'AT HOME IN THE WORLD':
Iraqi Refugees in Jordan and the Search for Comfort

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Per mia madre –

Che anni fa mi regalò il libro che ha dato inizio a tutto ciò

Abstract

In the decade following the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, thousands of Iraqis made their way to neighbouring Jordan, where many spent years living. Unlike other major refugee groups in the region, such as Palestinians or, more recently, Syrians, Iraqis in Jordan during this period were overwhelmingly educated, middle-class professionals. They self-settled throughout Amman and were generally financially better off than many of their Jordanian hosts. While most eventually registered with the UN in the hopes of being resettlement outside of the Middle East, many did so several years after being in Jordan.

Based on 18 months of fieldwork with Iraqis in Amman between 2010 and 2013, this dissertation is an examination of the dynamics of Iraqi mobility into and out of Jordan following the US-led invasion. Specifically, it explores how concepts and experiences of home were being reimagined and reconfigured among Iraqis. As Iraqis spoke to me of their departures from Iraq and as I shared their lives in Jordan, it became clear that they experienced their 'displacement' less as an 'event' that had occurred to them than as an ambiguous and open-ended process that extended over time and across places. They sought to construct a sense of home that was fundamentally affective—what they termed "a sense of comfort" in the world.

As Iraqis moved across the destabilised terrains of Iraq, Jordan, and beyond, how was their sense of comfort—of being at home in the world—alternately cultivated and undermined? Drawing on Heidegger's notion of "equipment," I argue that Iraqi experiences of displacement and of home should neither be understood as binary (home / not home) nor as dominated solely by legal or financial concerns. Iraqis assessed the comfort, and thus liveability, of various places in ways that were multi-layered, contradictory, and shifting. In illustrating this, I contend that Iraqi patterns of mobility and emplacement were intimately tied not only to the specific configurations of laws, people, and opportunities available to them in various places, but also—and especially—to the amount of labour that was required to sustain a sense of comfort.

Résumé

Dans la décennie qui suivi l'invasion de l'Irak en 2003, des milliers d'Iraquiens se sont installés en Jordanie voisine, où ils ont passé plusieurs années. À la différence des autres populations réfugiées dans la région, comme les Palestiniens ou, plus récemment, les Syriens, les Iraquiens en Jordanie durant cette période sont principalement des ménages de classe moyenne, généralement instruits. Installés en majorité à Amman, ils sont bien souvent plus aisés que beaucoup de leurs hôtes jordaniens. Si la plupart se sont enregistrés auprès des Nations-Unis dans l'espoir de pouvoir se reconstruire une vie en dehors de la région, beaucoup ont attendu des années pour franchir ce pas.

Cette thèse analyse les dynamiques de mobilités des populations iraquiennes vers, et depuis, la Jordanie, à la suite de l'invasion américaine. S'appuyant sur un travail de terrain de 18 mois effectué entre 2010 et 2013 à Amman, elle explore, en particulier, la manière dont les concepts et les expériences de 'chez soi' ont été ré-imaginés et reconfigurés parmi les Iraquiens en Jordanie. Comme ces derniers me l'ont confié, et comme j'ai pu le constater par moi-même en partageant leur quotidien, leur 'déplacement' a été vécu moins comme un 'événement' en tant que tel, que comme un processus ouvert et ambigu, qui se prolonge dans le temps, et à travers l'espace. À bien des égards, ces Iraquiens ont cherché à construire un sens du 'chez soi' fondamentalement affectif, qu'ils ont appelé un « sens du confort » dans le monde.

Pour ces Iraquiens qui ont connu, et traversé, les terres instables d'Iraq, de Jordanie, et d'ailleurs, comment leur sens du confort—ce sens d'être 'chez soi' dans le monde—a-t-il été cultivé ou ébranlé ? En mobilisant la notion « d'outil » chez Heidegger, cette recherche suggère que les expériences de déplacement et de 'chez soi' chez les iraquiens, ne sont ni binaire ('chez soi' / pas 'chez soi'), ni uniquement façonnées par des considérations légales ou financières. Ces populations évaluent le confort des multiples lieux qu'ils ont connu, et donc leur habitabilité, de manière multiple, mouvante, et parfois contradictoire. En illustrant cette réalité, cette thèse affirme que les modèles de mobilité et d'emplacement construits par les iraquiens sont intimement liés, non seulement au cadre légal en vigueur, aux rencontres qu'ils ont pu faire, et aux opportunités qui leur ont été offertes dans les pays où ils se trouvent, mais aussi, et en particulier, à la quantité de travail requise pour entretenir un sens de confort.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
IDP	Internally Displaced Person(s)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IRO	International Refugee Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRAP	Iraq Refugee Assistance Project
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental organization
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SIV	Special Immigrant Visa
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
USCIS	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
USRAP	United States Refugee Admissions Program

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Arabic words have been transliterated using the transliteration system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Place names, personal names, and names of political parties and organizations are spelled without diacritical marks, but ʿ*ayn* and hamza (except for initial hamza) are retained. The names of my interlocutors follow colloquial pronunciation. Commonly recognized Arabic words and places follow English spelling and are not italicized, e.g., hijab and Amman.

PREFACE

The rain falls in sheets, torrents, rivers of water. Thunder. Lightning flashes, piercing the sky. Momentarily it is day at night. The sky is shapeshifting, rearranging its elements, trying to find a more comfortable compromise with the earth. Mist rises from the broken sidewalk as I rush into Books@Café in Jabal Amman. I find it enveloped in darkness. The storm has unexpectedly cut the electricity. Candles guide me through the entrance of the bookshop, drenching me in their soft glow. I walk up the staircase to the café and as I rise, so too does the sound of singing, of clapping, of boisterous laughter. The darkness has provoked a lively camaraderie: the café's patrons are being led in song by a young woman sitting on the patio and singing without restraint, with clear and open joy.

I catch a glimpse of Naʿmeh, an Iraqi friend, who is sitting on a couch in a corner with a group of friends. I walk toward them. This is one of Naʿmeh's last evenings in Amman; he will be resettled in Los Angeles soon. As he surveys the scene, a slow bloom of sadness spreads across his face.

"I will miss this place. I feel at home here now." He says this with a sense of surprise, as though the words are coming from elsewhere, as though he does not quite know what to make of this feeling, here, in Amman.

"What does that mean to you?" I ask, "That you feel at home here?"
Naʿmeh is silent for a long time. Finally, he shifts in the couch, leans toward me, and says, "It means that I don't wake up every day and ask 'Where am I?'"

INTRODUCTION

Mariam set the small pear-shaped glass in front of me before sitting down on the floor of her cavernous basement apartment in Amman. She lifted the dented mental kettle with her right hand and poured the pitch-black tea until it precariously reached the glass' edge. Before heating the kettle, she had been telling me about her short trip back to Baghdad for the first-year anniversary of her mother's death. She picked up the thread of our conversation by saying:

> Next to my uncle's house, there is a shop owned by an Egyptian man. I asked him why he did not leave, and he said, "Why would I leave Iraq, my country, and go to Jordan?! I would rather die and not go to Jordan." I swear! He said, "I'm Egyptian and I'm a son of Iraq." His wife and children were Egyptian too, but they loved Iraq because they saw the blessings and goodness of the country. Look, the place that you are comfortable in, that is your country (*Shufi, al makān illi tirtāḥīn bi, huwwe bilādich*). For example, you are originally from Egypt, but if I asked you now whether you loved it, what you loved, you would say you love Canada more. Why? Because this is the place where you lived, where you were comfortable, therefore it is your country. [...] Wherever the human being finds humanity, and feels his respect, and appreciation [that is his country].

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ʿAdel was sitting on the floor, fiddling with his phone, as I shelled peanuts from the bowl between us. We had been talking about his departure from Iraq to Jordan,

where he now found himself, and his attempt to resettle in the United States, when he offered the following reflections:

> I am sorry to say this, but I do not feel that Iraq is my home anymore. I used to feel that it was my home mainly because I had not seen any other country. Iraq was very closed under Saddam, there were very few foreigners, just some Arabs, mainly Egyptians and Jordanians. There was also a lot of poverty. Then when I came to Jordan, I met people from all over the world, and I suddenly did not feel that Iraq was my home. Because home, if I had to define it, home is where you find your dignity and food. The two go together, because no one who works deserves to be poor. So Iraq is not my home. And if my family was out of Iraq, I would only go back to visit certain religious places in Najaf and Karbala. You know, to be honest, now, I feel that I am homeless. I am homeless. Being homeless is not that you lost your apartment. It means that you do not have people to support you; it means that you never feel quite comfortable; you never feel your dignity. This [Jordan] is not my home, Iraq is not my home. Maybe America. The most important thing is dignity. You cannot live without your dignity. When you lose it, it is very hard. Very hard.

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In their conversations with me about their lives as Iraqis in Amman, Miriam and ʿAdel both gestured to an understanding of home not as a fixed, singular geographical place. Rather, home for them meant a relationship to the world, one that humans constantly strive and struggle to make fulfilling. Michael Jackson (2013, 4) has defined this striving as the struggle to be "at home in the world," by recovering "a balance

between being an actor and being acted upon." In both their understanding and striving for a place to feel comfortable, Mariam and ʿAdel were not alone. The Iraqis I encountered in Jordan overwhelmingly shared this sense of home as something fundamentally affective, a vital "extra,"—a comfort, a dignity.

In large part, the intensity and pervasiveness of the discussions about comfort and home that I encountered in the field had much to do with the instabilities besetting the Middle East and the world. Iraqis were haunted and hunted by insecurity—in their memories of the past, in their experiences of the present, in their hopes for and imaginings of the future. My friend Layal, who had been living in Jordan for five years with her parents and brother when I first met her, described the paralytic feeling of living with this sort of insecurity as an inability to discern "where the goodness is, in Iraq or outside." This sense of fundamental, even ontological, instability was linked to a long history of violence, hardship, and political repression in Iraq, as well as the challenges of daily life in Jordan and potential resettlement countries, such as the United States. For the Iraqis I came to know, there was neither the allure of a promised land nor the nostalgia of a homeland to which to return. Far more than confronting life as refugees, they were wrestling with life in a fundamentally wounded world. The image they used to capture this struggle was that of the "exploded" family, presently dispersed and destined to never really be brought back together again. Their lives were emblematic of what Anna Tsing (2015, 2) characterizes as precarity, or life "without the promise of stability."[1]

[1] Tsing's understanding of precarity resonates strongly with Saskia Sassen's (2014) notion of "expulsion," which she defines not as an event but as the defining logic of the current historical moment. This logic does not derive from any one action by an individual or state, but rather emerges from "larger assemblages of elements, conditions and mutually reinforcing dynamics (Sassen 2014, 77)." Bringing together phenomena as seemingly distinct as forced migration, incarceration, bankruptcy, mining, and

In this ethnography, I ask: as Iraqis moved across the destabilised terrains of Iraq, Jordan, and beyond, how was their sense of comfort—of being at home in the world—cultivated and undermined? How, when, and where did they feel 'out of place'? How were their lives woven together and held apart? What was demanded of them and what did they demand in return?

Drawing on 18 months of fieldwork with Iraqis in Amman between 2010 and 2013, this manuscript tackles these questions through an examination of the dynamics of Iraqi mobility into and out of Jordan following the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. Unlike other major refugee groups in the Middle East, such as Palestinians or, more recently, Syrians, Iraqis in Jordan during this time represented a rather particular refugee group. Hailing overwhelmingly from Baghdad, they were not dispossessed in a sudden or comprehensive matter, despite the rise in acute violence during 2006-2007; Iraqi departures in the post-2003 period, for the most part, were relatively controlled and planned. As predominantly middle-class professionals, Iraqis in Jordan were often financially better off than their Jordanian hosts (and certainly far better off than the Syrians who eventually joined them) due to savings they brought with them and reverse remittances many received from family members still in Iraq. Their financial status enabled many to self-settle throughout Amman (and to a lesser extent, other urban centres in Jordan, such as Zarqa). Moreover, they also tended to avoid formal

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eviction, Sassen (2014, 76) argues that the underlying principle driving these has been a "strengthening of dynamics that expel people from the economy and from society." The pre-1980s systems of Keynsian economics and communism were both defined by a systemic tendency towards an incorporation of people—a logic of inclusion—despite the unequal, uneven, and even at times violent ways in which this was achieved; no matter, the underlying logic sought to bring people in. In contrast, the post-1980s period of deregulation and privatisation has been defined by expulsion dynamics that "at ground level, not intermediated by the specifics of country and sector, [...] all go in one direction—toward pushing people out (Sassen 2014, 77)."

humanitarian assistance (Al-Khalidi, Hoffmann, and Tanner 2007; Chatty and Mansour 2011). While many Iraqis I met eventually registered with the UN for resettlement outside of the Middle East, many did so only after having lived in Jordan for several years. Finally, despite the risks, some Iraqis returned to Iraq temporarily for work, to check on or sell property, to obtain documentation, to collect pensions, or to attend weddings and funerals (Chatelard 2010a; 2011; 2012; Chatty and Mansour 2011; Dorai 2009a; Mason 2011).

As Iraqis spoke to me of their departures from Iraq and as I shared their lives in Jordan, it became increasingly clear that they experienced their 'displacement' less as an 'event' that had occurred to them and more as an ambiguous and open-ended process extending across time and place. Furthermore, their displacement was alternately amplified and attenuated, did not occur to everyone in the same manner, and implicated refugees and host communities alike. I therefore argue that Iraqi experiences of displacement and understandings of home should neither be understood as binary (home / not home) nor as dominated solely by legal or financial concerns. Iraqis assessed the comfort, and thus liveability, of various places in ways that were multi-layered, contradictory, and shifting. As Tobias Kelly (2009, 27–28, emphasis added) notes in his study of Palestinian containment and displacement under Israeli occupation:

> The distinction between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' presence is not given once and for all but is constantly shifting and people can feel 'out of place' without having moved anywhere. [...] Rather than the processes of movement and containment, exile and return being seen in opposition, they should both be

> understood in the wider context of *the instabilities in the processes through which people are related to place*.

Similarly, in her study of serial migrants, individuals who move multiple times throughout their lives, Susan Ossman (2013, 123, emphasis added) compellingly argues that "individual direction arises neither through singular imagination nor through a particular collective history, but through *the ways we live with others and how different sites of settlement give value to these through political arrangement*."

I follow Kelly and Ossman in focusing on the everyday practices and processes that at once connected and distanced Iraqis in particular places at particular times, ultimately informing their sense of ontological stability and guiding their mobility. In so doing, I center Iraqi understandings of home as an ongoing striving that is affective and embodied—a sense of "comfort" in the world—in order to rethink the constitutive relationship between mobility, displacement, and home.

Contextualizing Displacement

Though displacement by war, famine, and natural disasters has long marked human societies, it was not until the early 20th century, with the collapse of the European imperial dynasties (as well as the Ottoman Empire) and their replacement with territorially fixed states that conceived of themselves as singular 'nations,' that displaced people were conceived of as "objects of governance" (Soguk 1999, 124). This era saw massive displacements and provoked the first formal international efforts to manage

them.[2] In the following section, I offer a brief overview of how displacement as a concept developed in response to specific political, policy, and operational challenges in the second half of the 20th century. I then discuss how displacement is being reconceptualised as a relational process that is regionally grounded in order to then situate my contributions to understandings of the constitutive relationship between displacement and home.

Theorizing Displacement

The early 20th century efforts to reconceptualise displaced people as a problem of governance continued with the post-Second World War establishment and consolidation of an international regime to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees. This began with the creation of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in 1943 by the Allied powers. UNRRA's mandate was to repatriate people who had been displaced during the war. By 1946, however, the policy was coming under increasing criticism, as millions of people refused to return to Eastern bloc countries. In response, the United States supported a stop to repatriation, arguing that UNRRA's relief work was legitimating Soviet control of various European countries. The Soviet Union, by contrast, saw UNRRA's reluctance to continue repatriation as evidence of its subservience to American power (UNHCR 2000, 14, 16). In the wake of this dispute, a new agency, the International Refugee Organisation (IRO),

[2] For an in-depth overview of how displaced persons were conceptualised prior to the First World War, as well as relations between the 'refugee' and the territorial nation-state, see: Arendt, Hannah. 1968. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc. For more on European population displacements in the Second World War era, see: Reinisch, Jessica and Elizabeth White. 2011. *The Disentanglement of Populations: Migration, Expulsion and Displacement in Post-War Europe, 1944-49*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

was established in 1947. While the IRO's rhetoric supported repatriation, it focused in practice on resettlement. This shift was denounced by Eastern bloc countries as a Western attempt to capture a needed source of labor—a motivation that was indeed behind the resettlement (UNHCR 2000, 17). In effect, then, two of the three 'durable' solutions of the current international refugee regime—repatriation and third-country resettlement—materialized in tandem with Cold War politics. Importantly, the emphasis of both these solutions was on sorting people out—either returning them to where they came (based on origin) or where they should be (based on ideological commitment).

The transformation of displaced people into an urgent governance issue was tied to the anxieties that mobility provoked for nation-states that imagined themselves as built on a tightly bounded territory-people-language base. At the IRO's 1946 inauguration, for instance, Eleanor Roosevelt (as quoted in Carlin 1989, 19) spoke for the United States when she argued that it was "a direct selfish interest" of each UN member state to address the displacement problem, which was in need of "disposal" and represented a "sore on the body of mankind." By 1950, however, there were still numerous people displaced throughout Europe, and with the IRO's mandate ending, negotiations began for the establishment of a third agency—the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which was designed to be a humanitarian rather than political entity. It was with UNHCR that the first formal international legal instrument was put in place to address displacement, namely, the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. This Convention set out the formal definition of a "refugee," as:

> A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.[3]

Developed as a specific response to the needs of post-war Europe, the Convention would have profound effects on how policy and scholarship approached displacement (Haddad 2008, 148). First, it framed displacement primarily as an international issue—that is, as an issue of how to govern the movement of people across international borders. Refugees were therefore interesting only insofar as they were problems for states and for inter-state relations. Consequently, methods of regulation such as re-territorialisation (in camps, third countries, first country of asylum, country of origin, etc.) and legalisation (as refugees, asylum-seekers, etc.) were emphasised (Soguk 1999, 194). Second, the causes of displacement were narrowly construed as having to do with war and persecution and their associated psychological state—fear. Third, displacement was understood as a temporary condition, one that required an immediate humanitarian response and that ceased to exist once a person was repatriated or resettled. Finally, displacement was seen as an exceptional 'event' that had interrupted and radically altered people's lives (Dunn 2018), moving them from their former statuses to the generic status of 'refugee.'

[3] Whereas the 1951 Convention legally circumscribed refugee status to people who had become displaced due to events prior to 1951 and mainly in Europe, the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees expanded the legal conception of a refugee by removing the Convention's temporal and geographic limitations.

In this view, displacement precipitated an 'after' characterized by the experience of a wide range of lamentable losses. These included, among others: social networks and capital (Marx 1990; Utas 2005), home (Loizos 2009; Papadopoulos 2002), economic means and material goods (Bascom 1998), political and legal rights (Harrell-Bond 1986), agency (Kunz 1973; 1981; Richmond 1988; Van Hear 1998), health (Derrick 1999; Gerritsen et al. 2006; Hollifeld et al. 2002; Ingleby 2005; Miller and Rasco 2004; Porter and Haslam 2005; Watters 2001), cultural moorings (Scudder and Colson 1982), and concrete connections with former homes (Feldman 2006).[4] In the Middle East, the salience of this conceptualization of displacement has been validated by the political and social resonance of the Palestinian case. Refugee camps have been central to the Palestinian experience, which has been generally understood as a sudden and traumatic severance of Palestinians' connection with their home—as both intimate place and national territory (Allan 2013; Peteet 2005; Sayigh 2013).

This conceptualization of displacement was important in highlighting the lived realities and consequences of forced migration for millions of people, while also safeguarding their rights and providing them with crucial (if inadequate) assistance. Nevertheless, it also made invisible myriad other displaced individuals, such as people who did not end up in camps or who did not cross an international border. Moreover, it eclipsed other forms of displacement, such as forced relocation due to state-building or private economic-development projects (Colson 1971; Scott 1998; Terminski 2011),

[4] This understanding of displacement frames international legal approaches grounded in what are known as the "three durable solutions" promoted by UNHCR to refugee crises: voluntary repatriation, local integration in the country of first asylum, and third country resettlement (UNHCR 2007a). It also resonates with traditional approaches to diaspora, in which diaspora is narrowly defined as resulting from "forced dispersion, [...and having] a distinct collective cultural memory and [a resistance] to assimilation to the dominant host culture," as well as broader theorisations of diaspora that remain anchored in the "homeland-diaspora-host state" triad (Gorman and Kasbarian 2015, 9).

displacement due to persecution within state borders (Chatelard 2012), displacement under varying degrees of economic and environmental distress (Barrios, Bertinelli, and Strobl 2006; Bhuyan, Khan, and Ahmed 2001), and protracted displacement (Crisp 2002; Milner and Loescher 2011; Zetter and Long 2012). Finally, it sidelined other experiences and meanings of displacement that did not focus on loss, war, or even mobility (Hammar 2014b; Lubkemann 2008b).

Initial critiques of this approach to displacement were addressed through an expansion of typologies, most importantly, the formal recognition of internally displaced persons by the United Nations in 1998 (UN 1998). However, this proliferation of categories has reinforced rather than undone the conceptual and humanitarian regimes in which displacement comes to be recognised only if caused by specific circumstances and manifested in particular ways (Turton 2003; Zetter 2007).[5] In fact, there is continued emphasis, operationally and academically, on documented and encamped groups, particularly those who have crossed international borders. In part, this continued focus has to do with the deepening political tensions provoked by all forms of international mobility and by the urgency and scale of refugee crises. It also has to do with practical matters: namely, the fact that refugee camps, as areas that are physically and legally demarcated, and that 'hold' (more or less coercively) displaced people in one

[5] This emphasis on typologies is not new, but is rather an iteration of the sociological categorisation of social types. Work on social types owes much to Georg Simmel's (1950; 1965) conceptualization of various social types, such as the stranger or the poor. Simmel argued that such social types emerge not because of the specificities of the individuals subsumed under them, but rather in relation to the reactions and expectations of others. For instance, in Simmel's view, the poor come to exist only when there is a societal recognition of poverty as a specific status and when society begins assigning people to the category. The refugee, and all other displacement typologies, can therefore be understood as social types that came into existence at specific historical junctures.

location, provide a readily accessible point of entry for service providers and academics in what are otherwise often chaotic settings.

Displacement as Process

Despite the enduring dominance of this displacement framework in practice and theory, over the past two decades there has been growing recognition of the varied nature, dynamics, implications, and consequences of displacement. There is now a well-established literature that engages these dynamics and brings into view many of the invisibilities produced by the dominant displacement approach. In particular, attention has shifted from a focus on typology to a concern for process (Baxter and Krulfeld 1997; Chatelard 2010b; Hammar 2014b; Jacobsen 2006; Phillips and Rynearson 1996; Polzer 2008; Polzer and Hammond 2008).[6]

Scholarship over the past two decades has focused, for example, on the important political, economic, and social differences that mark camp life (Achilli 2015; Turner 2003), as well as the fact that refugee situations are not rigidly structured in a departure-exile-resettlement temporality, but are rather far more fluid and increasingly protracted (Brun 2010; Crisp 2002; Milner and Loescher 2011; UNHCR 2006a). This research has brought attention to how displaced communities maintain collective memories, cohesion, and traditions in new places—whether of transit or final settlement (DeVoe 1992; Gorman and Kasbarian 2015; Krulfeld 1992). Importantly, the concern for

[6] This shift was anchored in broader changes in the social sciences that emphasised questions of transnationalism and globalisation over boundedness; routes over roots; and heterogeneity, fluidity, and hybridity over primordial identity (Baxter and Krulfeld 1997, 1; Clifford 1997). In this decentring of boundaries, notions like 'displacement' and 'diaspora' took on new valences in which they were no longer exclusively associated with trauma, but rather encompassed potentially meaningful ways of life (Boyarin and Boyarin 2002; Chaliand 1989; Clifford 1994; Gorman and Kasbarian 2015).

the protracted nature of displacement has pushed scholars to explore not only what displacement destroys but also what it generates.

For instance, there has been growing interest in the economies produced by displacement (Betts et al. 2017; Crush et al. 2017; Hammar 2014a). This literature has focused on the economy generated by the proliferation of international and local NGOs, such as those that Andrea Behrends (2014) discusses in the Darfur-Chad borderlands. It has also explored new forms of economic practice that displaced people develop and engage as they not only endure exile but also live their lives, such as circular migration between places of residence and origin in a bid to diversify livelihoods (Chatelard 2010a; Hansen 2014), or the establishment of informal savings collectives as a means of mitigating the effects of poverty in refugee camps (Allan 2013).

Scholars have also highlighted the ways in which refugee subjectivity overlaps, interacts with, or is sidelined by other and often new subjectivities, as well as the agency and creativity of refugees in strategically deploying multiple registers of belonging (Allan 2013; Gass 2014; Malkki 1995a; Shami 1996b). In fact, Géraldine Chatelard (2010b, 16, emphasis in original) suggests that it may be more effective to think of how refugees "express their claims, identities, experiences and expectations along a variety of *relational* categories of self-definition, and rarely along mutually exclusive normative ones."[7] For instance, Diana Allan (2013) explores new forms of belonging emerging among Palestinians who have been living in refugee camps in Lebanon for decades, fuelled in large part by the stark economic realities they face in their day-to-day lives,

[7] Similarly, Michael Jackson (2013, 4, emphasis in original) has more recently cautioned that despite the hardships migrants face, most do not "*ontologize* themselves as drudges, floating, or liminal, although there are times when these words ring true."

and the forms of solidarity that such hardship brings into being. This concern with the shifting nature of refugee subjectivity has been propelled by the growing recognition that the vast majority of refugees self-settle, often in urban areas. Such refugees do not fit into strict categories of migration (e.g. labour versus forced) and may or may not be legal 'refugees' or even 'legal' at all (Bakewell 2008; Bascom 1995; 1998; Crisp 2004; Davis and Taylor 2012; Jacobsen 2006; Jansen 2016; Landau 2004; Malkki 1995a; Palmgren 2016; Polzer 2008; Raeymaekers 2014; Sanyal 2016; Stevens 2016; UNHCR 2010).

A related concern has been with understanding the important continuities in experience between refugees and other mobile groups, such as immigrants, migrant labourers, and pastoralists, which are often hidden because refugee status is a legal construct with strict inclusion requirements (Baxter and Krulfeld 1997; Betts 2013; Wellmeier and Hopkins 2001). For instance, Hannah Elliott (2014) examines how the commodification of camel milk—a substance that traditionally cannot be sold—and the emergence of camel milk markets in the Eastleigh neighbourhood of Nairobi is anchored in the forging of shared 'Somali' identity between Somali refugees and former Kenyan Somali pastoralists who have been forced to become sedentary.

Attention has also been paid to displacement experiences that unsettle the definitional assumptions of the typical 'refugee' narrative in troubling ways (Chatty and Mansour 2011; Mason 2011). In this vein, scholars have examined the lives of people who are involuntarily emplaced or who are variously displaced-in-place (Feldman, Geisler, and Silberling 2003; Jones 2014; Lubkemann 2008b; Magaramombe 2010), as well as the experiences of host communities in which refugees reside (Brun 2010; Chambers 1986; Evans 2014; Gebre 2003). Importantly, there has been a recent interest

among scholars in understanding—rather than assuming—the importance of legal status for people who are displaced. This work has shown that the effects of legality in contexts of protracted displacement are complex and contradictory. Studies of urban refugees in Tokyo and Johannesburg, for instance, indicate that, with respect to livelihoods, employment, and access to services, formal legal status seems to make little difference (Jacobsen 2006). Similarly, Katarzyna Grabska (2006) found that for Sudanese refugees in Cairo, legal status had little effect on their ability to secure livelihoods in the city.

Finally, the gender and age dimensions of displacement experiences (Abusharaf 2009; Gass 2014; Raeymaekers 2014; Utas 2005), changing dynamics in new and old diasporas (Eastmond 2006a; Hansen 2014; Ilias 2015; Kasbarian 2015; Koser 2003), and the relationship between displacement, religion, and humanitarianism (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011; Gozdziak and Shandy 2002; Lauterbach 2014), have also variously been addressed over the past two decades by researchers seeking to explicate the differential impacts, outcomes, and experiences of displacement.

Though definitions of displacement continue to be debated, growing interest in the diversity of refugee experiences has resulted in the consolidation of a broad agreement that displacement is best understood as a relational process that materializes under conditions that Amanda Hammar (2014b, 9) describes as "enforced changes in interweaving spatial, social and symbolic conditions and relations." Hammar's conceptualization is similar to Stephen Lubkemann's (2008a, 212) framing of displacement as "changes in structural conditions (such as those produced by war) [that] deprive them [people] of the vital social, economic, ecological, and symbolic resources required for social reproduction—and in the extreme for mere survival." While

changes, imposed and often damaging, are central to Hammar and Lubkemann's definitions, they also importantly do not limit displacement to any group, place, or situation. Nor do they tie it to mobility, voluntary or otherwise; that is, while displacement is associated with certain social phenomena—such as war or forced migration—it is not limited to them. This understanding leaves open the possibility of asking different sorts of questions. How, for instance, are different places interconnected, what do places enable and offer, and how do people relate to them? Where and how exactly do displacement and emplacement materialize? And what are the divergent experiences that people have in ostensibly familiar places?

From this perspective, then, there is as much interest in what displacement creates, reconfigures, or makes possible, as in what it undoes, disrupts, or fractures. Engaging with and pushing forward this literature, this study examines how displacement is not only a process, but also one that unevenly extends across places of origin and exile. Specifically, I explore the micro-processes that underpin experiences of displacement and emplacement simultaneously, alternately attenuating or accentuating Iraqis' attachments to various locales.

The Regional Specificities of Displacement

Scholars and policy-makers have long noted the disproportionate numbers of refugees who remain in the Global South (Kagan 2011; Sanyal 2016; Zolberg 2006): UNHCR (2019a) estimates that in 2018 over 80% of the world's 25.9 million refugees lived in the Global South, with close to four out of every five refugees living in countries neighbouring their country of origin. Although the implications of forced migration and the experiences of refugees in Europe and other 'Western' contexts garner much

attention, refugees remain first and foremost a challenge for countries in the Global South (Edmond 2017; Malkki 1995b; UNHCR 2016). Despite this reality, only recently have researchers begun concerted efforts to understand Global South experiences of and responses to displacement (Bank and Fröhlich 2018; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2018).

Within the Global South, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is home to some of the largest forcibly displaced populations in the world: in 2018, the region was home to approximately 50% of the world's 25.9 million refugees and 20% of the world's 41.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), many of them Iraqi, Syrian, and Palestinian (UNHCR 2019a). Even before the current moment, however, the region has had a long history of displacement, which has been as much a consequence of state building as of state collapse. Prominent examples include the genocide of the Armenians and the consolidation of modern Turkey, the expulsion of the Palestinians and the establishment of the state of Israel, or the extreme population engineering under Saddam Hussein in Iraq (Chatelard 2012; Chatty 2010; Gorman and Kasbarian 2015; Peteet 2011; Watenpaugh 2015). From the mid-19th century, communal mass migration in the MENA has resulted in large ethnic, national, and religious communities residing in new areas, empires, and nation-states, making up significant portions of the population in them.

In many ways, then, the Middle East provides ample evidence for the constitutive relationship between displacement and state-making, discussed by Hannah Arendt (1968) with respect to European nation-states in the post-First World War context. This line of inquiry has been taken up by scholars interested in the role of states and host communities in shaping the parameters of the term 'refugee' and related experiences of displacement. There has therefore been a focus on, among other issues: border

regulations (Achilli 2015; Al-Zubaidi and Wimmen 2008; Harper 2008; Shiyab et al. 2009); legal limitations on access to the formal labour market (Chatty and Mansour 2011); the mobilization of moral panics tied to global discourses that frame refugees as inherent threats to national order (Mason 2011); and the ways that recent mass displacements have altered migration policies in Middle East states, such as Jordan and Lebanon (Dorai 2018).

Paralleling this work, however, is a growing body of scholarship that explores the implications of historical and transregional forms of belonging, as well as a long history of mobility and hospitality, in order to understand displacement experiences in the MENA (Bocco and Djalili 1994; Chatelard 2012; Chatty 2010; Madoré 2016; Shami 1996b). This work has interrogated the salience of the 'refugee'—as a category capturing a politically relevant form of difference—in a context where "forms and forces of regionalism" (Shami 1996b, 3), or historical and enduring sentiments, identities, and linkages across current forms of territorialisation, remain strong. As affective and physical linkages, these regionalisms—Arabism, Islam, labour migration, pilgrimage routes, kinship ties, and tribal and sectarian affiliations, among others—generate territorialities and subjectivities that do not necessarily overlap with those of states (Chatelard 2010b; Chatty and Finlayson 2010).[8] In a region of multiple supra- and sub-state identifications, states and societies have therefore often received displaced individuals as fellow Arabs, co-religionists, or guests (*al-ḍuyūf*). Moreover, displaced

[8] The importance of regional linkages has been noted elsewhere. For instance, Polzer (2008) describes the displacement of Mozambicans to South Africa during the civil war as an example of the ways in which continuities across borders—in this case cross-border labour migration and a shared language—contributed to a sense of belonging and familiarity, rather than disruption, and were significant in leading to successful integration.

persons have themselves articulated their identities and claims within multiple local registers, not necessarily or even primarily as refugees (*al-lāj'īn*).

In light of the concern for situating displacement within its regional specificity, scholars have highlighted how places of exile are conceptualized and experienced as familiar (Chatelard 2010b); how displacement has overlain long-established cross-border labour migration routes (Chatelard 2010a; Dorai 2018);[9] how social class distinctions have served as a basis for integration (and, of course, marginalisation) (Chatelard 2005; Fattah 2007; Fawaz et al. 2018); how Arabism and religious identities (of both states and individuals) have shaped migration trajectories (Chatelard 2010a; Al-Khalidi, Hoffmann, and Tanner 2007); and how regional understandings of hospitality, asylum, and belonging have enabled refugees to self-settle in new places (Chatty 2014; Fawaz et al. 2018; Madoré 2016).

One outcome of this focus on connection rather than fragmentation has been to productively trouble ahistorical and state-centric notions of in/out, as well as more recent bio-political engagements that retain an interest in the externality of the refugee. I situate my discussion of Iraqi experiences and understandings of home, comfort, and displacement within this literature that explores the ways in which regional dynamics and histories impinge upon displacement. In so doing, I attend to not only the solidarities such connections allow, but also the paradoxical manner in which such connections can be the grounds for marginalisation.

[9] The interest in regionalising displacement and, in particular, linking it to regional labour migration, builds upon a well-established literature on labour migration in the Middle East. See, for instance: Babar, Zahra. 2017. *Arab Migrant Communities in the GCC*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Chalcraft, John. 2008. *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; Shah, Nasra M. 2004. "Arab Migration Patterns in the Gulf." In *Arab Migration in a Globalized World*, 91-114. Geneva: International Organization for Migration.

Displacement and Home: Or 'An Ecology of Comfort'

On a Tuesday afternoon in May 2012, I arrived at the local school in Ashrafiyeh where I was teaching conversational English classes as part of an NGO-run program for refugees. I had agreed to introduce Sabreen, a documentary filmmaker interested in the situation of refugees in Jordan, to some of the Iraqis with whom I worked. We arrived early and, given the breezy weather on an otherwise scorching day, found the few staff members on the immense patio adjacent to the overcrowded offices. Tamer, a teacher and administrator, was sitting at a once-white plastic table, busily shuffling through a pile of papers and entering data on a laptop. I introduced him to Sabreen, and with an over-abundance of enthusiasm she began asking him a slew of questions about his work, eventually asking, directly, "So don't you want to go back [to Iraq]?" Tamer looked up, seemingly caught off guard. "No, I wouldn't go back." Sabreen nodded vigorously, and began talking about the deteriorated security situation in Iraq, how terrible it was, how difficult it must be. "It's not only about security," Tamer retorted while continuing to type. "Things have changed, people have changed." Sabreen pushed him to say more about this and about the violence that plagued everyday life in Iraq. Tamer stopped his typing, started to say something, and then stopped again. "No …" the sentence unravelled before he could find its ending. "No, that's not what I mean," he insisted. "It's just that the place has changed, the people have changed. It doesn't feel like home anymore."

Displacement and home are intimately linked, not only because displacement is often understood as the loss of home, but also because displacement precipitates the

need to refashion home, imaginatively and practically (Dossa and Golubovic 2019; Jansen and Löfving 2009). Within this broader discussion, scholars and policy-makers alike have debated the specific importance of return to a country of origin, both physical and psychological, for refugees. The large refugee flows witnessed in the 1990s, together with a growing concern for the paradoxical effects of an increasingly globalised, transnational world, generated a lively debate about who constituted a refugee and how growing refugee communities, particularly in the Global South, should be understood (Malkki 1992; 1995a; Marx 1990; Shami 1996a; Van Hear 1998). In this context, Liisa Malkki (1992) published a ground-breaking essay in *Cultural Anthropology* on the relationship between refugees and home, in which she pointedly criticized what she termed "sedentarism," or the view that identity, especially national identity, was tied to a specific territory. Though she acknowledged the suffering experienced by refugees at having been forced to leave their countries of origin, Malkki argued that we should not understand this suffering as stemming primarily from having been forced out of one's home (i.e. from the experiential dimensions of being de-territorialised). Rather, this diagnosis of the refugee condition stemmed from a sedentarist view of the world that assumed a clear distinction between home and exile.

Malkki's contention that home is not necessarily located in a place of origin, and that return to such a home should not be assumed to be at the centre of refugee concerns, was critiqued by others who argued that identities remained stubbornly territorialized. Gaim Kibreab (1999), in particular, argued for a recognition of the ways in which the inability to return created anxiety for many refugees, irrespective how well they had adapted elsewhere. In his study of Bosnian returnees to Sarajevo, Stefansson (2004) similarly showed that people wanted to return to their towns of origin even

though they were aware that they could not return to their pre-war lives. Given the de-naturalisation between place and personhood it posits, Malkki's approach was generally eschewed in refugee studies because of its perceived potential to undermine the pain and suffering, and the legal rights, of those seen as having been forced from their homes (Turton 2004).

While this debate has often been framed in oppositional terms, the experiences of Iraqis in Amman alert us to the importance of clarifying the distinction between home as a specific place—of origin, history, community, family—and a feeling of being at home, or what Mariam defines as feeling "comfortable" (Brun and Fábos 2015). For Iraqis like Tamer, the struggle to feel at home in a world of precarity was a constant one—shifting across terrains, anchoring itself for some but not others, coming and going like the ebbs and flows of the sea. Though certainly carrying important material, historical, and communal dimensions, home for Iraqis was defined in affective and embodied terms; among other things, it was a "comfort," an ability to "see one's feet," a "dignity," and a place where "you feel yourself to be human." The Palestinian poet and essayist, Fawaz Turki (1996, 75), in explaining both his deep attachment to the Middle East and his reluctance, even inability, to live there, illuminates this distinction by stating that he thinks of himself as "*from* the Arab world but not *of* it." That is, Turki does not dispute his origin, personal history, or the collective history of which he is a part, nor the ambivalent emotional attachments these provoke. Similarly, Iraqis never disputed the importance of Iraq to their sense of self, either individually or collectively. Like Turki, however, they did distinguish between Iraq as point of origin and a feeling of being at home, which for many no longer coincided with Iraq as a territorial place.

As with Mariam and Tamer, the Iraqis I met were all trying to orient themselves in the world in such a way as to secure their own sense of feeling comfortable—a feeling that could and did inhere in different places. This did not mean that home was unmoored, that it was *only* a set of feelings. Rather, the emergence of a feeling of comfort was tied to the potentialities of the where, when, and with whom they found themselves in what I call an 'ecology of comfort.' In thinking of an ecology of comfort, I ask why and how Iraqis—trapped as they were in an open-ended situation of precarity—practically, imaginatively, and discursively managed to keep striving for a sense of comfort despite the direness of their circumstances.

In tackling this question, I situate my work within the vast and varied social science literature on the multi-dimensional and multi-scalar nature of home. Home has been understood as a place that makes it possible to link the past to the present (Ahmed 1999); as the family (Jones 2000); and, more broadly, as a set of social relations (Brun 2001). It has been conceived as a "spatial imaginary" that brings together various memories, ideas, and feelings across places and scales (Blunt and Dowling 2006); as a political homeland (Mallett 2004); and as a site of unequal power relations within the family and society in which issues of gender, generation, and class play out (Brickell 2012; Young 2005). Others have thought of home as an actual house that can fix and safeguard meaning (Bachelard 1958; Chapman and Hockney 1999; Wright 1991); as a haven or refuge (Moore 1984); as an absence and yearning (Dudley 2011; Eastmond 2006b); and as "a pattern of regular doings" within a particular space (Douglas 1991, 287). Home has also been approached as a mobile place that can either be physically transported, such as Roma caravans (Bender 2001), or recreated through specific actions, such as by lighting a campfire (Humphrey 1995). It has been characterised as a

point of departure and return held together by forms of journeying (Ginsberg 1999; Tucker 1994). Finally, home has been described as a state of being grounded in a set of practices (Gurney 1997; Ingold 1995; Jackson 1995); as a multi-scalar constellation, from home as intimate and familiar place to home as homeland, nation-state, or group (Brun and Fábos 2015); and as a political target for destruction—both physically and affectively (Porteous and Smith 2001).

Across this range of definitions, home emerges at once as a materiality and a complex set of affects that can exist in various locations, physical, virtual, and imaginary. Home, then, is a multi-dimensional concept that acts as "a repository for complex, inter-related and at times contradictory socio-cultural ideas about people's relationship with one another, especially family, and with places, spaces, and things" (Mallett 2004, 84). In this sense, home is polythetic, or a phenomenon defined by what Wittgenstein (2001[1953]; see also Wennerberg 1967) termed "family resemblances." As such, all the homes subsumed under the category 'home' do not need to have "one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all – but they are related to one another in many different ways" (Bangu 2005, 53). Rather than pinning down and detailing an exact definition of home, it is best thought of as what Lisa Stevenson (2014:10) has termed an "image," or something that can be recognised and known beyond description. Whether the image is a house in disarray, a family sitting together at breakfast, a map, a yearning, a memory, home as image captures both its polythetic nature, and Wittgenstein's contention that we can use words to communicate without articulating an explicit definition of what we are indexing (Bangu 2005).

Importantly, in writing about home and Iraqis, I intentionally move away from the term 'protracted displacement.' Protracted displacement is technically defined as

25,000 refugees living in exile for over five years (Brun 2010; Chatty and Mansour 2011; UNHCR 2006a; 2012; Zetter and Long 2012). More broadly, it has been described as a "long-lasting and intractable state of limbo" that lasts longer than 20 years (Milner and Loescher 2011; UNHCR 2006a, 106) and a refugee situation with "no solution in sight" (Crisp 2002). This view of protracted displacement frames the situation of refugees such as the Iraqis I met as a static one in which they are simply waiting for a better life. While this view resonated with many Iraqis—who often described their situation as one of paralysis—it nevertheless hides from view the many ways in which the striving for comfort is an active process that people engage in irrespective of their circumstances (see Fawaz et al. 2018). Recognizing this, I prefer to frame Iraqi experiences using Anna Tsing's (2015) understanding of precarity as the absent promise of stability—a situation that, though terrifying, nevertheless leaves open the possibility of thinking about and acting on the world. That is, I argue that it is more fruitful to approach Iraqi experiences not as *de facto* forms of displacement, but rather as what Krulfeld and Baxter (1997, 3) describe as a process of "experiencing and experimenting with a different existence."

This argument draws on the literature concerned with the phenomenological dimensions of home, as well as home-making practices and affects (Ingold 1995; Jackson 1995). It is indebted to Heidegger's (1971a) contention that our world-building activities are essential to and grounded in our capacity to dwell, or to be at home, in the world. Here, the desire and striving for home is understood as a "basic trait of human nature" (Tucker 1994, 186), an "ongoing, universal human endeavour" to assemble "a liveable structure" (Hage 1997, 102). Human beings are therefore seen as inherent "home-makers" defined by how they make themselves at home (Ginsberg 1999, 31). In this approach, attention is shifted from the static 'thingness' of home to the contingent

and continuous production of a sense of being at home, or the ways in which "home-building" is about "what is doable and viable given the conditions of the present," while remaining "oriented toward a better world" (Hage 1997, 102).

This idea of home as an "affective construct" (Hage 1997, 102) that people are permanently labouring to make for themselves offers a starting point for my own explorations of what Iraqis termed "comfort." I join it to Mary Douglas' (1991, 289) contention that because a home is "*for people* who are living in that time and space, it has aesthetic and moral dimensions." In understanding home-building as also an ethical practice (Löfving 2009, 163), I want to highlight how Iraqis, as they sought comfort, always imbued their seeking with questions about what was right and good, both for and from themselves and others. I argue that the work to feel at home is therefore a value-making process anchored in concrete material practices that necessarily involve others with whom we are co-present in a place and time. Its ethical dimensions do not start from *a priori* maxims or categorical imperatives. Rather, they are grounded in the contingency of the everyday, or Levinas' insistence that ethics begins in face-to-face encounters with others (Perpich 2008), and Sartre's understanding of ethics as "a matter of one person's relationships to another" (Sartre and Lévy 1996, 68).

"Equipment," Effort, and Everyday Life

> To be frank, in Basra where I was living, there was nothing [going on], the situation was better than any city in Iraq. You could say it was the best situation. Still the services, for example, the electricity, the water, the fuel, the gas—they were not easy to get it. Now when I came here [to Jordan], all of a sudden, there were

many things I did not need to think about. In Iraq, I must think when the electricity will come, where to get oil—there were many things I needed to think about. However, here, I am comfortable [*mirtāḥ*].

As this last word gently fell from his lips, Reda lifted his hands upward, took in a deep, calm breath, and smiled. When we had this conversation in mid-2012, Reda had already been living in Jordan for close to three years; he had successfully found employment and, unlike most Iraqis I met, he intended to stay in Jordan. To capture the feeling of "not needing to think about" things, Reda chose the same word as Mariam— *mirtāḥ*— derived from the root verb *rāḥa*, meaning to be relaxed, rested, comfortable. Repeatedly, Iraqis mentioned this feeling when describing the contrast between Iraq and Jordan when explaining what exactly it was that they were journeying to find and secure outside of Jordan. "After we came here [to Jordan], we all felt relaxed initially. We returned back to our life," explained Amina, a former interior designer who was living in Amman with her husband and daughter waiting for resettlement.

Like Reda, other Iraqis often described this feeling of comfort as an absence of effort. Bassam, a young Iraqi who was living alone in Amman, laughed as he remembered his arrival in Amman and the feeling of being outside of Iraq for the first time in his life:

Bassam: We had many problems in Iraq, many wars, many, many problems. Here, there is nothing! When I came here, I asked my aunt, "How do these people live?! There are no problems!" Really, that was the first question I asked my aunt. Because there is nothing [here in

Jordan] to keep you busy! Nothing, just eating and going to work. That is it!

Giulia: Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Bassam: It is a good thing, of course! However, it was strange for me, for us! Because when we came to this life, we came from an experience [in Iraq] of living with many problems. It is a strange atmosphere for us. Really!

I understand this idea of comfort as a "nothing"—a generative absence, an effortless attunement or engagement with places and people—in terms of Heidegger's notion of "equipment."[10] For Heidegger (1962, 97), we encounter things in the world not as things, but rather as equipment, or as "something in-order-to": for instance, something in-order-to-cook, write, transport, or measure. Therefore, our primary relationship to something is not based on a theoretical or detached understanding of it as a thing, but rather on our ability to use it skillfully in a given context. In this regard, Heidegger (1962, 98) noted: "The less we just stare at the hammer-thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is—as equipment." Heidegger

[10] Heidegger's ideas have a troubled history. The question of how to reconcile his philosophy with his support of National Socialism has haunted academics for decades, and has produced an important secondary literature that has become structured by what Ian Thomson (2005, 32) terms an "accuse or excuse" dichotomy. Increasingly, however, philosophers have acknowledged that Heidegger himself regularly invoked his philosophy to justify his politics, making a separation between the two impossible. For Thomson, the link between Heidegger's philosophy and his political endorsement of National Socialism is best understood as stemming from his ambition to radically reform the German university, rather than from an outright support for National Socialist ideology or any commitment to an exclusive sense of community. See Thomson (2005) for a detailed summary of the most prominent discussions and literature on the "Heidegger controversy." My use of Heidegger here and elsewhere in this thesis does not imply that his philosophy and political positions are ethically or intellectually unproblematic; rather, I take inspiration from several of his insights not as positions to be for or against, but as invitations to think these ideas anew and, hopefully, with greater care.

termed this retreat of equipment's thing-ness when it is in use its "readiness-to-hand." In focusing on the work of equipment, Heidegger (1962, 99) argued that that "with which our everyday dealings proximally dwell is not the tools themselves. On the contrary, that with which we concern ourselves primarily is the work—that which is to be produced at the time." When we use equipment, then, we have no conscious experience of it as an object—i.e., as a thing that exists independently of the context in which it is being used. Rather, we have an experience of the work being done.

Importantly, this does not mean that behaviour becomes automatic. People remain aware of their actions during their use of equipment, but their awareness is not grounded in a subject-object distinction. Their experience is one of a task being undertaken. Equipment can become conspicuous, however, or "un-ready-to-hand," if broken or malfunctioning in some way. Even in such cases, however, Heidegger argued that equipment does not become a "thing" in the sense of being phenomenologically detached from the context in which it is encountered. "When something cannot be used—when, for instance, a tool definitely refuses to work—it can be conspicuous only in and for dealings in which something is manipulated" (Heidegger 1962, 406). For instance, a person would not encounter a broken-down car as a metal object of specific mass, but rather as damaged equipment, which is interrupting daily life. This inability to use the car disturbs the "constitutive assignment of the 'in-order-to' to a 'towards-this'" (Heidegger 1962, 105), compelling people to become problem solvers focused on restoring the functioning use of equipment.

I take inspiration from Heidegger's ideas to suggest that places are experienced primarily as equipment rather than things; that is, they are experienced in terms of the extent to which they work for people as they navigate their everyday lives. The more

they work, the more their thing-ness fades, in the sense of being material locations of abstract contemplation or attachment, and the more comfortable people feel in them. Comfort therefore emerges as an overall affect that indexes the 'functionality' of place—its materiality, infrastructures, laws, people—for everyday life, understood as what Lawrence Grossberg (2010, 278) describes as "the uncatalogued, habitual, and often routinized nature of day-to-day living, what we don't think about while we're living it; it encompasses all those activities whose temporality goes unnoticed." When places work—that is, when they create and sustain a feeling of being at home—it is because they do not require excessive efforts to feel this way. However, like all equipment, places can break down and malfunction, thus becoming, to varying degrees, "un-ready-to-hand." This provokes people's problem-solving instincts, as they seek to restore their sense of comfort in the places in which they find themselves.

People move away from places not only when attempts at repair are unsuccessful; importantly, they also move when places require too much investment, or a constant engagement in repair. Both the inability to repair places as equipment, and the concomitant transformation of people into eternal problem-solvers, makes places "un-ready-to-hand," provoking people to move in search of places that will work for them. Understanding place as equipment allows for an appreciation of the ways in which people experience places along a continuum between maintenance and effortlessness, and also beyond and in relation to the parameters of the origin/exile/resettlement triad. Importantly, this approach also highlights ways in which this sense of comfort, of feeling at home, remains materially grounded, notwithstanding its affective nature (Ní Laoire et al. 2010). For Iraqis, places-as-equipment broke down in different ways, provoking myriad responses, "experiments in living" (Cooper 2014, 11), as they attempted to

(re)gain comfort. Though home-building is a universal and ongoing endeavour, Iraqi experiences alert us to the fact that, however necessary, the labour required of and invested in this process cannot be unlimited. In fact, patterns of mobility and emplacement shifted as Iraqis sought the comfort of not having to constantly work to feel at home. What made them feel displaced in the various places they traversed and inhabited, then, was not only changes or situations—forced or otherwise—that they had to contend with, but also the effort that such circumstances demanded of them.

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This manuscript can be thought of as a localized study of home-building under pressures of precarity. In a regional context, not only of multiple wars but also of profound economic dislocations, incomplete and contested citizenship, as well as inter-territorial solidarities, it is imperative to try to theorise exactly how forms of attachment *and* detachment concurrently materialize, endure, and fade. As Landau and Haupt (2007, 4) argue in discussing tactics of belonging among foreign-born populations in Johannesburg, "Given the speed with which new social formations are being fashioned and remade by geographic and social mobility and displacement, it is unclear what forms of inclusion, solidarity or mutual recognition are possible and what forms of inclusion and belonging may already exist." Faced with a haunting past, a difficult present, and an opaque future, the Iraqis I encountered in Jordan became Heidegger's problem-solvers. They tinkered and tried to find ways of living that made them feel comfortable, what Gaston Bachelard (1958, xxviii) evocatively described as the way that "we are continually living a solution to problems that reflection cannot hope to resolve." In exploring Iraqi understandings and experiences of home as part of a more general process of home-building, I am not suggesting that refugees do not face urgent and

particular challenges that need to be addressed nor that their lifeworlds are exactly coterminous with those of everyone else, thus emptying the term 'refugee' of all specificity. Rather, I argue that refugee lifeworlds are particularly fertile sites from which to understand the contradictory and creative ways in which people live with precarity, and to offer social, political, and historical critiques of the precarity with which a wide range of people are confronted.

Understanding the Field

When I first arrived in Amman in June 2010 to begin my preliminary fieldwork, I was at a loss as to how to go about finding an Iraqi 'community' in the city. In part, this had to do with the fact that, even at the height of the Iraqi influx in 2006—08, there were far fewer Iraqis in Jordan than the government's claim of 500,000 refugees (Seeley 2010). The only official survey concluded that there were approximately 161,000 Iraqi refugees in Jordan during this period (2007).[11] In Jordan, as elsewhere in the Middle East, Iraqis were not encamped; that is, they were allowed to self-settle. Iraqis in Jordan settled throughout the country, but most chose to live in Amman.[12]

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[11] This survey was commissioned by the Jordanian government and implemented by FAFO, a Norwegian research institute. Despite the official nature of the survey, the number of Iraqis in Jordan remained an issue of contention. While the FAFO survey calculated that there were approximately 161,000 Iraqis, the final report stated that the government's 500,000 estimate was nevertheless correct. It did so by suggesting that the gap between the survey and the government estimates was due to Iraqis having been reluctant to participate in an "official" survey. For more on the politics surrounding the number of Iraqis in Jordan see: Seeley, Nicholas. 2010. "The Politics of Aid to Displaced Iraqis in Jordan." *Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)* 40(3): 37-42.

[12] There was one exception to this regional non-camp approach. Palestinians (and a small number of other third-country nationals, often Iranian Kurds) were held, in some cases for years, in ad hoc camps in the no man's lands between Jordan and Iraq and between Syria and Iraq; many were eventually resettled outside the Middle East (HRW 2006; Jansen 2003; van Genderen Stort 2005). This refusal of entry to a small number of Palestinians, while at the same time allowing in tens of thousands of Iraqis, seems at first to be a puzzling and dissonant policy choice. However, in Jordan, this exclusion of Palestinians was linked to Israeli proposals for turning Jordan into an "alternative" Palestinian homeland (*al-watan al-badīl*). In Syria, a country that has historically provided Palestinians with access to many services, this exclusion

Iraqis were in fact among the growing number of refugees worldwide self-settling in cities with minimal formal support.[13] Though scholars have been studying refugees who self-settle in urban contexts for a long time (Crisp 2017; Kok 1989), the past two decades have seen the urban dimensions of refugee life increasingly draw more concerted research and policy attention (Bakewell 2008; Bascom 1995; Cooper 1992; Crisp 2004; 2017; Davis and Taylor 2012; Jacobsen 2006; Jansen 2016; Landau 2004; Palmgren 2016; Polzer 2008; Sanyal 2016; Sommers 2001; Stevens 2016; UNHCR 2010).

That urban refugees have until recently drawn relatively little attention has been due first to the fact that they are simply difficult to locate in the overcrowded, busy, and already mixed neighbourhoods of major cities. Second, this spatial invisibility has been compounded by the desire of many urban refugees to remain undetected (Arar 2016), either because of their precarious and semi-legal status or, as in the case of many Iraqis, because they did not view themselves as refugees in need of aid. Lana, a close Iraqi friend, was living in Amman with her husband and three children when I met her in 2012; neither she nor her husband were working, and she was therefore extremely attentive to her family's finances. Nevertheless, when I asked her why she had not taken her youngest child—sick with the flu—to the local public health care clinic that Iraqis could access for free, she scoffed at my question. "To the local clinic? That is not for us; do you think I will go and stand there in line like the Jordanians and wait? No! I took

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was more puzzling, but was likely linked to security concerns (Sassoon 2008). Similarly, in Lebanon the exclusion of Palestinians fleeing conflict in other regional countries is generally linked to the fear that any increase in the Palestinian population would upset the demographic balance of the country. As with Palestinians fleeing Iraq, those fleeing the war in Syria have faced similar hurdles to access protection in regional states (HRW 2014b; Su 2014).

[13] Approximately 60% and 80% of all refugees and IDPs, respectively, now live in urban areas (UNHCR 2010).

him to a private doctor who lives in the area." This refusal to accept certain types of support frustrated many aid workers, who generally agreed that Iraqis were extremely reluctant to seek humanitarian assistance, unless they had no other options. At the end of my fieldwork in March 2013, I visited one of the myriad international NGOs working with refugees in Jordan to say good-bye to some international aid workers I had come to know well. As with many NGOs, this particular organization had recently shifted much of its work from Iraqis to Syrians, who had then become the major focus of humanitarian concern. In explaining the very different experiences she had with Iraqi and Syrian refugees, Jennifer, a staff member from the United Kingdom, alluded to this Iraqi reluctance to engage the humanitarian services available to them by observing, "The Iraqis were very proud when they first came, and in the end, that hindered them, because they missed a lot of opportunities and support."

Taken together, these challenges meant that 'finding' a 'community' to study, in the traditional ethnographic sense, was a constant challenge—one that forced me to rethink my ethnographic practice. Iraqis did not just live freely in Amman; they lived throughout its variegated neighbourhoods, from the upscale mansions with pristine lawns in the exclusive West Amman areas of Abdoun and Rabieh to the middle class neighbourhoods of Jabal Amman and Jabal Hussein to the working class and industrial zones of the city's east: Ashrafiyeh, Marka Shemaliyeh, and Hashmi al-Shemali. This physical dispersal throughout the city did not neatly overlay with class, as Iraqis who might have been able to live in areas that were more middle class often opted for more humble accommodations in an effort to prolong their savings. Importantly, this diffusion of the Iraqi population throughout the city meant that no specifically Iraqi neighbourhood or area emerged. Iraqis were embedded, quite literally, within Ammani

neighbourhoods that were already mixed, housing Egyptians, Somalis, Sudanese, Palestinians, Syrians, and the many global North 'expatriates' working in the humanitarian, diplomatic, and security sectors. Moreover, while many local NGOs were running programs that reached out to Iraqis, the Jordanian policy of targeting aid at whole neighbourhoods rather than at refugees specifically meant that NGOs rarely acted as durable gathering points for Iraqis.

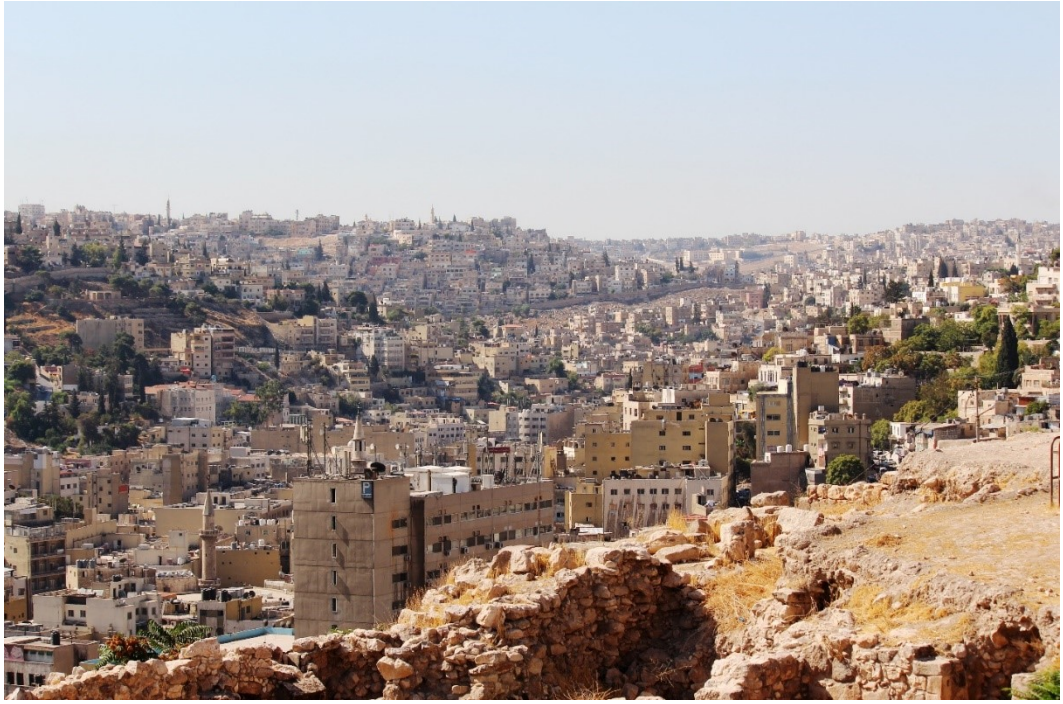

Figure 1 – View of Amman from Jabal Al-Qal'a. Photo by author, 2012.

Moreover, Amman, a city of two and three-storey beige buildings packed tightly together, initially seemed to me to be a non-descript series of neighbourhoods distinguished only by the quality of the stone from which the buildings were constructed. The city's winding roads and plunging sinewy staircases twist and turn in dizzying patterns in order to accommodate its hilly geography; I despaired at ever being able to navigate them competently and comfortably. It had few places that could be defined as 'public' in the sense of having a capacity to 'gather' people rather than merely

‘circulate’ them, with one Jordanian friend describing Amman as a city where “public places circulate in private ones.” This made Amman a city of personal connections par excellence. Access to public places, events, gatherings, and contacts depended almost exclusively on knowing people.

Not being able to identify a distinctly ‘Iraqi’ area, I decided to initially rent a room in Jabal Amman, one of the city’s oldest and liveliest neighbourhoods. I planned on keeping this as my base while renting a room in an Iraqi family’s home in Marka Shemaliyeh—where many Iraqis I knew resided and where I could spend most of my week—returning to Jabal Amman on the weekends to type up notes, read, and have some time to myself. In an effort to build the necessary social contacts to find an ‘in’ to the Iraqi community, I began contacting as many NGOs and UN agencies I could think of during my preliminary fieldwork in June—August 2010. It was during this time that I met a number of Iraqi families, many of whom were still in Amman in 2012, when I returned for my long-term fieldwork. These families served as important access points into the broader Iraqi community.

When I arrived in Amman in January 2012, I also contacted a number of researchers I had met during my preliminary fieldwork, one of whom put me in touch with Bassam. In a serendipitous turn of events (for me, at least), Bassam and I had met briefly in 2010, and he remembered me from that fleeting encounter. When I first reconnected with him in 2012, Bassam had just had surgery; he was perceptibly glum about still being in Jordan two years after he had arrived from Iraq and registered with UNHCR for resettlement to the United States. From the moment I began explaining my research, I could feel, despite his graciousness, that he tolerated my interest without being particularly supportive of it. He was visibly sceptical about the usefulness of my

work and asked probing questions about what exactly I wanted to know from people. Finally, he agreed to introduce me to other Iraqis only when I assured him that I had no intention of either interviewing them immediately or visiting them only once. The fact that I wanted to spend a considerable amount of time with families seemed to reduce the risk associated with his vouching for me. At the time, I remember feeling unnerved and dejected by Bassam's caution and astute questioning. It was precisely these qualities, however, that made him one of my most valued friends and guides throughout my fieldwork.

While I had initially wanted to live part-time with an Iraqi family, this ultimately proved impossible. Many families I met lived in crowded apartments that could not accommodate an additional person, even in cases where they could have used the additional income.[14] The families who did have ample room tended to be better off and guarded their private space, worried, in large part, about 'what the neighbours might say' about welcoming an unmarried young woman into their home. I decided, as an alternative, to live in Marka Shemaliyeh. This was an attempt, on my part, to 'anchor' myself in a place that would hopefully 'hold' the community with whom I wanted to work. However, when I tried to secure lodgings in Marka Shemaliyeh, friends—both Iraqi and Jordanian—were extremely vocal in their opposition. "No woman lives here alone," Bassam told me, foreshadowing what landlords and others would confirm.

[14] This problem was not simply one of physical space, but, more importantly, one of water. Jordan is among the ten most water-poor countries in the world, and therefore strictly rations water. Homes in Amman receive one day of running water per week (even in wealthier areas). On this day, people do all water-intensive activities, such as the laundry, mopping, etc., and fill up their water tanks for the rest of the week. The number and size of water tanks is limited by the available space on a building's roof, and very often people share tanks with neighbours. Overcrowding therefore means that there is very little water per person in any given building, making the arrival of even one additional person a serious challenge.

Both because of these difficulties and because of how far apart the Iraqis I met were from each other, I moved away from a location-centric ethnographic method. Rather than limiting myself arbitrarily to one area of the city, I opted to commute on a daily basis, following different friends through the city, sometimes spending days at a time in one neighbourhood, other times visiting several neighbourhoods in a day. I travelled regularly to Marka Shemaliyeh, Hashmi al-Shemali, Jabal al-Nuzha, and Ashrafiyeh, in the city's east, as well as Jabal Luweibdeh, Jabal Hussein, Swefieh, Abdoun, Shmaisani, and the area surrounding the University of Jordan in the city's west.[15] As a woman, I enjoyed relatively easy access to domestic space, particularly in homes where women were heads of households. This proved particularly important in an urban context where Iraqis had few public spaces in which they gathered and met. In exploring the lives of Iraqis in Amman, I also met their Jordanian neighbours and friends, and, as they started arriving in early 2012, Syrians who settled in the same areas.

In addition to the Iraqi families I had met in 2010, Bassam introduced me to several other families who would come to let me into their social worlds and lead me to other people and organizations. It was because of Bassam that I came to know Mariam, an exuberant, affectionate, and immensely charismatic woman in her late thirties, with a forthright and expansive demeanour. From the moment I set foot in her home, she took it upon herself to teach me Iraqi Arabic, answer all my questions, and introduce me to as many people as possible. Her house became a focal point of my fieldwork. Over time, I

[15] The east-west divide captures what is described as a divide between the wealthy and the poor. For detailed information on the east/west divide in Amman, see Myriam Ababsa, ed. 2003. *Atlas of Jordan: History, Territories and Society*. Amman: Presses de l'Institut français du Proche-Orient.

was absorbed into everyday networks of generosity, gossip, and obligation that drew me into a world much larger than my research. I was called upon to help with resettlement files, read English paperwork, and take care of children. I was invited to share in meals, family outings, moments of sadness, and the necessary excursions to UN offices. Crucially, I was asked to take sides, by alternately hiding or divulging information, being indignant at the difficulty of resettlement procedures, and confirming the dubious morality of Iraqis, Syrians, or Jordanians depending on my interlocutor's own views.

Abu Yasser's home, just below Bassam's apartment, became another important place for me, as I came to be close with his wife, Imm Yasser, and their granddaughter, Leila. I also spent significant time with a group of single young men who lived in an apartment adjacent to the family of Abu Hadi, with whom I also became close. This proximity allowed me to visit the young men with the excuse of going to visit a family. My time with them gave me a window into the lives of youths outside of their family dynamics, allowing me to eavesdrop on conversations to which I would not otherwise have been privy. Two other important family networks were those of Lana and Amina, Iraqi women I met while volunteering as an English-language instructor at an NGO schooling program for refugees. My work at the school not only introduced me to many Iraqis (as well as Jordanians who also attended), but also gave me a crucial vantage point from which to understand the role of NGOs and the UN in my friends' lives.

While my research methodology was grounded in participant observation, it also included detailed field diaries, activity logs, informal conversations from daily interactions, and formal semi-structured interviews with key informants (30 Iraqis; 15 Jordanians) conducted twice over the course of my fieldwork. I chose to interview key informants a second time to follow-up on questions that we had discussed during the

first interview, as well as to discuss new issues that I encountered in the interim. These approaches were supplemented by 20 formal interviews with UN and NGO staff, as well as discussions with local and foreign scholars.[16] While I conducted interviews with UN and NGO staff throughout my 18 months of fieldwork as the opportunities to do so arose, I chose to hold off on formal interviews with Iraqis and Jordanian interlocutors until I knew them relatively well. Given this decision, during my first months of fieldwork I relied mainly on note taking, alternating between the notebook I always carried around with me—prompting much amusement and the oft-repeated order, "Write, write!"—and my Smartphone, which proved invaluable for moments when scribbling notes might have seemed inappropriate. When I was unable to take notes of any kind, I reconstructed conversations when writing up my field notes to the best of my ability. The dialogue throughout this thesis is therefore sometimes drawn from verbatim transcriptions of recorded interviews and other times from reconstructed dialogues. In all cases, I have tried to foreground people's voices, placing them in a dialectic of sorts with both my own and with those of the various theorists I engage. Finally, to protect the privacy of friends, NGO workers, UN staff, colleagues, and acquaintances, I have used pseudonyms throughout the thesis. I have also altered or anonymized certain identifying information, such as specific organizations people worked with or particular activities they were involved in while in Jordan.

[16] Most interviews and materials were collected in Arabic; however, a number of NGO staff and some Iraqis chose to speak English either throughout or for portions of our interviews.

Iraqis in Jordan

The Iraqis that populate this thesis mainly arrived in Jordan after 2010, though a few had been in Jordan since the mid-1990s. While all of them had come to Jordan directly from Iraq, a few families had previously sought refuge in Syria. As the unrest in Syria grew from 2011 onwards, these families decided to move to Jordan. To do so, however, they were required to first return to Iraq, since Jordan did not allow Iraqis to cross the Jordan-Syria border directly. The overwhelming majority of Iraqis I came to know were engaged in resettlement efforts; that is, they had left Iraq for Jordan with the intention of applying for resettlement outside of the Middle East via the UN, or they had decided to do so at some point after their arrival in Jordan. While there is indeed a population of Iraqis who are long-term and even permanent legal residents of Jordan, these individuals are not the focus of this thesis. I found that there was only sporadic contact between Iraqis who had legally established themselves in Jordan and did not intend to travel further and the Iraqis I came to know. In fact, through my network of contacts, I only ever met two Iraqis who were living permanently in Jordan.

Though I often heard from colleagues and friends that the majority of Iraqis in Jordan were Sunnis, a contention reiterated in the only official survey of Iraqis in Jordan (FAFO 2007), I found this not to be the case: the Iraqis I met were from all religious backgrounds, with a large number of families of mixed religious and ethnic origins.[17] Therefore, no single religious or ethnic group was the focus of my work. Importantly, since most Iraqis I met had arrived in Jordan after 2010, their final years

[17] Géraldine Chatelard (personal communication, may 10, 2010) suggested that this discrepancy was largely the consequence of a widely-held suspicion among Iraqis that Jordanian authorities would not look kindly upon Shiʿi Iraqis being in Jordan—a suspicion that compelled many Iraqis to lie to governmental and UN officials when asked about their religious affiliation.

in Iraq were marked by greater stability than Iraqis who might have fled in 2006—08 at the height of sectarian violence in Iraq. This timeline is crucial in understanding the specificity of my interlocutors' experiences in Iraq and Jordan. Moreover, it helps explain some of the discrepancy between my findings and those of other researchers who worked in Jordan in the 2006—08 period, when issues of violence in Iraq and fears of deportation from Jordan were foremost in people's minds (Ali 2012; Fagen 2009; Mason 2011). It is also important to bear in mind that the Iraqis in this manuscript left Iraq and lived in Jordan before the current 'refugee crisis' that began in 2014; that is, the experiences discussed occurred prior to the mass migration from the Middle East across the Mediterranean, catalysed by the war in Syria and the expansion of ISIS in Iraq. Importantly, the Iraqis I met never once spoke of trying to seek ways of reaching Europe that were outside of the formal resettlement system.

Though some of the Iraqis I knew traced their origins to other parts of Iraq, most came from Baghdad. They were all—men and women—well educated, with everyone having at least finished high school. A number of them held doctorates. While their economic situation varied, many initially had savings with them (generally from employment in Iraq in the post-2003 period or from the selling of property and land) or received remittances from Iraq, and about half were working in some capacity in Jordan. These characteristics align with the findings of the only official survey of the Iraqi population in Jordan (FAFO 2007), which showed that they were well educated, that most had saving or access to remittances (42% received remittances), and that 30% of the overall population (and 50% of men) were employed.

The case of Iraqis was therefore complex in that they did not fit squarely into the categories created by refugee scholars and humanitarian agencies, and because they

could be studied both as belonging—depending on the point in time—to the powerless and the powerful. That is, they were at once refugees and members of an educated, professional, urban middle class. In tracing the emergence of a middle-class and modern identity in Aleppo, Syria in the early 20th century, Keith Watenpaugh (2006, 8) argues that this class "was defined not just by the wealth, professions, possessions, or levels of education of its members, but also by the way they asserted their modernity." In further clarifying what this 'modernity' looked like, Watenpaugh argues that some of its elements were contingent and depended on the fashions and ideas that happened to be popular in different cities. However, modernity for the Aleppine, and more generally Arab middle classes, that Watenpaugh (2006, 302) discusses always "centered on advanced education, transgenerational class reproduction, patterns of consumption, kinds of professions and a general commitment to being modern"—a commitment which included an acceptance of modernity's universality and a rejection of past traditions. Important to the middle classes Watenpaugh discusses were issues of secularism, equality, and liberalism, as well as an enthusiasm for civil society institutions. Finally, Watenpaugh (2006, 303) details how middle-class modernity was a form of cultural practice that facilitated the transnational movement of middle class individuals.

Like the Syrian elites that Watenpaugh discusses, my Iraqi friends defined themselves as middle class, professional, urban, and modern. Taken together, these components coalesced into a strong sense of socio-economic distinction among Iraqis, even those who were facing economic hardship in Jordan and who, in practice, could have been considered poor. This sense of class identity had a profound impact on their post-2003 experiences in Iraq, their time in Jordan, and their imaginings of life

elsewhere—often the United States. Disentangling Iraqi experiences therefore required both a sensitivity to the ways in which they were marginalised and an awareness of their, at times, dominant class positioning.[18] While class is not an explicit focus of this thesis, it does nevertheless regularly make appearances throughout the chapters. Some of these moments are explicit, as they relate directly to the themes I am developing concerning home-building, while others remain implicit. In all cases, as Iraqis conceptualised, experienced, and laboured for a place to be comfortable in the world, they did so not only (and perhaps not even primarily) as refugees, but also as middle-class, urban professionals with a specific understanding of history and of themselves as individuals and as a collective.

Research Ethics and the Challenge of Sectarianism

About one month into my fieldwork, I found myself sitting in a mental health seminar at the Jabal al-Nuzha branch of a small local NGO working on issues of poverty and urban development. A social worker from a partner organization was standing at the front of the room with only a long conference table between him and a room filled with women, a scattering of children wiggling their way out of maternal embraces, and two visibly uncomfortable men. Some of the women whispered amongst themselves, though mostly we just sat silently waiting for the social worker to begin speaking. It was a lecture about de-stigmatizing mental health issues and the importance of reaching out to available services. It all sounded very proper. As the social worker was explaining the services his organisation provided, a woman suddenly interrupted him. She shifted in her seat and

[18] This relates to Laura Nader's (1972) call to "study up," or to focus on the particularities of individuals and groups who are in dominant or powerful positions (e.g. colonizers, government institutions, private corporations, members of upper classes, etc.).

pulled her coat more tightly around her before politely but firmly explaining that while everything he was saying about individual psychological problems was true, these problems were not the "real problem." The social worker was visibly jarred. Before he could articulate a response, the woman proceeded to explain that the real problem for Iraqis in Jordan was social violence. "For instance," she resumed, her voice gathering strength, "the first question an Iraqi is asked in Jordan is 'Are you Sunni or Shiʿa?'!" Murmurs rose from around the room, a low drumming like bees that further unsettled. The woman continued, as if buoyed by the support, by saying that it was a shock to be asked this, and that sectarian division was being imposed on Iraqis in exile by host governments, international organisations, and ordinary people. "When they ask me this," she said finally, her voice trembling resolutely, "I answer, 'I am Iraqi. I am a Muslim.'" Others became more vocal, picking up her outrage. "Yes, it is true. The focus should be on the community!" said a woman seated between two friends. "We should be looking at what the Americans have done to Iraqi society!" exclaimed another.

Too often throughout my fieldwork I saw researchers, journalists, volunteers, and NGO workers give themselves the authority to ask this very question—are you Sunni or are you Shiʿa?—and its variants (What religion are you? Are you Christian or are you Muslim?). I explore the effects of this call for religious identification throughout the thesis, but here I wish to point to the uneasy intersection of methods with ethics. Many of the individuals I witnessed asking these questions argued for the usefulness and even necessity of such information for proper data analysis, even when their analyses sought to go beyond these categorisations. They argued, furthermore, that Iraqis could always decline to answer, and cautioned against adopting too sensitive an approach that cast Iraqis as helpless victims rather than agents. Despite these arguments, I consistently

found that Iraqis felt such questions to be profoundly impolite at best and deeply offensive at worst.

An ethical imperative for silence on the issue of religious affiliation therefore emerged as a necessary method in my fieldwork. This silence was not an act of avoidance so much as a choice not to make religious affiliation an explicit object of discussion. From within this silence, I found that I was able not only to approach people on their own terms, but also to see where, when, and how their religious identities and solidarities mattered, and how they understood these identities to be tied to their experiences in Iraq and Jordan. I have carried this ethical imperative forward into my writing and chosen not to foreground in any explicit manner people's religious affiliations (nor their ethnic backgrounds, e.g., Kurd, Arab, Turkman, Assyrian, etc.). In choosing to do so, I am not eschewing the issue of sectarianism, which was certainly relevant. Instead, I follow Katz's (1988: 166) suggestion that we first consider the "interactional and phenomenal realities that provide the 'foreground' for various kinds of actions and talk, and only then take up the relevance and impact of 'background' factors such as ethnicity, class and gender." I therefore situate sectarianism's importance and effects within the experiences of my friends, rather than assuming the analytical salience and meaning of sectarian or other categories *a priori* (see Fujii 2009).

Organization of the Manuscript

In the chapters that follow, I bring into focus what I term an 'ecology of comfort' that served at times to link, at times to distance, but always to entangle Iraqis with each other and with others across various places and times as they strove to feel at home. The

thesis begins in Iraq—at 'home'—in order to situate Iraqis' understandings and experiences of attachment and detachment in Jordan and beyond.

In the first chapter, "Greying Hearts," I argue that displacement in the Iraqi case was neither a forced migration in response to an emergency nor a singular event in Iraqi lives. Crucially, while the violence that engulfed Iraq in the decade following the 2003 US-led invasion was certainly important in influencing the decisions Iraqis made, they defined their lifeways by more than just violence. Indeed, displacement for Iraqis is best conceptualised as the slow but steady unsettling of comfort in Baghdad—what one Iraqi friend termed a "greying of hearts," that occurred *in* Iraq, often took years, and was actively resisted. It was when their sense of comfort was lost at 'home' that Iraqis began orienting their life projects away from Iraq, culminating in the decision to leave the country.

Arriving in Jordan, Iraqis were met by a powerful and pervasive discourse concerning hospitality. Both at the state and street levels, hospitality was the framework within which their presence came to be understood, managed, and experienced. Iraqis were therefore called "guests" not "refugees." As guests, but particularly as Arabs, Iraqis were already—albeit conditionally—included in the social world of Jordan. The second chapter, "Guests of No One," explores this provisional inclusion, how it paradoxically came to be experienced by Iraqis as profoundly exclusionary, and how they sought to think themselves beyond the logic of hospitality and the status of the guest.

The third chapter, "Being Productive," explores the concrete consequences for Iraqis of being "guests" in Jordan—their efforts at imagining themselves beyond it notwithstanding. Being guests produced a sense of entrapment and, with it, boredom, which coloured almost every discussion I had with my friends. Taking this boredom

seriously, this chapter explores how Iraqis worked to overcome the sense of paralysis the felt. An opportunity to fulfil this desire was provided by government and UN/NGO humanitarian programs, which came to rely heavily on Iraqi volunteers for work with Iraqi and, subsequently, Syrian refugees. I argue that this opportunity effectively turned Iraqis into guest-hosts; that is, they were the ones who performed the day-to-day tasks of hospitality. In taking responsibility for others, Iraqis sought to make time meaningful again by living it productively.

The fourth chapter, "Forging Togetherness," explores how Iraqis created solidarity while in Amman. Iraqis in Jordan carried with them profound wounds, suspicions, and animosities from their lives in Iraq. Despite popular and academic claims that Iraqis were fundamentally divided along ethno-sectarian lines, however, I found that most remained passionately, if ambivalently, attached to 'Iraq' and to themselves as 'Iraqis.' Crucial to Iraqis' sense of comfort in Jordan, then, were the ways in which they worked to renew solidarity, and with it a sense of community. In exploring this process, I do not assume the presence of "communal effects" (Tsing 2015) among Iraqis but rather consider the affective, infrastructural, and conceptual work underpinning an emergent 'we' among them. Though this 'we' took formal nationality as its starting point, it was grounded in an understanding of appropriate everyday dispositions and specific practices of care toward one another.

Given the challenges to feeling at home in Jordan, all but a handful of Iraqis I met were engaged in the UN resettlement process. The fifth and final chapter, "Life in the 'Impasse'," offers an exploration of the experience of life lived in the shadow cast by the discrepancy between the promise and reality of resettlement. This impasse provoked considerable animosity, suspicion, and recrimination among Iraqis, overshadowing the

togetherness they had forged while in Jordan. Though initially Iraqis felt that all Iraqis deserved resettlement, over time the grammar of judgement that characterised the resettlement system began to colour how they saw each other. This led to a conceptual division among my friends between “the rich Iraqis” and “the refugees” that acted as a powerful corrosive on social relations.

1— GREYING HEARTS

"Do you ever want to go back to Iraq?" I asked.

The silence between us was brought into relief as the noise from the café seeped into it: the metal clanging of spoons on ceramic plates; the cash register opening; the ruffling of money as bills were paid and change counted out; the din of nearly half a dozen conversations that were going on simultaneously, regularly interrupted by beeps and rings and vibrations from twice as many phones; the sudden laughter of the couple sitting to our left; the unrelenting honking of cars trapped in the traffic of Jabal Amman's labyrinthine streets; a loud "Hello!" from a young man briskly walking outside to an invisible someone across the street.

Tareq's reply, when it came, was definitive. "No, I don't want that."

"Never?"

"Never."

"And if it gets better?"

"For a visit maybe, but not to stay there."

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In the lead up to the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had a plan for handling what was initially predicted to be 600,000 refugees in the event of war in Iraq (UNHCR 2003a). This plan was part of a broader joint preparedness program that anticipated a mass exodus of civilians from Iraq; the program included nine UN agencies, in addition to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). UNHCR spent $25.8 million on non-

food relief items and other measures in the Middle East, and by 17 March 2003, had emergency stocks ready for 300,000 people in various countries neighbouring Iraq. Additional staff was deployed across the region, and seven standby emergency response teams were mobilized in the lead up to the war. In Jordan, UNHCR coordinated with the Hashemite Charitable Association to establish a campsite approximately 60 km from the Iraqi border that could accommodate 20,000 people. This massive preparation assumed that, with the coming of a major international war against Iraq, large numbers of Iraqis would almost immediately be displaced throughout the region. This did not happen (Chatty 2003).

Iraqis moved much later, in steady, controlled, and often planned movements rather than in large, sudden flows (UNHCR 2006c). Many left during lulls in violence, sometimes years after militias had personally targeted them and their families, and often after the peak years of sectarian violence in 2006—08. While the post-2003 migrations of people within and out of Iraq are partly attributable to the violence and disorder in the country (Chatelard 2012), these factors alone cannot account for patterns of mobility. UNHCR's assumption that war would produce immediate flight ignored the history of Iraq; in particular, it failed to account for ways in which the US invasion and its aftermath would be imagined and experienced as part of a long history of consistent precarity and mobility. Indeed, while mobility has been neither anomalous nor episodic in the Middle East (Chatty 2014; Gorman and Kasbarian 2015; Shami 1996b), nowhere has this been truer than in Iraq. This has in large part been the result of decades of political persecution, population engineering, and repression by successive regimes, as well as the devastating economic consequences of UN-imposed sanctions following the 1991 Gulf War. Importantly, many displacements were collective in nature,

affecting groups that the state perceived as threatening at a specific moment in time (Chatelard 2012, 366). For example, Chaldeo-Assyrian Christians left following massacres in 1932, over 100,000 Iraqi Jews left in the early 1950s, and thousands of loyalists departed following the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958. Further, under the regime of Saddam Hussein, Iraq was subjected to brutal population engineering and displacement. This included the ethnic cleansing of so-called 'Persians,' which resulted in up to half a million Iraqis being forced to relocate to Iran. The *Anfal* campaign, comprised of eight military offensives in Kurdistan in 1988—89, resulted in the death and disappearance of around 200,000 people, the destruction of 2,000 villages, as well as the forced removal of the elderly and women to transit camps and prisons, from where they were afterwards forcibly resettled in new collective towns (*mujammaʿat*) (Mlodoch 2012, 210).[19] It culminated with the destruction of two important cities, Halabja in 1988, and Qaladiza in 1989. Saddam Hussein also undertook "Arabization" campaigns in cities such as Kirkuk, which had significant Kurdish and Turkmen populations, directly affecting as many as one million people (Brié 2006). These targeted social engineering projects were undertaken alongside an unrelenting campaign of political persecution, resulting in the departure of up to 70,000 political opponents and their families, both Arabs and Kurds, who settled in Syria. Finally, the international sanctions imposed on Iraq following the 1991 Gulf War are estimated to have caused the flight of close to half a million Iraqis (Al-Tikriti 2010; Chatelard 2011; Dorai 2009b; Fawcett and Tanner 2002; Rajaee 2000). These movements under duress all occurred alongside a variety of other mobilities—including labour migration,

[19] *Al-Anfal* is the name of the eighth chapter of the Qurʾan, which recounts the victory of an outnumbered group of followers of the new Islamic faith over a pagan army at the battle of Badr (624 AD).

religious pilgrimages, medical tourism, and business-related travel—from which they are difficult to disentangle. Prior to the 2003 invasion, UNHCR estimated that Iraqis in "refugee-like situations" in the Middle East totalled over half a million, most of whom were undocumented and settled in major cities, such as Beirut, Amman, and Cairo (Chatelard 2010a; Chatty and Mansour 2011; UNHCR 2003b).

A long and complex history of migration flows informed the trajectories, experiences, and consequences of the post-2003 displacement. It is estimated that 4.7 million Iraqis were displaced between 2003 and the time of my fieldwork in 2012, nearly 15% of the total population, of whom approximately two million crossed international borders (Al-Tikriti 2010; Chatelard 2011; Chatty and Mansour 2011; Harper 2008; Leenders 2008; Mason 2011). In addition to widespread communal violence, during this same period Iraq also experienced dramatic policies of economic liberalisation and the dismantlement of the public sector and army, which produced high levels of unemployment in an already shattered economy (Marfleet 2007). At this time, Iraq experienced attempts at territorial consolidation by radical armed groups seeking to ethnically and religiously homogenize various areas. As such, much of the violence and insecurity was concentrated in cities, especially in Baghdad, where most mixed areas were located (Al-Khalidi, Hoffmann, and Tanner 2007; Chatty and Mansour 2011). This resulted in displaced populations being composed predominantly of the educated, urban middle class, most of whom chose to settle in regional capitals such as Damascus and Amman (Al-Khalidi, Hoffmann, and Tanner 2007; Chatelard 2010b; Chatty and Mansour 2011; Harper 2008; Sassoon 2008). The 2003—12 displacements have generally been temporalized as three waves: the first comprised former Baʿathist elites; the second included technocrats and professionals targeted as a

class through the De-Baʿathification process that saw the dismissal of the entire state service, as well as micro-minorities; and the third—following the bombing of the al-ʿAskari mosque and the execution of Saddam Hussein in 2006—involved all sectors of the population (Al-Tikriti 2010).

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Due to this history of precarity, many Iraqis I came to know conceived of violence as a constant backdrop to their lives in Iraq, one of many accumulating factors that contributed to life's un-liveability in the country. But rarely did they cite violence as the primary or only reason for departure (Lubkemann 2000; 2008a). As my friend, Tamer, explained, "If we left every time there was something happening, we would be leaving [Iraq] constantly!" In trying to account for why the predictions of international organizations in 2003 were wrong and why Iraqis moved as they did, Dawn Chatty (2017, 183) argues that the trauma of the Palestinian experience of expulsion, protracted displacement, and denied return has been "deeply engrained in the Middle Eastern social psyche," to the extent that it "contributed significantly to Iraqi migration decision-making." In this reading, Iraqis endured the growing insecurities of post-2003 Iraq because they feared that if they left the country, they might never be able to return. This centrality of the Palestinian experience, however, was absent from all of the stories of departure Iraqis recounted to me: no one ever brought up the Palestinian experience as relevant to their own and no one spoke of being afraid they would not be able or allowed to return to Iraq had they wanted to do so.

In this first chapter, I revisit the time immediately prior to my Iraqi friends' arrivals in Jordan in order to understand the constellation of factors that guided their decisions to leave Iraq. In so doing, I follow Ali Ali (2012) who, in his ethnography of

Iraqi refugees in Syria, argues that we need to broaden our understanding of "what it means to be forced into a migration decision." I therefore suggest that Iraqis arrived at the decision to leave Iraq slowly, incrementally, driven by what they perceived and experienced as profoundly troubling—and unexpected—transformations that they could not effectively accommodate. As they strove to stay in Iraq and then slowly started thinking of leaving, what was paramount was neither the issue of physical safety nor the fear they might not be able to return. Instead, my Iraqi friends spoke insistently of a diminished and diminishing sense of comfort in Iraq, leading to a final moment when many effectively determined that the country's present and future were "dead." This loss of comfort often developed over years and was actively resisted; as such, displacement in the Iraqi case can neither be understood as a movement away from their country of origin in response to a sudden emergency nor as a singular event in Iraqi lives.

Rather displacement was a process, a sedimentation of various experiences that produced what Amanda Hammar (2014b, 3) terms "cumulative forms of chronic dislodging," or what my Iraqi friend Imad termed a "greying of hearts" that occurred *in* Iraq.[20] "God is generous," Imad explained, "but when you open every Iraqi's heart, believe me, you will find it dejected (*minkhizi*) from the pain and injustice from all sides in his country. In Iraq, we say the heart goes grey not the head (*bil ʿIraq naqūl al-qalb yashīb mū ar-raʾās*). [...] We Iraqis have greying hearts." It was when their sense of comfort in the place they had always considered home was lost that many Iraqis decided to permanently leave. In stark contrast to the Syrians I met in Jordan who, like the Palestinians before them, passionately expressed their steadfast determination to return

[20] Ali (2012) argues that this cumulative process is related to a place's specific "coercive capacity," or the combination of pressures that reduce people's life choices.

to their country, Iraqis had consciously and firmly oriented their life projects *away* from Iraq prior to their departures.[21] "All Iraqis, poor or rich, had a plan to go to a third country from the get go, from the minute they left Iraq," explained Sara, a project manager with the local branch of an international NGO working to assist Iraqi refugees in Jordan.

The chapter begins by exploring the lived realities of what Iraqis called "Saddam's time" in order to situate their ambivalent feelings about the US invasion, the promise it carried, and the possibilities it inaugurated. It charts how people navigated the paradoxical opportunities of post-2003 Iraq and their efforts to materialize hope and security. It then explores the slow erosion of this hope and, with it, of the reality and possibility of being comfortable in Iraq—a process accentuated by what Iraqis hauntingly characterized as the "disfigurement" (*tashawuh*) of their country, and of Baghdad in particular. This disfigurement centered on questions of recognition and daily forms of belonging and living rather than simply on questions of violence and suffering. In conversation with Paul Ricoeur's (2007) theory of recognition, Judith Butler's (1997) discussion of subjectivity and power, George Simmel's (1950) theorizations of the stranger, and Sigmund Freud's (2003) discussion of the uncanny, I argue that the felt disfigurement of Baghdad, and Iraq more broadly, was critical in foreclosing the possibility of a liveable life there.

[21] Other scholars have noted that many Iraqis in Jordan remained engaged with Iraq through forms of circular migration across the border, particularly business elites and male breadwinners who worked in Iraq while their families remained in Jordan (Chatelard 2010a; 2011; 2012; Chatty and Mansour 2011; Dorai 2009a; Mason 2011). There were also episodic return visits to Iraq to check on or sell property, assess the security situation, obtain documentation, collect pensions, and attend wedding and funerals. Among the Iraqis I came to know, however, such return movements were the exception. Even for the handful of individuals who had returned to attend funerals, secure paperwork, or, in one case, to work for a few months, such returns were in the service of a final exit from—rather than reintegration in—Iraq.

Life in "Saddam's Time"

On March 19, 2003, the US-led invasion of Iraq began. In the following 21 days, nearly three decades of Baʿathist Party rule under Saddam Hussein ended, marked poignantly by the iconic image of hundreds of people tearing down his statue in Baghdad's Al-Firdous Square on April 9. Following the invasion, Iraq was marked as much by possibility as by violence and suffering. Many Iraqis held deeply ambivalent feelings about the US-led invasion, in large part because the changes it wrought and the attendant insecurities were seen in light of what had come before. The sense of apprehensive possibility and hope that the invasion animated for many Iraqis, then, should be understood less as a political position in support of the US and more as a desire to maximize their sense of comfort in a dramatically altered and fluid setting.[22]

While speaking with Iraqis in Jordan, I was struck repeatedly by the manner in which they described "Saddam's time."[23] In most of the recollections people shared with me, what they recounted was not a black-and-white story of abject horror on the one hand or a romanticized good life on the other. What emerged, instead, was an entanglement of sentiments that foregrounded the immense difficulty of daily life, which was both mundane and tragic. Nabil, a high school arts teacher in Baghdad who had worked as a director with Iraqi state television under Saddam Hussein's son Uday,

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[22] Similarly, writing about the civil war in Sierra Leone, Catherine Bolten (2012, 145) argues that what could be perceived as "collaboration" was often undertaken to defend, rather than to destroy, the social world.

[23] Saddam Hussein was President of Iraq from July 16, 1979 until April 9, 2003. He was also Vice President from July 17, 1968 until July 1, 1979 under Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, when the Baʿath Party rose to power in a coup. By 1976, Saddam Hussein had consolidated his position within the Party and was the *de facto* ruler of Iraq for several years before officially becoming President.

told me a story that encapsulates this. I first met Nabil in late July 2012—in the midst of a blistering summer heat wave on the first day of Ramadan—just after he had arrived in Amman to visit his sister, Najwa, and nephew, Bassam, with whom he was staying. He had come to Jordan for his two-month summer vacation "to have a change of scenery." Jovial and loud, Nabil filled Bassam's small apartment with a sense of lively companionship, and I understood why Bassam had been looking forward to his uncle's visit.

It was early September when Nadia invited me to her home to have one last lunch with Nabil before he headed back to Iraq. She had recently moved to a new apartment in the Tabarbour neighbourhood, following an acrimonious divorce from her Jordanian husband. Filled to our respective brims by her lunch of carp, rice, and salads, we sat down in Nadia's living room lined wall-to-wall with plush yet surprisingly stiff couches. Scalding glasses of black tea were distributed, as Nabil provided this collage of memories about life under Saddam Hussein's reign:

> In Iraq, during the period of Saddam, in the beginning of our youth in the 1980s, there was the tragedy of the war with Iran, the tragedy of [being drafted into] the army. Every day there was an injured person. I mean people, people thought Saddam was a hero, a real hero, but … The economic situation started to deteriorate from the 1980s onwards. People were living peacefully, thank God, there were schools and universities. But as there was a dictatorial regime, it meant that I went to university during 1984 wearing khaki,[24] it was a military uniform with the picture of Saddam [pinned to it]. And if anyone was absent on Monday

[24] The colour of the military uniform. All students at the time had to wear this uniform, either to do military service or to join the military in case they failed a year of university.

when the [Baʿath] party meetings were held, he would be suspended from the university. Our life was no luxury, we were alive, but as compared to the countries around us, we were underdeveloped. However, in the media, people had a hero. When we finished university, the second tragedy started—the war with Kuwait and the sanctions. The salaries decreased, until the salary was around $10 [per month], that was the highest salary in Iraq. Then there were bribes, people would not do anything without taking a lot of money. Many robberies and accidents happened because of this as well. I was a TV director, so I had a higher salary, the highest salary that I received before Saddam's fall was 30,000 dinars which equals 15$ [per month] exactly. That was the highest salary. Therefore, most of the Iraqi youth thought about leaving Iraq in the 1990s. However, the security situation was good [in Iraq]. You could talk about anything, except about Saddam. The punishment for this was to cut the tongue. I did my military service for two years and Iraq did not have war then, but was under the [international] sanctions. However, he [Saddam] militarized Iraq. Everyone talked to each other and asked each other "What do you wish?" And the answer was "I want to escape, to leave Iraq." My brother left the country. My brother left Iraq for 12 years. It was always very difficult. I remember once, my friends and I, we made an association. Every five or six people would create an association to borrow money. We obtained 20,000 dinars as an advance so I could buy two pairs of pants. An association! I mean the price of a pair of pants or a shirt was 25,000 dinars, while the [average] salary was 10,000, so you needed two months and a half to buy one pair. The situation became really difficult, everyone wanted to leave. When Najwa wanted a shirt for example, that was difficult. Everything was prohibited during Saddam's

time, most fruits was not allowed to be imported, we did not know what cherries were, or kiwis, pineapples, strawberries. Many fruits such as these were not allowed. This fish that we ate today belonged specially to the royal family, that is to say, Saddam's family [*al-ʿāʾila al-mālika, yaʿani ʿāʾilat saddam*]. Carp was for Saddam's family. Abu Bassam [Bassam's father][25] used to work in the department directed by Sajida, Saddam's wife. He used to bring us fish when he was rewarded. And when we used to tell people that we ate these types of fish, they did not know about them. Saddam had 196 palaces, while people could not even find accommodation, nothing.

Nabil's story about life in Iraq under Saddam Hussein, and the manner of its telling, echoed many others: the tragic elements of war, economic deprivation, corruption, torture, and death; the loss of ordinary experiences—not knowing what a kiwi was or being able to purchase a local fish; the ludicrousness of having to spend two months' wages on a pair of pants. Yet interspersed among these recollections were statements about being alive, living peacefully, being able to go to school and university, and being safe. As Nabil shared his experiences that day in Nadia's living room, it felt as though I was watching a series of flashbacks that had no apparent link to each other, but that together created an increasingly vivid sense of desperate life—one that led many Iraqis to desire to physically leave, which was in fact very difficult to do.[26] Hossam, an

[25] In the Arab world, parents are often referred to by a *kunīa*, or teknonym—a naming convention whereby parents are referred to by the names of their children. In Arabic, a *kunīa* is created by joining the words for mother (*umm*) or father (*abu*) with the eldest son's name.

[26] Reda, a young Iraqi electrical engineer I met in Amman, explained that to leave Iraq prior to 2003 required paying 400,000 dinars to obtain a passport and permission to leave; those in military service were regularly denied exit, as were others. In fact, the right to free circulation was never enshrined in Iraqi law; restrictions on the issuance of travel documents began during the British Mandatory period (1921—32) and continues today (Chatelard 2012, 367).

Iraqi professor of dentistry, who was working at a university in northern Jordan when I met him and his family in 2012, described this sense of entrapment vividly. He, his wife Aida, and their young son and daughter had left Baghdad in 2011, and they were awaiting resettlement to the United States. Hossam often spoke of his life prior to 2003, as he did on this particularly hot summer day in June 2012. Like Nabil, Hossam was nuanced in his description of Saddam Hussein's time in power, but he also sought to communicate the fundamental discomfort of life.

> I was tenth in my class at university [BA]. And at that time, if you were among the top ten, they allowed you to continue until you become a college professor. So I continued, until I became an Assistant Professor. That is my life simply speaking. It was good and bad. Yes, there was security and it was good because I spent it studying and bad because we did not live our lives … we could not live our normal life. They [the regime] did not let people be comfortable (*ma khāllu an-nās yertaḥūn*). Even the elderly, he [Saddam Hussein] took them to the so-called Popular Army, he took them to northern Iraq, because he was not on good terms with the Kurds. He put them on mountains, just sitting, they did not fight, the main purpose was to take them from their families and separate them. Every single house in Iraq was not settled in their day because of these things.

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A few months after my conversation with Hossam, Bassam and I were standing on Jabal al-Qalʿa, also known as the Citadel, a fortified structure on one of Amman's many hills. It was early evening and the autumn wind howled as it swept over the ancient stones. Bassam was looking out at the horizon and a sudden sadness came over

him as the setting light stained his face. He was struggling to explain the political consequences of this desperate life.

> At the time, if they [the regime] smelled that you were thinking of doing something, Saddam would kill the entire street. So no one was thinking this way. If I met [someone suspected of being linked to] the opposition, they would kill my close family. In another governorate,[27] they would put another family member in jail, and people further away would lose all jobs.

Bassam went on to tell me the story of an uncle who had disappeared suddenly. He remembered his uncle coming to visit his mother to say good-bye, saying that he had to leave, after some of his friends, who were involved with an opposition party, had been killed. He did not want to take any chances. The security services waited outside his house for weeks before eventually giving up and forgetting about him. Not a word after that. Bassam's uncle left and came back only after the 2003 invasion. "So no one even thought about doing anything. It wasn't a question of feeling oppressed; there was nothing you could do."

Here, Bassam was suggesting that social context circumscribes people's sense of the possible. It sets an aspirational horizon, one that was severely diminished under Saddam Hussein's rule.[28] Bassam provided this assessment of how people's "capacity to aspire" (Appadurai 2004) was weakened by way of explaining his support for the invasion. In discussing the poor's "capacity to aspire," Appadurai argues that while the

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[27] Iraq was and continues to be divided into governorates (*muḥāfażat*) or provinces, of which it currently has 19.

[28] This resonates with Judith Butler's (1997, 25) contention that what is speakable—and thus possible at any given historical juncture—is produced precisely through foreclosures of possibilities that are then rendered unspeakable.

poor can certainly dream, plan, and wish for things, the structural nature of poverty radically reduces the contexts in which aspiration, as a set of practices, can effectively unfold. In conceiving of aspiration as a practical capacity in which present actions are linked to future beneficial outcomes, Appadurai clarifies how contexts in which aspirations cannot be practiced lead to their atrophy. I draw a parallel here between the workings of poverty and those of political oppression by suggesting that political oppression also curtails avenues through which aspiration can be practiced properly, resulting in what Bassam described as situations in which people not only merely did nothing, but also thought nothing. Nabil explained this chillingly when he told me about the various plays that the television network where he worked were required to air, including one in which a criminal was the protagonist: captured for having spoken badly about Saddam, the police cut out his tongue. The purpose of these plays, according to Nabil, was to communicate the idea "that we should accept reality, because it's the only reality."

This stark desperation of life in Iraq under Saddam Hussein, however, was not evenly distributed; it intensified and dissipated depending on the place, time, and person in question, generating a particular distribution of discomfort for Iraqis. Reda, for example, a young Iraqi electrical engineer I met in Amman, had moved to Jordan in May 2009 in order to improve his English language skills and find a better career path than he believed was possible in Iraq. When we sat down to speak in October 2012, he was successfully working for a small Jordanian company. Sitting at a café off Jabal Amman's first circle, he stated that though he might consider returning to Iraq, many of his friends did not even contemplate this as a possibility. He explained:

Reda: I will tell you why. Remember this: Baghdad, Ramadi, Mosul.[29] Ask him [an Iraqi], where are you from? From these cities? If he tells you that he is from these cities, he is right [not to want to return]. Because these cities—how can I say it? They were the best cities in Iraq, especially Baghdad. When I was in Karbala and I went to Baghdad, I felt that I changed from one country to another country.

Giulia: Because it was modern?

Reda: Modern and there was electricity. And it was very, very good. In Karbala, sometimes the electricity lasted only one hour each day. In Baghdad, maximum, maximum, if they wanted to cut the electricity, it was for a few hours in the day.

Giulia: So the situation in these cities worsened since 2003.

Reda: Yes, now all of the cities are in the same situation! The people who lived in these cities, they did not feel our suffering. When I tell them now what our situation was, they say, "No! Are you kidding?" So, anyone who says to you, "The situation in Iraq when Saddam Hussein [ruled] was better than now," he is telling the truth. If anyone tells you "No, the situation now is better than before," also he is telling the truth. [...] Because each one had a better situation depending on where he was from and where he was working and what he was working in and ... also ... depending on the religion and even if they were from the same religion, from Islam, from

[29] Mosul is a city in northern Iraq that was characterized by a wide religious and ethnic diversity prior to its capture by ISIS in 2014. Ramadi is a city in central Iraq in what has come to be known as the "Sunni Triangle." While it has a predominantly Sunni Arab population, it was the site of important anti-Saddam demonstrations in 1995.

> which part. This is all very important. And all of them are right about the problem in Iraq.

Most of the Iraqis I met were from Baghdad; even those who traced their origins from elsewhere had spent most of their lives in the city, identifying as Baghdadis before anything else. The particularities of capital life, especially mixed demographics, security, and relative privilege vis-à-vis other regions—as described by Reda through reference to electricity—therefore necessarily shaped my friends' experiences and views of Iraq pre- and post-2003.[30]

Cautious Hope

"Saddam's time" generated profoundly contradictory feelings for most Iraqis. This helps explain the many stories of cautious hope, and even the mood of promise, that I heard surrounding the 2003 invasion. I should state here that such stories were not unique to my friends. For instance, Saad N. Jawad (2013, 52, emphasis added), a professor of political science at Baghdad University for nearly thirty years, described his colleagues and students' opinions just prior to the US invasion in this manner:

> In the run-up to the invasion, the opinion of Iraqi academics, staff and students, was divided. On the one hand, there were those colleagues and students, *in the majority at the time*, who thought that an American invasion could rid them of a dictatorial regime that refused to change, end the years of depression, create a prosperous society similar to the ones in the Gulf, establish democracy and respect

[30] Hana Batatu (1978, 119), in his authoritative history of Iraq, suggested that, after the 1930s, the "history of Iraq became [...] largely the history of Baghdad, and its arresting feature the transient but recurring sovereignty of the masses of the capital city."

> for human rights. On the other hand, were those who strongly believed that invasion and occupation would only bring more destruction and division. I belonged to that second group.

Like Jawad's colleagues and students, Nabil confirmed this strong support for the invasion by recalling that "when the entry of the American forces to Baghdad occurred, or actually, when we heard that there will be a war, all the Iraqi people—Sunnis, Shiʿa, Christians, Kurds—were happy." Even those like Jawad, who had been fierce critics of the invasion, nevertheless held out hope for the post-invasion future:

> I have to admit that, despite my objection to the invasion, I initially had some hopes that our education system, devastated by years of wars, dictatorship, and sanctions, would be rehabilitated as quickly as possible. I was imagining the immediate reconstruction of physical buildings and infrastructure, the creation of scholarships and fellowship programs to train Iraqi postgraduate students and lecturers, the establishment of rigorous English language programs inside Iraq, the acquisition of new books and journals, and so on (Jawad 2013, 52).

This hopeful sentiment was also articulated by Lana and her husband Sami, who had arrived in Amman from Baghdad in 2011 with their two daughters. Lana was a student in one of the English classes I taught at an informal school for refugees run by an international NGO, Refugee Solidarity International (RSI).[31] She quickly became a close friend, and within a few months, I was visiting her family regularly. On a rainy Sunday, I huddled in Lana and Sami's small apartment in Marka Shemaliyeh, enjoying a

[31] This is a pseudonym.

lunchtime meal of *kibbet hāmuḍ*,[32] when Sami abruptly switched the television channel from an Egyptian television show to *al-Sharqiya*, a popular Iraqi news channel.[33] Lana and I were facing the screen, while Sami was sitting across from us on a faded pink couch, their baby son on his lap. The little boy was trying to balance himself, precariously holding onto his father's right index finger. Scenes of a desiccated landscape flashed across the screen in what appeared to be a documentary on the increased desertification in southern Iraq due to Saddam Hussein's decision to drain the vast salt marshlands.[34] "All the birds are gone; he killed the birds and everything!" Lana suddenly blurted out. Sami let out a quiet snort before replying to her in Assyrian. This provoked a wide smile from Lana, who turned to me and said, "You know what he just told me? He said, 'Think of all the people he killed, not the birds.'" Sami nodded in my

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[32] This is a dish typical of the Mosul area, consisting of paddies made of rice and meat cooked in a tomato and lemon sauce, often with vegetables.

[33] *Al-Sharqiya* was established in 2004 as a privately-owned satellite channel by Saad al-Bazzaz, an Iraqi journalist who had worked in newspapers and television under Saddam Hussein before going into exile in 1992. See: Silver, James. 2003. "My Life as Saddam's Editor." *The Independent*, July 7, 2003. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/my-life-as-saddams-editor-95162.html

[34] Though discussed since the 1940s, the decision to drain the marshlands was not made until 1984 during the Iran-Iraq war. The task was aided in large part by the construction of dams in Turkey and Syria. The actual draining began in 1991 and continued progressively through 1994. The decision to drain the marshlands is often interpreted as driven by Saddam Hussein's suspicion that the native inhabitants of the marshlands, the Madan, were religiously and politically close to Iran, and because Iraqi rebels backed by Iran sought refuge there during the war (Brié 2006). However, the marshes were also the front-line of the Iran-Iraq war, and presented an especially difficult terrain for combat—one that required drying out areas to allow the advance of mechanized forces. While the regime initially tried to win over the Madan with promises of development, the Madan's resistance to such overtures resulted in the regime adopting more brutal measures, including the physical containment of the marshes using a cordon sanitaire, the destruction of approximately 70 villages, and the displacement of over 50,000 people (Ahram 2015; Brié 2006; Nakash 2003). Throughout this campaign, official discourse couched this counterinsurgency strategy in the language of development, arguing that draining the marshes was necessary for agricultural expansion and to modernize the Madan. This development discourse had a long history in Iraq. The Ottomans, British, and previous Iraqi governments also saw the "reclaiming" of the marshlands as central to establishing state control over an area that was difficult to penetrate and to modernizing the Madan through settled agriculture. In fact, between 1968—84, there were several efforts to make the Madan take up settled agriculture, as well as to suppress the presence of escaped criminals or dissenters in the marshes (Ahram 2015). Since 2003, both the Iraqi government and ordinary Iraqis have worked to dismantle many of the embankments in the marshes, leading to their re-flooding and partial restoration. While 75% of the marshes were restored in 2008, they have since shrunk and are projected to go below 50% of their pre-drainage levels due to damming of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in Iran and Turkey (Al-Maarofi et al. 2013; Schwartzstein 2015).

direction, confirming Lana's translation and holding my gaze until, it seemed to me, he felt that his point had properly taken hold. A long silence invaded the room, before Lana dissipated it by saying: "I hate the Arab world these days! There is no hope in these countries." I asked her if they had hope after 2003 in Iraq. She responded: "After 2003, we actually thought there was hope! Yes, yes! When the Americans came, frankly, we were waiting for that, for a very long time, praying for this for a very long time, for this day!"

A former human rights activist in Iraq, Lana situated her enthusiasm against the backdrop of economic insecurity, fierce political oppression, and war under Saddam Hussein. At the time of the invasion, Lana had only recently completed her law degree and was not yet married. Initially, her father had rejected the idea of her working, considering it shameful for one of his daughters to have to work outside of the home. When her father finally acquiesced, she worked first as a lawyer, and then, in 2003, when the opportunity arose to work with the new Iraqi Interim Government, she worked in two Iraqi Ministries.[35]

> I first worked for the Ministry of ––. It was established after 2003. And I was there! I was an advisor. We did excellent work there too [...]. I was involved in the long-term planning for the Ministry and I started a women's division. Everywhere I worked, I tried to build foundations and make them solid before I left.

[35] In order to maintain Lana's anonymity, I have omitted the exact names of the Ministries where she worked.

Much of Lana's work at this Ministry aimed to foster a civil society in Iraq after decades in which such grassroots activity had been severely circumscribed. To this end, she was involved in a number of international meetings in Europe, the US, and the Middle East that focused on strengthening human rights in Iraq. The sense of possibility that permeated these first years was clear in her narrative, as was her commitment to being part of a changed Iraq. In parallel to this work, she helped establish a local women's organization:

> We were funded by the biggest international organizations and spent the money on our projects all over Iraq. I liked this work. I was tired all the time—tired, tired. Tired from thinking, and tired from running after everything, especially the money. But when you do something for the people it makes you feel so good! Especially when there is a problem in some area and you can solve it. Since 2004, until I left my country in 2011, each year, I brought in $20,000—30,000 for the organization, even more sometimes! This was funding for projects, and that is why I made relationships, very good relationships, with the British and American embassies. They saw how we were working and our organization became one of the most important women's organizations in Iraq.

Lana's descriptions of these early years evokes a sense of growth and fulfilled aspirations, which speaks to the ways in which home has "forward dimensions" (Jansen 2009, 58) and which justifies her initial faith in the post-2003 era. However, this hope would soon wane:

> In the [other] Ministry of ––, I had a very sensitive position. I was responsible for the Ministry's bidding committee for governmental contracts. I would tell the

> head of the Ministry whether to sign or not to sign. I am serious! Ask anyone there who Lana is! Honestly, all of the general directors used to be afraid of me. I was so important that the head of the Ministry would not sign until I had signed. Then many of the general directors began cutting deals with company owners in order to get a commission. Try to convince a thief not to steal! I did it! I cut many people's livelihoods even though it was hard. I forced them all to be straight, but they fought me.

The use of government positions for personal gain to which Lana referred became widespread in Iraq, especially following the 2005 legislative elections that saw the consolidation of the practice of handing over specific ministries to different political parties (see Marr 2006; 2007). The effects of this process were both political and sectarian in nature, consolidating the power of rival political parties within sectarian groups, while also entrenching sectarianism within the bureaucratic system as a whole. Bassam, for instance, recalled the time, right after the invasion, when he applied for a job at the newly established Ministry for Elections. He sat an entrance exam and the woman in charge of overseeing the examination process told him that he had scored well and said that he would very likely be offered a position. He left extremely pleased, and, a few days later, he returned to the Ministry to see the publicly posted list of successful candidates. His name was not on it. Somewhat disconcerted, he found the woman responsible for the examinations and asked her what had happened. The woman was visibly embarrassed, but finally told him that he did not have the required recommendation (*tazkīya*) from the Islamic Dawa Party.[36] Initially, Bassam did not

[36] The Islamic Dawa Party was formed in 1957 by a group of Shiʿi leaders with the express aim of promoting Islamic values and resisting secularism in Iraq. It gained strength in the 1970s and began an

understand what this requirement for a party recommendation meant, and he was shocked to learn that Dawa controlled the Ministry. He asked the woman, "Can I ask, if a Sunni comes, will he not get a job?" The woman replied, by way of warning, "Don't talk this way; it's dangerous."

That people in ministries would act in such a fashion angered and discouraged Lana. Sadly, her experience with the women's organization she helped establish became equally frustrating since it was dependent on external funding, much of which came from local agencies as prone to corruption as government ministries.

> I was known as a troublemaker! Because I cannot stand things that are bad and I cannot be two-faced with people about this. I cannot tell them that they are good when they are not. This is why, in all honesty, I could not live in Iraq, especially after 2003. Because for those who want to live in Iraq, they must be willing to do any bad thing (*illi baddo yʿaīsh bi-l-ʿIraq, ay shī sayeʾ lāzim yaʿmalu).* Anything, anything, you need to do all these immoral things to stay on the market, so that people will like you and support you. Otherwise, they will not support you. Not only will they not support you, they will actively fight you in the nastiest of ways! This is difficult. Once or twice, even ten or twenty times, it is not a problem. But every hour, every minute, every second of every day, it's too much! After all these years, someone told me, "Why are you leaving, for whom are you doing all of this work?! You are throwing away everything!" I told him, "You are right, but I can't stand anything anymore." And really, really, I couldn't

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armed insurgency that triggered a violent government clampdown on all Shiʿi political activism in the country. From the mid-1970s, the Baʿath started systematically targeting Dawa members; mere membership in the Party carried an automatic death sentence. Most Dawa leaders went into exile in Iran, returning only in 2003, when they took on a major role in Iraqi politics.

> act just like them—they are stealing, and doing everything, everything wrong! I cannot do this. I cannot do this. Do you know that my name was in the Council of Ministers? I was nominated for the future. But I just threw it all away. The work of years, we just threw it behind our backs.

What stands out in Lana's account of her time working both in the civil service and in the non-governmental sector is the way in which the requirement to do "bad things" slowly encroached on her life—first hour by hour, then minute by minute, and second by second. The pressure to become an immoral person in order to secure her livelihood, "to stay on the market," was a trade-off Lana could not accept. It fed a growing discomfort with life in Iraq, despite an evidently deep love for and commitment to her country. While concluding her story, Lana sighed heavily and looked out through the open window shutters to the massive pine tree outside her building. She slouched silently, her eyes freighted with emotion. Clearly, the decision to abandon the path and future she had invested in so passionately had been difficult. Her distress prompted me to ask, almost reflexively, whether she really felt that "throwing away" years of work had been a choice that she could have chosen not to make. After a very long silence, eyes locked on a spot on the floor, an Egyptian movie blaring in the background, Lana raised her head and said, forcefully,

> Yes, I had a choice. The choice to risk my life and my family's life. So many people did it; believe me, because of the money. However, I do not care about money. I just care about them [pointing to her daughters and son]. You know, we tried to make the situation better in Iraq, but we could not. In the end, we could not do anything.

With this statement, Lana described a full-circle back to a situation of aspirational paralysis in which her imaginative horizon was once again radically diminished. The loss of future direction and hope was pervasive among both those, like Lana, who had eagerly anticipated the invasion, as well as those who had not, but who nevertheless harboured the hope that it might instigate some sort of positive change. It was captured in a sentiment I heard expressed repeatedly by Iraqis: that though Saddam Hussein had ruled with an iron fist, "now there are a thousand Saddams (*hisse, fi alf Saddam*)."

Disfigurement

When Tamer, an Iraqi teacher at the RSI school where I volunteered, told my documentary filmmaker friend Sabreen that "people have changed" in Iraq, he echoed a sentiment held by many Iraqis. These changes *in* people and *of* people were intimately related, and together resulted in a deepening problem of recognition, which struck at the core of the ability to see people as "one's own" and to be seen as such (Hage 1997). In *The Course of Recognition* (2007), Paul Ricoeur conceptualizes recognition as embodying three different modes: recognition as identification (of objects); recognition as self-recognition; and mutual recognition (recognition of and by others). Ricoeur thinks of the movement across these modes as a dialectic in which recognition moves from the passive to active voice and from a question of cognition to one of ethics and politics (Taylor 2008). For Iraqis, the post-2003 moment was critical because it severely undermined recognition in all three modes: people no longer recognized their city; they no longer recognized themselves; and they no longer recognized nor felt recognized by others. This destabilization of recognition had a devastating impact on their sense of comfort. My Iraqi friends called this process *tashawuh*—disfigurement.

Ripping Out the Roots

I first met Amina while volunteering with RSI. She was a student in my advanced conversational English class, and she enthusiastically engaged with the varied topics that we discussed each week. She had arrived in Jordan in 2010, with her husband, Murid, and their youngest daughter, Nayla. They were awaiting resettlement to the US, where her eldest daughter and son were already living. During the month of Ramadan, Amina invited me over for *iftar* one evening.[37] Sitting in the plush, deep, velvety couches of her upscale apartment in the Jamaʾa al-Urdoniyeh area, Amina told me that she loved Iraq, but would never return.

> Amina: I loved Iraq so much, especially Baghdad. I felt I could not leave, but now it is not mine. If you bring back the same Iraq, as it was in the past, of course, I will feel it is mine. My country. But now, I have no relation with it. You know, it is like you have a very nice picture and somebody comes to disfigure it. Everything is dirty. How can you feel? For instance, a nice building, a [government] ministry [building], we paid so much for it, and it was very, very nice, and very good quality, and somebody comes just to burn it, and leaves it. They did not make another one. And they did not repair it. What do you feel? A very nice bridge and they just broke it. What do you feel? The street, there is no street like this [gesturing toward the window and to the wide street that leads to the University of Jordan]. It is just broken and they leave it.

[37] *Iftar* is the meal that breaks the fast during the month of Ramadan.

Giulia: Do you mean the Americans?

Amina: Well, it is all because of the Americans, but there were many people who wanted to do this. So they let them [i.e. they let the Americans do this]. Why interfere when there is a volunteer for that, right? Something [the city] we felt we lived with all of our life, and we saw how it was built, how it grew up. Baghdad was a very nice city before. A very nice city. We loved it very much. We paid a lot of money for these buildings, and they were very good quality, made from first class materials, which we imported from outside, from Britain mostly. Then it became rubbish. They stole it, and it is not the Iraqis who did that. It is somebody, but it is not the Iraqis. They burned everything. Why? So what if it was made by Saddam? Why do you burn it? That is why I am telling you: everything that was beautiful in Iraq is gone. They did not make anything beautiful, whatever is nice, they broke it.

This sentiment about the destruction of the urban environment in Baghdad was one I heard repeatedly. Reem, an Iraqi friend of Amina's who also attended the RSI school, stopped me in the school's stairwell one day, not long after Amina had been resettled in the United States. We exchanged common courtesies before Reem commented on her sadness at Amina's departure and her stress at not yet knowing when she herself would be leaving for the United States. "I cannot go back to Iraq. I cannot," she said with a dogged fierceness that was at odds with the softness of her voice. "Why?" I asked. She smiled sadly and replied, "They are not our people there." We went down a few steps of the stairwell as students walked up and down caring little for our intimate exchange in such a public and busy location. We stepped to the side. Reem was

struggling to explain how she felt. She motioned with her hands and started to speak again only to fall silent before any words had left her lips. Finally, she said,

> I have no history there anymore. No past. It is all new. How can I find my childhood memories? They [the new governments] removed everything, I cannot recognize it. Even the places, the statues, the fountains. If these were built by Saddam, they destroyed them. Why? When I walk, I do not find myself in anything.

Reem held my gaze a little longer, smiled, and took a few more steps toward the school's courtyard. On the threshold of the final step, we ran into Mustafa, who seamlessly joined the conversation. Reem continued, more passionately now, as though inspired by her friend's ability to witness and corroborate her feelings. "You know now, *now*—not a few years ago—*now* they are destroying Eagles Square (*Duwwar al-Nussūr*). Saddam built it to honour Iraqi pilots killed during the Iran-Iraq war. They are destroying it under orders from Iran. My heart is bleeding for what is happening in Iraq." Mustafa nodded quietly as Reem finally added, "I cannot relate to these people."

In trying to theorize the deliberate and widespread destruction of Sarajevo during the Bosnian war, Martin Coward (2009; 2010) uses the term "urbicide" to capture the deployment of violence specifically against the city itself. Inspired by Heidegger, Coward (2009, 14) argues that urbicide is "the destruction of buildings as a condition of possibility of being-with-others," or the eradication of a specific collective identity through the elimination of its material manifestations. Specifically, Coward (2010, 188) suggests that:

> [...] buildings are the condition of possibility of a shared spatiality. That is, existence is ineluctably plural because of the way in which it is gathered by/around buildings. Destruction of buildings is thus a destruction of the conditions of possibility of the heterogeneity of existence. It is a form of violence deployed by homogenizing political formations such as ethnic nationalism in order to disavow such plurality. The consequence of understanding existence in this manner is that we note that what it is to 'be human' (i.e., to exist, plural, in the world) is bound up with the non-human.

By highlighting the primacy of the built environment in social life, Coward argues that we cannot properly understand human experiences in war without understanding how the built environment, and the violence done to it, is integral to such experiences. Importantly, he contends that urbicide aims not only to destroy, but also to generate a narrower and divided sense of belonging. Amina and Reem both spoke to the haunting ways in which radical changes to Baghdad permanently altered their relation to the city itself, especially the disfigurements of buildings that held together some aspect of an Iraqi national identity. Importantly, however, this inability to recognize objects (Ricoeur's first mode) was actually bound up, certainly for Reem, with the inability to recognize herself (Ricoeur's second mode)—to find her memories, to narrate her story—as well as the inability to recognize and feel recognized by others (Ricoeur's third mode). Her experiences thus lend support to Coward's contention that the human is bound to the non-human in important ways.

While some of the destruction that Amina and Reem described was the result of heavy urban fighting in Baghdad, a substantial part of it was tied to the process of 'de-Baʿathification' that began under the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), Iraq's

transitional government established by the US-led coalition on 21 April 2003.[38] This explains their claim that the city had been destroyed wherever it was associated with Saddam Hussein. Unlike the neutral and bureaucratic connotations of its English counterpart, the Arabic expression for de-Baʿathification—*ijtidhādh al-Baʿath*—has agricultural connotations, and conveys an extremely violent image: the complete uprooting of a "harmful and parasitic plant" (Saghieh 2007, 203). De-Baʿathification was thus designed to completely eliminate all institutions and symbols of the Baʿath in Iraq and, with them, of all associated emotions, whether of affection or fear. In 2005, the *Committee to Remove the Remains of the Baʿath Party and to Consider Building New Monuments and Murals* was formed under the government of Nouri al-Maliki with the express purpose of evaluating one hundred monuments and commemorative sites from Saddam Hussein's time for possible destruction (Semple 2007). Among these, three key monuments dedicated to the fallen of the Iran-Iraq war were slated for demolition: the Martyr's Memorial, the Unknown Soldiers Monument, and the Victory Arches, consisting of two giant hands holding up crossing swords that intersected forty meters above a Baghdad highway. The dismantling of the Victory Arches began in 2007, but was eventually halted; they have since been restored.[39]

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[38] The CPA was eventually dissolved on 28 June 2004, when power was handed over to the Iraqi Interim Government, a caretaker government tasked with preparing Iraq for national elections. These took place on January 30, 2005. Though the Interim Government was vested with full sovereignty, the US retained *de facto* power, particularly since its military forces remained in the country. The 2005 elections resulted in an Iraqi Transitional Government, which assumed power on May 3, 2005, and was primarily responsible for drafting a new permanent constitution, which was approved via referendum on October 15, 2005. Elections held under the new constitution resulted in the first permanent government on December 15, 2005.

[39] The dismantlement of the enormous monument provoked public outcry and even demonstrations, especially over the covert manner in which it was undertaken. It was not until the US Ambassador to Iraq intervened directly that the demolition was halted. Importantly, the reason given for this US intervention was to prevent the further deterioration in ethno-sectarian relations. In 2011, as a sign of reconciliation, the government ordered the reconstruction of the Victory Arches (Semple 2007).

Other monuments were not so lucky. These include the monument in Eagles Square mentioned by Reem, which depicted an Iraqi pilot standing on top of the wreckage of an Iranian jet; the monument in al-Mustansiriyya Square honouring Iraqi prisoners of war in the Iran-Iraq conflict; and the Meeting monument in the al-Mansur district that was composed of two intertwining white spirals of concrete representing the unity and harmony of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious Iraq. In fact, almost every symbol of the Baʿath era has been destroyed in what Sinan Antoon (2010) has described as a form of visual de-Baʿathification. Crucially, none of these symbols had emphasized sectarian or ethnic identities, but rather an Iraqi one (Isakhan 2011).[40] Moreover, the monuments commemorating war captured the generalized sense of loss and suffering associated with a time when thousands of men were conscripted and most families lost fathers, brothers, husbands, sons to the front.[41] In this sense, these monuments captured the losses of a wide range of Iraqis expressed by one of my friend with the phrase: "There isn't a single Iraqi woman who has not worn black." Most of these monuments were dismantled quietly, without prior warning or official discussion; it was only when people started noticing pieces missing and when local newspapers reported the stories that these actions came to light (Spinner 2006). Such sudden transformations often severed intimate attachments to place. These urban modifications were understood not only as simple demolitions and changes to urban space, but as

[40] In thinking about the meaning of these monuments, it is crucial to remember that the bulk of Saddam Hussein's army was comprised of Shiʿa, so that the commemoration of the dead straddled significant sectarian divisions. For instance, one of the most outspoken critics of this visual de-Baʿathification was Baghdad's then-mayor, Sabir Isawi, a religiously conservative Shiʿi from Sadr City (Spinner 2006).
[41] Iraqi men working in needed sectors, such as medical professionals, and those who were in institutions of higher education, were exempt from military service.

disfigurements that permanently altered people's relation to Baghdad, unmooring, so to speak, their sense of comfort in the city.

A Broken City

Compounding this targeted destruction of Baghdad was the general neglect that characterized the city post-2003, about which Iraqis constantly complained. I was invited to lunch at the house of Hossam and Aida on a breezy fall day in 2012. As Aida cleared away the food, Hossam insisted on showing me before and after pictures of Baghdad. One pair struck me in particular. On the right, a yellow sky darkened by sand, street and sidewalks strewn with garbage, no cars in sight, people everywhere on street and sidewalk, market stalls haphazardly set up. Though filled with people, the picture's mood is grim, and the impression it gives is one of oppression rather than life. On the left, the same place. A clear sky, a statue of Saddam Hussein standing neatly, orderly traffic, a crowded sidewalk.

The difference between the two pictures was stark and Hossam used the contrast to highlight how unrecognizable Baghdad had become. It was not so much the removal of Saddam Hussein's statue and its replacement by a market that disturbed him; rather, it was the fact that the place evoked a sense of abandonment rather than care, recalling Amina's laments about the city being destroyed and—crucially—left in disrepair, so that "everything that was beautiful in Iraqi is gone." This phenomenon of the before-and-after Baghdad pictures occurred repeatedly.[42]

[42] Given that few people had pictures of their pre-2003 lives—because almost no one had a camera—most of this comparison unfolded using Facebook pages and other websites that collected thousands of images of pre- and post-2003 Baghdad.

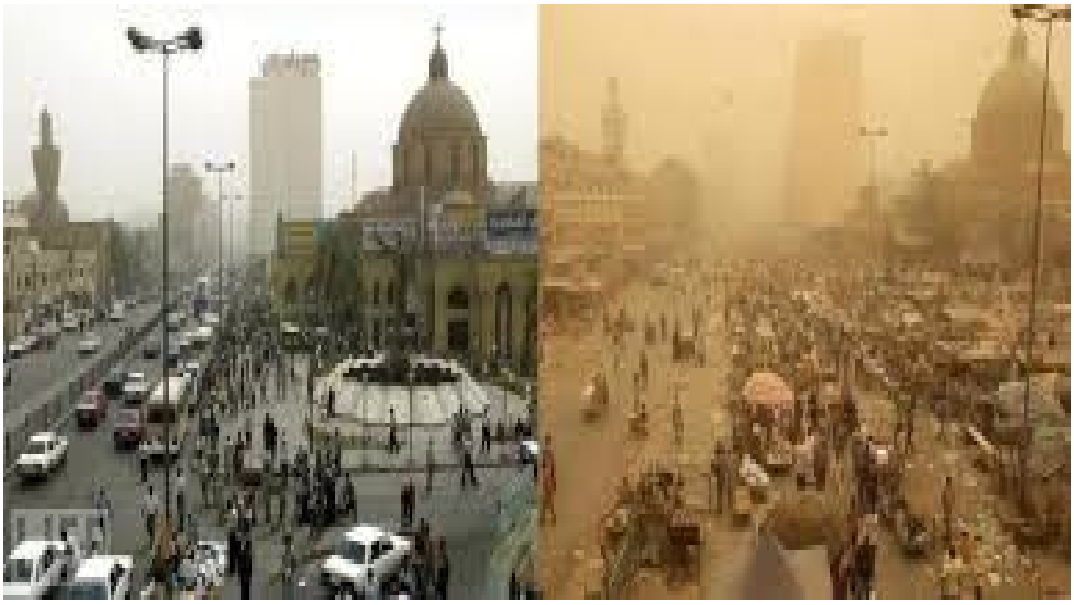

Figure 2 – Before and After Pictures of Baghdad on Hossam's Computer. 2012.

Such laments about the changing fortunes of the city's physical appearance were often accompanied by poignant complaints about electricity. "It was as though your skin was on fire!" Amina said forcefully, as she tried to make me feel, not only understand, what it might mean to live under the weight of Baghdad's heat. It was early March 2012, and Amina's eldest daughter, Nayla, was visiting from Baghdad. She had been telling us about the constant problems with electricity, which is what had provoked her mother's outburst. Amina continued:

> It is so hot in the summer in Baghdad. You cannot even imagine it. There is no electricity. No state electricity, of course, and there is often a shortage of petrol for the generators. When we were there, all we could do was take a shower and lie down, wet, on the [tiled] floor to try to cool down, and maybe sleep. It was terrible. Baghdad is a good city, but it is impossible to live without electricity—it is a life without dignity!

Similarly, Bassam's uncle, Ahmad, cited the absence of electricity as the key reason he travelled to Jordan for the summer, and as central to what made life uncomfortable in Iraq.

> No government has made the people comfortable. The electricity is horrible. If only we had better electricity, Iraq would be the best place to live. I come to Amman every summer, to escape from the electricity problem. People suffer and want to tear their clothes off. They go crazy. Crazy! You cannot bear anything touching you! Even the water is hot because the fridges do not work.

Such talk of electricity coursed through my fieldwork with Iraqis in Jordan. Its long absences, sputtering presences, and destabilising unreliability were central to Iraqi narratives about life in Baghdad. The images invoked were always embodied: of lying on the floor wet, standing in queues hours on end for petrol; tearing off one's clothes in anguish. The body and its discomforts were central, then, to what made life in Baghdad impossible.

Becoming Strangers

In 2003, on the eve of the US invasion, UNHCR estimated that there were close to half a million Iraqi refugees, just over half of whom were living in Iran. While some were important opposition groups and political exiles, the vast majority were ordinary Iraqis who had escaped or had been expelled during Saddam Hussein's reign. Following the invasion, many former exiles, particularly political and intellectual elites, returned to

Iraq. Though statistics are scant, UNHCR (2005) reports for 2003 and 2004 indicate that over 200,000 Iraqis returned in these years.[43]

Given the intensity of displacements in Iraq, particularly under Saddam Hussein's regime, in August 2003 the CPA established a Ministry of Displacement and Migration to assist returnees, as well as IDPs and refugees (Sassoon 2008, 29). In addition, the concerns of these returnees were central to the provisional constitution drafted following the 2003 war. For instance, article 11 restored Iraqi nationality to those who had lost it under Saddam Hussein's regime for political, religious, or racial reasons. Article 58 stated that all measures would be taken to "[...] remedy the injustice caused by the previous regime's practices in altering the demographic character of certain regions [...]."[44] In mainstream humanitarian discourse, the return of refugees to their places of origin is a desired, even ideal, outcome, and a crucial component of post-war reconciliation. In practice, however, the return of displaced people to places that have witnessed prolonged conflict has profound political consequences, often leading to realignments of local communities and power arrangements (Koser 2000; Long and Oxfeld 2004).[45]

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[43] See also UNHCR statistical reports for 2003 and 2004, respectively: http://www.unhcr.org/41d2c17ac.html and http://www.unhcr.org/44e5c76c0.html

[44] Formally, this provisional constitution was the Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period, often shortened to the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL). It was signed into law on March 8, 2004 and came into effect the following June. It was superseded by a permanent constitution in 2006. For the full text, see: https://web.archive.org/web/20090423064920/http://www.cpa-iraq.org/government/TAL.html

[45] For instance, in Guatemala, the return of refugees from Mexico led to confrontations over land and property, as well as over acceptable forms of political participation, with refugees having developed a far more activist approach to politics during their years in exile than had their counterparts in Guatemala, who had been living under military control (Taylor 1998). In Sarajevo, returnees were accused of cowardice and betrayal for having left (Stefansson 2004). In Rwanda, refugees were deeply troubling because some of them had been perpetrators of the genocide itself (Janzen 2004).

The return or arrival of "new" Iraqis in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion was no less challenging. In Baghdad, as elsewhere, they unsettled many of the spatial, communal, and personal dynamics of the city, making it seem for many of my interlocutors as though the place itself was shape shifting around them, even as they themselves did not move. Specifically, it led to complicated issues of self and mutual recognition for those Iraqis who had lived in Baghdad their entire lives (Ricoeur's second and third modes). The effects of these new arrivals were felt both within families and across neighbourhoods.

"Iraq was beautiful because of its diversity. I mean Jews, Mandeans,[46] Christians, and Muslims were living together. Iraq was beautiful. When Iraq was divided, it lost its beauty. Iraq is [now] like a good dish without salt." Mariam, a mother of six, who had been living in Amman with her children, husband, and in-laws since leaving Baghdad in 2006, made this statement in order to explain that what characterized Iraq, for her, was a sense of tolerance. She contrasted this tolerance to the more exclusivist views that she believed exiled Iraqis brought back with them. By way of explanation, she described the return from Iran of her father's cousin, who had been politically persecuted under Saddam Hussein, in the following way:

> It is true; the people who came back from Iran are very different from us. My father's cousin escaped from Iraq in 1978. Since Saddam came to power, he

[46] Mandeans are an ethno-religious group indigenous to southern Iraq and Iran. Mandeans revere John the Baptist, speak a language related to Aramaic, practice baptism extensively, and are generally forbidden from consuming alcohol or meat. Though there is similarity between some Mandean beliefs and traditions and those found in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, they are not considered adherents of these faiths; nor are they considered 'pagans.' Their traditions and practices are immensely varied and of largely undetermined origins (Buckley 2002). They comprise one of the oldest and smallest minorities in Iraq; estimated at around 60,000 prior to the 2003 US-led invasion, there are now fewer than 5,000 Mandeans remaining in Iraq (Deutsch 2007).

murdered a tremendous number of people who were in a political party other than the Baʿath—the Islamic Dawa Party. Therefore, he [her father's cousin] escaped to Iran. When he came back in 2003, he was a religious person. He surprised us because our family is not very religious. In terms of his words and thoughts, he was a very different person. He told my husband, "You are hand in hand with the Sunnis? Sunnis?!" My husband was shocked and replied, "Why do you say that? How can you be a Shiʿa if you hate?" In the message, in our religious book, it says that we have to marry Sunnis and Sunnis have to marry our people. We have to share in their happiness and in their sorrow. That is how the relationship should be. Our sixth Imam, Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, told us about the time to come.[47] He said that there will be a time when a segregation occurs between Sunnis and Shiʿa: "Remain close to each other, coexist, and love each other." That is how we understand it. You know, as soon as he [her father's cousin] arrived, he immediately became a government supporter and suddenly became a big person in the government. Yes! My husband told him to his face, "All your life, your loyalty was to Iran, so of course you will work for Iran's benefit." He was one of those people that we were scared of because he was so different from us.

These differences of opinion over who comprised one's community and where distinctions should be drawn started to have real effects in Mariam's life when her eldest son, at the time a young teenager, adopted a sectarian discourse after 2003.

[47] Jaʿfar al-Sadiq was a descendant of Ali, Prophet Mohammad's son-in-law, and was a prominent Islamic jurist, highly respected by all branches of Islam.

> We taught them [the children] that there is no difference between Sunnis and Shiʿa. However, one day my eldest son came and said, "No, there is a difference!" I asked him where he got this idea, and he said, "From the street." I told him, "No! Do not humiliate them like that! Now there are Shiʿi regions and Sunni regions, but let us not forget that we played together, we used to play with each other, drink, and eat together. And my mother is Sunni. Remember that your mother is from a Sunni mother's house!"

Speaking openly about religion was deeply troubling for many Iraqis who had lived under Saddam Hussein's regime. Though Saddam Hussein manipulated identities and stoked sectarian tensions to further his political agenda and maintain his hold on power, most Iraqis agreed that this was opportunistic rather than ideological, and that sectarianism was not only manipulated but also contained (see Harling 2012, 64). Moreover, while there was indeed a significant imbalance in the distribution of political power among ethno-sectarian groups under Saddam Hussein, Iraqis insisted that the politicization of such identities had never been as severe as in the post-2003 period (see Marr 2006). In support of this contention, they cited various pieces of evidence about life under Saddam Hussein's reign: identification cards did not carry any information about religion; religious education was limited; the government employed people from across Iraq's various religious and ethnic communities; Saddam Hussein's regime punished all groups, including his own core supporters, often understood to be residents of the 'Sunni Triangle,' an area northwest of Baghdad where the majority is Sunni Arab;[48] there were high rates of inter-marriage between communities; and people of

[48] This view of Baʿathists as interchangeably Sunni is a flawed over-simplification. Certainly, under Saddam Hussein, there was an imbalance in favour of Sunnis—particularly those from the Sunni

different sects, and even of different religions, prayed together at various religious sites.[49] However, the piece of evidence my friends felt most supported their analysis was the fact that no one ever talked about religion.

The erasure of religion from the public sphere in Saddam's Iraq has often been interpreted as an imposed silence that did little to foster meaningful contact and connection across religious divides. This interpretation, however, assumes that sectarian difference in and of itself is inherently problematic, requiring some sort of intervention for social co-existence (Haddad 2011; Rubaii 2019b). This view does little justice, however, to the very real ways in which many Iraqis were genuinely tied to each other

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Triangle—in most government positions, particularly in the top leadership (Harling 2012; Rubaii 2019a; Saghieh 2007; Sluglett 2015). Not only was Baʿath Party membership, particularly at lower levels where there were more technocracts, less imbalanced that in its upper echelons, but Baʿathist rhetoric promoted pan-Arabism and Iraqi nationalism rather than an overt religious agenda (Marr 2006). More importantly, Saddam Hussein's relation with the Sunni population was itself a fraught one. This was largely because his primary concern was to consolidate and hold onto his personal power, not to advance the interests of any one group. In fact, many of his policies aimed precisely to undermine the autonomy of all potentially independent groups, Sunni and otherwise, that could threaten him. For instance, in his dealings with tribes, Saddam Hussein did not privilege Sunni tribes because they were Sunni; rather, he worked to undercut all tribes' autonomy by offering resources, such as employment, in exchange for absolute loyalty. Similarly, he promoted a new rural Sunni elite at the expense of older urban classes in cities such as Baghdad and Mosul, and aggressively repressed the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1960s and 1970s (Harling 2012). It was in the last decade of his rule (1990s), faced with increasing domestic and international pressures, that Saddam Hussein began leaning more heavily on family, tribal, and religious connections, effectively reducing the regime's constituency to residents of the so-called 'Sunni Triangle,' the area of his birth place—Tikrit—and his home village, Al-Awja (Saghieh 2007).

[49] The 1959 Personal Status Law in Iraq (which was still in effect in this early post-2003 period) does not differentiate between sects, applying a single law to everyone. It was made through encoding a pastiche of Sharia rulings (both Sunni and Shiʿi) and using principles of civil law, in order to ensure that there would be one law for all Iraqis, while also allowing for the safeguarding of some religious rights for minority groups (e.g. Christians). One outcome of this law was to integrate Iraqis more closely by making inter-faith marriage far easier than in other Middle Eastern countries; the result was a very high rate of Sunni-Shiʿi marriages. In fact, I met very few Iraqi families that were not mixed. Crucially, while religious judges still conducted court proceedings, they were obligated to apply the law as written, rather than interpret it according to their own religious leanings (the dominant approach in most other Middle Eastern countries). All post-2003 governments have attempted to either radically reform or outright repeal this Personal Status Law, but have so far met with fierce opposition (HRW 2014a; Matta 2006; McVeigh 2017). As for inter-faith exchanges, Iraq is peculiar in the region for the extent of the religious interaction/ exchange among its population. Muslims prayed in churches during Christian religious holidays (AFP 2013) and mixed Sunni-Shiʿi mosques continue to exist in Baghdad (Khan 2014). This type of interaction was seen as highly aberrant in Jordan. The problems that stemmed from different understandings of what Mariam termed "religious culture" (*al-thaqāfa al-dinīa*) are explored in Chapter 4.

through forms of interconnected living that did not erase difference, but that did silence its potential divisiveness—what Kali Rubaii (2019a, 129) describes as "a form of social connection through difference." My Iraqi friends explained the silencing of religion in everyday life, even among close friends, as having less to do with Baʿath policies than with the fact that the ethno-religious community was only one of many axes of identity in Iraq. Importantly, it was not always the dominant one: for many Iraqis, regional identities are extremely important, with people feeling strong associations to cities and their environs (Visser 2007, 2).[50] In fact, regional attachment was a common way in which Iraqis in Jordan identified themselves (Chatelard, personal communication, May 10, 2010).

The forced recognition of religious difference that Iraqis encountered post-2003 had much to do with the country's changing political landscape. Without exception, irrespective of their political opinions or religious backgrounds, all Iraqis I spoke with were categorical in their contention that politicians in the immediate post-2003 period were outsiders. "They are all from the outside, Iran, Syria, London," Bassam told me one afternoon when we were strolling in Jabal Amman. "These people, they returned, and after this, there were militias, not political parties. This is what led to the war."[51]

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[50] This regionalism is something quite different from the approach that suggests Iraq is not a unified state but rather three separate ethno-religious states that should be federated or separated—a Kurdish north centred on Mosul, a Sunni Arab Baghdad, and a Shiʿi South based in Basra. This division, based on Ottoman-era provinces, over-simplifies the extent to which these regions were incredibly mixed. In fact, Visser (2007, 5) argues that in the early twentieth century, "Basra had important Sunni elements, Baghdad was in fact the largest Shiite province in the region, and Mosul was inhabited by a mix of Arab, Kurds, Turkmens and Christians." Moreover, the administrative separation between Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul was no more than 30 years old in 1914; prior to this, there were extensive periods during which there had been administrative unification of these regions under Baghdad (Visser 2007, 7–8).

[51] As Bassam suggested, all militias had some sort of domestic connection and outside support. This was acknowledged both by the United States and Iraq's own successive governments, who often spoke of the need to reign in militias and the outsiders supporting them, while doing very little to concretely force them to disband (North 2006; RFE-RL 2006; Ridolfo 2006). By way of example, the Badr Organization—the military wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the most powerful

Scholars and policy analysts have highlighted this "imported politics" (Haddad and Rizvi 2007, 58; Lafourcade 2012; Marr 2007; Rubaii 2019a), arguing that there was indeed a predominance of formerly exiled Iraqis in the first post-2003 governments, who brought with them political allegiances that led to the proliferation of politically-affiliated militias. Fully a third of the Iraqi political leadership in 2006 was made up of people who had spent their adult lives outside of Iraq; another 20 percent had only lived in the Kurdish north, cut off from the rest of Iraq since the 1991 US-imposed no fly zone effectively turned it into an autonomous area (Marr 2007).[52]

Outside politicians played an immensely influential role in guiding the CPA (Dodge 2005), which explicitly compared the Baʿath party to the Nazis, and argued that it was "dominated by Saddam and *other Sunni Arabs*" (Bremer and MacConnell 2003:38-39, as quoted in Lafourcade 2012, 191, emphasis added). In fact, the objectives of the first two CPA Orders (2003a; 2003b) were to de-Baʿathify Iraqi society and dissolve the Iraqi military, security, and intelligence infrastructures. The purges undertaken based on these two CPA Orders were widespread and indiscriminate, based not on an evaluation of individual performance or merit, but on the assumption that "members of the Baʾath Party elite could not have reached a certain rank in the party without either having committed acts that seriously violated human rights standards or

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Shiʿi party in Iraq—was established, funded, and trained by Iran during the Iran-Iraq war, and moved into Iraq post-2003. Under the Iraqi Transitional Government (2005-2006), the Ministry of Interior was controlled by SCIRI and the Minister, Baqir Jabr Al-Zubeidi, was a former Badr Brigade commander. During this time, the Ministry was accused of effectively acting as a cover for the Badr Brigades' torture and extrajudicial killing of hundreds of Iraqis (Buncombe and Cockburn 2006).

[52] For instance, Ahmad Chalabi, a key proponent of the Iraq invasion who provided the United States with much of the erroneous information about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, went into exile with his family in his early teenage years. He spent most of his life in the United States and the United Kingdom before returning to Iraq in 2003 with American forces; he was 59 years old at the time. Similarly, Nouri al-Maliki, who was Prime Minster of Iraq between 2006 and 2014, was forced to flee Iraq in 1979, at the age of 29, when his membership in the outlawed Islamic Dawa Party came to be known. He lived in Syria and Iran until his return to Iraq in 2003 at 53 years old.

without being deeply corrupt," and that "even simple members [...] of the Party [could] be excluded if [...] considered a threat to security" (Lafourcade 2012, 187–88, 190). De-Baʾathification of the military left 400,000 men unemployed and armed (Saghieh 2007), while de-Baʾathification of the civil service and other government institutions, including universities and hospitals, rendered thousands in the middle class unemployed, pushing many to eventually leave or to appeal for protection from tribal and sectarian networks (Bassam 2007; Saghieh 2007).

This sudden arrival and political takeover by outsiders led to an enduring insider/outsider schism. This divide was largely "a reflection of the mindset of those Iraqis living abroad who had dedicated a significant part of their lives to opposing what they saw as an abhorrent regime" (Haddad and Rizvi 2007, 59). These exiled Iraqis had "[...] no significant roots with the country and [...] carr[ied] a political worldview—forged in exile—[...] largely alien to the Iraqi people" (Haddad and Rizvi 2007, 60). This imported worldview was not only vehemently anti-Baʾathist, but also ethno-sectarian and thus focused on communal interests at the expense of national unity and identity (Marr 2006). Not long after our discussion of the images of Baghdad, Hossam highlighted this when he explained who he thought was to blame for the fact that religious affiliation had become a dominant aspect of life in Iraq. "The Shiʿa from Iran, they destroyed the country. They hate us." His wife, Aida, gave him a stern look when he said this and quietly but firmly added a corrective, "Not all of them." Hossam shifted in the sofa and acquiesced, "Alright, not all of them." He then added, however, that all Iraqi military pilots had been killed by Iranian agents after Saddam Hussein's fall as

revenge for their bombings of Iran during Iran-Iraq war.[53] Others, like Jad, a former low-level member of the internal security forces in Iraq, who, together with his sister, Dana, had been in Jordan since 2006, argued that "all the Islamic militias" and their associated political parties were to blame for the entrenchment of sectarian politics. Jad illustrated this by stating that while Shiʿa militias attacked vegetable vendors for selling both tomatoes and cucumbers, which they considered improper given that tomatoes were seen as feminine and cucumbers as masculine, Sunni groups targeted ice sellers who provided refreshing water in Baghdad's blazing summers because the Prophet Muhammad drank his water tepid. This emphasis on sectarianism was certainly rooted in an exilic worldview based on Saddam-era persecution. However, it was also one of the few ways for new political elites to claim some "nominal representativeness" in a context where they had no actual support (Harling 2012, 64). In inciting sectarianism, many elites attempted to displace the fault line that divided exiles and locals so that they could garner greater local backing (Harling 2012, 64).[54]

A dramatic manifestation of this forced religious recognition in everyday life was what Iraqis overwhelmingly described as one of the most alarming features of the surge

[53] Evidence from Wikileaks suggests that Iran had close to 200 former Iraqi pilots assassinated as part of a revenge campaign for their participation in the Iran-Iraq war years earlier. This assassination campaign is estimated to have prompted the exodus of close to 800 additional pilots. This assassination campaign cut across sectarian lines, with 36 Shiʿi pilots gunned down in the Karradah neighbourhood of Baghdad during Ramadan in 2005. In recognition of the severe threat they faced, former Iraqi fighter pilots were given safe haven in the Kurdish north by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani (ABC News 2010).

[54] This attempt to use sectarianism to political advantage was buttressed by the centrality of ethno-sectarian identity to CPA policies, which were largely based on a sectarian reading of Iraqi history and communities. Such policies included: the push for federalism along ethno-sectarian lines—what Kali Rubaii (2019a) describes as a "tripartheid" of Iraq into a Shiʿi south, a Sunni center-west, and a Kurdish north-east; the introduction of the word "sect" in the 2005 Iraqi constitution; the use of T-walls to segregate Baghdad neighbourhoods into Sunni and Shiʿi zones, effectively isolating people from each other and territorializing sect in a way that had never previously existed (Gregory 2008); and the issuing of identity cards that allowed for sectarian identification through the mention of places names, surnames, and sometimes even religion (Khalili 2013).

in sectarian violence in 2006—08: the identification and, often, the killing of young men based on their first names. Given that certain first names are historically associated with Shiʿa (e.g. Ali; Hussein) and others with Sunnis (e.g. Omar; Bakr), militias in Baghdad seeking to establish control through an ethno-sectarian consolidation of various neighbourhoods began using first names as a basis upon which to execute young men they thought belonged to a different sect.

Iraqi poet-in-exile, Manal al-Shaikh, wrote poignantly about this fear of the name:

> My name
> I heard them calling my name
> Before replying, I thought for a while
> And I asked myself
> Does the world have one gate?
> And one destination?
> If I replied
> Would I return?[55]

Imm Hadi, a mother of five children who had been living in Amman for five years when I met her in 2012, evoked the same sense of fear articulated by al-Shaikh while explaining why she and her family left Baghdad. "I had a nephew, his name was Bakr, and he had to leave school due to his name. They kept asking him, 'Why is that your name?' They hated certain names. They killed 150 students because their names were wrong (*asmaʾhom ghalat*)."

[55] As recited in "Fire Won't Eat Me Up." *Al Jazeera* 2012, http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/poetsofprotest/2012/08/2012829145239423558.html)

In our conversations, Reem also told me that after 2003 she began paying attention to people's sectarian affiliation, something that she had never done before. She vehemently denied that this reflected any inherently sectarian instincts on her part; rather, it was necessary in a context where the grounds for recognition had been altered. "Maybe the person who is listening to me will say, 'No, she is looking out for her people.' This is not true. Because I was living in Iraq before 2003, we were Muslim, Christians, Sunnis, Shia. All together, as one mosaic."[56] Reem interlocked her fingers forcefully at this point before continuing: "There were no differences, believe me, I would not ask anybody, 'Are you Sunni, are you Shiʿa, are you Christian?' No! Never, never in my life! However, after 2003, yes! Because they are burning people alive, they are killing them. Because you hold a name for which you are not responsible!" In her ethnographic study of internally displaced farming families living in Iraqi Kurdistan, Kali Rubaii (2019a) also found a shifting understanding of Iraq's historical diversity. Whereas this diversity had previously been Iraq's strength and richness, in the post-2003 period many of her interlocutors viewed it as a profound problem in response to which they felt that that they had little choice but to take up "sectarian categories as the only route to survival" (Rubaii 2019a, 136). Reem explained that she grew tired of having to attend to others in this manner. Specifically, it was not only the fact and threat of such religious recognition on her life—the chance of being burned alive—that weighed on her, but equally that she

[56] Iraqis often used the term "mosaic" to describe Iraq. Their use of the term was positive, describing a cultural, religious, historical, and social diversity that fit together more or less harmoniously. This metaphor has a long history in Orientalist and Middle East Studies, where it has been used as a useful shorthand for the region's tremendous geographic, political, socio-economic, linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity. However, use of the metaphor has also been criticized as presenting an ahistorical picture of the region, rather than actually describing the dynamic and complex ways in which different traits are interrelated or how they have changed over time (see Eickelman 1998, 13–14, 48–52, 202).

was forced to become a certain type of person, one who had to ask and care about such questions in order to survive.

This forced (mis)recognition of people according to sect was compounded by a more general sense of difference that returnees brought with them. Speaking to this issue, Amina was at pains to make it clear that what disturbed her in returnees was not their religion, but rather the fact that, in coming from elsewhere, they necessarily brought part of that elsewhere with them. The sheer number of places people returned from—Syria, Dubai, Iran, England, Jordan, the United States—meant that 'strangers' were seemingly everywhere (see Haddad and Rizvi 2007). Crucially, Amina highlighted how these myriad differences made it seem as though returnees were rootless, which paradoxically unsettled her own comfort in Baghdad.

> It is not specifically religious; it is just that they are without identity. You cannot understand what they are, where they are from. Because we know our people. We know our people, we know where everyone is from, this person is from outside [Iraq], this person is from the south, and this person is from the north. Now, some of them went to Jordan and came back, some of them went to Dubai and came back, some of them went to Iran and came back. Each returned with their difference. Therefore, they lost their roots. Each one brought something from the place they came from. They are not Iraqi. They are not the people we grew up with. I know Iraqis, I am fifty-five years old, I grew up with them, and these are not our people. We found that they are another kind of people. So when the stranger (*gharīb*) came to Iraq, we knew they were strangers, they are not from our culture, they have another culture, which is different from ours. Now, they became the

> majority and they made everything their culture, so we find ourselves strangers in our country. Because we could not become one of them. They took the place.

In theorizing the figure of the stranger, Julia Kristeva (1991, 41, 96) argues that we rarely ask how exactly someone can actually be a stranger, and, importantly, that not all differences actually make someone a stranger. Amina's claim is that the status of the stranger is not about a fixed and clear outsider-insider categorization; it also has little to do with legal status, since she and the newly returned exiles were all ostensibly 'Iraqi.' Who, then, is the stranger? Georg Simmel (1950) proposed that the stranger be understood as different from both the 'outsider,' who has no relation to the group, and the 'wanderer,' who has no intention of staying. The stranger, for Simmel (1950, 402), is

> [...] the person who comes today and stays tomorrow. He is, so to speak, the *potential* wanderer: although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going. He is fixed within a particular spatial group, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries. But his position in this group is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself.

Simmel's definition of the stranger certainly captures many of Amina's feelings concerning the returned exiles: the differences they brought with them, the way in which they were unmoored from the history of Baghdad, and the fact that they came and stayed. However, Amina also suggests that the status of the stranger can be shifted onto others. That is, even though she had not yet left Baghdad, it was precisely there, in the place that she knew so well and whose people she felt she belonged to, that she first

became a stranger.[57] By returning to Iraq in large numbers, and by being politically dominant, the exiles were able to displace, to estrange, those who were already living in Iraq, even before any of them physically moved elsewhere. The reference group against which the stranger is measured, then, can and does shift; in this sense, everyone is always already potentially a stranger, irrespective of official insider-outsider status.

The displacement felt by Amina because she was no longer able to recognize others was also expressed by Jad. He was more explicit, however, in highlighting the class dimensions that made recognition difficult. This class dimension was grounded in a long established rural-urban divide in Iraq. For instance, in the 1950s, the term *shruqi* was used by urbanites in Baghdad to stigmatize rural migrants settling in slums on the city's periphery. By the 1990s, it was used derogatorily to denote poor militant Shiʿa in those same areas. It was from such areas that, in the post-2003 period, Shiʿi militias, such as Jeish al-Mahdi, drew many of their recruits (Chatelard 2012, 369).[58] Similarly, Harling (2012, 70) highlights how in 2008 urban elites in Falluja and Mosul often complained about the local security forces, which were dominated by people from peripheral areas. Many of the Iraqis I met had been middle class professionals and civil servants in Baghdad. They too complained of the fact that newly arrived politicians with little local influence often recruited from rural or peripheral populations, further adding to the changes in the city's demographics. They described poorer exiles and rural

[57] In fact, she used the Arabic word *gharīb* to describe both the returnees and herself. The term *gharīb* is often used to describe Arab individuals who are not personally known. Unlike the term *ajnabi*—which is used to designate those of a different legal nationality, applies mainly to non-Arab foreigners, and is largely a strict in/out category—*gharīb* signals a strangeness that is fundamentally affective rather than legal or bureaucratic. When people speak of feeling estranged or in exile, they use the expression, *ḥasset bi-l-ghurba*—a feeling that varies over time and across places.

[58] Jeish al-Mahdi was an Iraqi militia established in June 2003 by Muqtada al-Sadr, an Iraqi Shia cleric. It rose to prominence in the post-2003 period for being a key player in the armed resistance against US-led forces in Iraq. The militia was disbanded in 2008.

migrants as *ḥuthāla*, an Arabic term meaning "dregs," "trash," or "scum." When applied to individuals, *ḥuthāla* was understood to mean "worthless people." This framing of what was happening in Baghdad permeated all of the accounts I heard of the post-2003 situation, alerting me to the class and urban-rural tensions that were at play in people's sense of comfort. Jad explained:

> The appropriate people (*an-nās al-munāsibīn*), the teachers and scholars, they are all gone. Only the ignorant remain here [in Baghdad]. New people, new faces. They do not seem like common Iraqis, you cannot recognize them. Most of them came from Iran, but that is not the issue really, because there are categories of people in all countries, including here [in Jordan]. For example, the poor, the destitute, the ignorant, the uneducated, the street vendors—they became ministers! Nouri al-Maliki [Iraq's Prime Minister in 2012] used to make rosaries in Syria! My brother-in-law's cousin was an ambulance driver in Saddam's personal escort. He was a soldier with no diploma or anything. After 2003, he joined Jeish Al-Mahdi [a Shiʿi militia] and he slaughtered people. Since he was part of Saddam's bodyguards, he could tell Jeish al-Mahdi where these people resided, and go and kill them. In honour of this service, they made him the Minister of Cultural Heritage in Iraq, despite not having any degrees! We were shocked, we saw him on TV. Qahtan al-Jabouri.[59] We were surprised! He used to come over to our house and clean the car. Now, he is a minister in the government! Not just any minister, he is the Minister of Cultural Heritage, which requires him to be educated. Is it possible for a country

[59] Qahtan al-Jabouri's formal title was Minister of State for Tourism and Antiquities.

> to be built this way? No, it is not possible. This person is ignorant, he cannot build the country.

I could find no documentation to support Jad's claims that either al-Maliki or al-Jabouri were as uneducated as he claimed. In fact, both have advanced university degrees from Iraqi universities: Al-Maliki earned an MA from Baghdad University, and al-Jabouri a PhD from al-Mustansariya University.[60] The important issue, however, is that rather than base his critique on their sectarian or political affiliations, or even their alleged engagement in violence (in the case of al-Jabouri), Jad focused on their ostensible lack of education and experience for their positions. At a time when sectarian rhetoric was free-floating, this argument based on class is telling in explaining what aspects of post-2003 Iraq alienated many of its citizens.[61] I understand the salience of class for my Iraqi friends not as an idiosyncrasy, but rather as a reflection of the historical depth of middle-class identity in many Arab cities. Writing about middle class identity in the Middle East, Keith Watenpaugh (2006, 8, emphasis added), for instance, argues that "members of this class distinguished themselves from the region's ruling Sunni Muslim oligarchy *and subaltern class of urban and rural poor*."

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[60] However, it should be noted that corruption in the education sector post-2003 was rampant, and there are many government and news reports of high-level civil servants purchasing fake degrees (Abdul-Kadir and Yacoub 2011). For instance, in an al-Jazeera article on Iraqi intellectuals, the Iraqi Ministry of Interior is quoted as saying that as many as 9000 fake degrees had been obtained by civil servants (Schweitzer 2013). I am not claiming this is the case for either al-Maliki or al-Jabouri, but wish to contextualise Jad's accusations.

[61] Phebe Marr (2007) notes that while many of Iraq's new political class was highly educated, often in scientific and technical subjects, most of them had almost no experience in any sort of governance or leadership position. Fully 76% of the new ministers in the 2003—05 governments, for example, were newcomers. This contributed to failures in consolidating a functioning central government and effectively tackling pressing national issues. Moreover, in an assessment of these new leaders' vision for Iraq, Marr notes that most did not focus on economic development, even though polls of the general population regularly emphasized the need for jobs and for adequate services, such as electricity (Marr 2006).

The fear that this 'rule of the ignorant' sowed was unmistakable. Dana, Jad's sister, a former high school teacher in Baghdad, constantly spoke of being afraid of the "new wave of people."

> You get scared of them because you do not know them. We Iraqis know everyone's features in Iraq; you know whether he is a doctor, an engineer, an officer, a military man. You know them, they are from wealthy families, from a respectable part of society, but now, you fear your neighbour, there is no trust because they changed the people and replaced them with new ones. Those who stayed are rubbish (*ḥuthāla*). Just imagine, for example, the garbage man who cleans up the street, imagine that he gets to be the General Manager of a municipality in the capital. The guy who gathers dry bread is assigned to the Ministry of Trade. The person who used to give injections, he did not study, he just knows how to give injections, so he becomes the Minister of Health!

Amina, when describing her return to her alma mater, al-Mustansariyah University in Baghdad, expressed a similar shock at the class differences she witnessed:

> Amina: I did not want to leave. I told my son all the time, "If there are only one hundred people left in Iraq, I will be one of them! I will not leave!" But after, when I saw that this Iraq is not ours … really I felt that. This is not ours, they are not our people. Not our culture. Everything is finished; everything is different from our time. There are many people who came from outside. It is changed, different. In Baghdad, it is another kind of classification, the society is … well, for instance, they are all graduates, they are all very cultured. You know when I returned to my university,

where I graduated twenty years ago—I went to pick up my diploma—I found another kind of student, another way of dressing, another kind of … something terrible.

Giulia: Do you mean that it was more religious?

Amina: No, not religious, just, it is, what do you call it, they have no society, they are all dirty.

The emphasis that Jad, Dana, Amina, and others placed on outsidedness and class over sectarianism has been interpreted as an idealized narrative, one that evidences a refusal to acknowledge that sectarian harmony pre-2003 was largely a myth (Sluglett 2015). This emphasis, however, can also be understood as stemming from the very real attachment that urban middle-class elites, particularly in Baghdad, had for Iraqi nationalism, even while they remained attached to regional and religious identities (Browers et al. 2012; Haddad and Rizvi 2007, 67–68; Visser 2007, 21). The endurance of this nationalism needs to be understood as rooted in the long history of Iraq as a geographical concept, one which was well established in the classic Islamic era and which has remained relevant to the present day (Northedge 2007). This attachment can more broadly be understood as an attachment to the idea of unity—of the "mosaic" that Reem described—as opposed to the divisions that were hardened in the post-2003 period. In this sense, the refusal to accuse anyone local of being responsible for unsettling their sense of comfort indexes a specific understanding of what Iraq was and should be.

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In his essay, *Das Unheimliche*, Freud (2003[1953]) argued that the "uncanny" (which in the original German literally translates as 'unhomely', but means that which is

cast out or has an abject quality) is not just mysterious, weird, or bothersome. The uncanny is not troubling because it is unknown. Rather, that which is uncanny is so troubling, so uncomfortably strange, precisely because it once seemed so familiar. For Freud, the uncanny object that is strangely familiar provokes both an attraction and repulsion, which in turn generates a profound sense of discomfort—one that most often compels a person to reject the object. For the overwhelming majority of Iraqis I met in Jordan, the physical changes to Baghdad, the inability to recognize themselves or the people they were living with, and the changed model of recognition that became dominant, each combined to make the city uncanny. That is, Baghdad was at once comfortable, in the sense of being the place where they had lived most of their lives and to which they had deep attachments, and yet profoundly disturbing. Like the mannequin that unsettles us *because* it is at once lifelike and lifeless, making it difficult for us to know whether it is human or plastic, Baghdad disturbed my interlocutors because it was both home and not-home, making it hard for them to orient themselves. This instability of place oriented Iraqis away from Iraq long before they chose to physically move to Jordan. In a first instance, it compelled many of them to seek refuge in the north.

Moving North

As individuals with a keen sense of national identity and of Iraq as a unified nation, many Baghdad residents, especially middle-class professionals such as my friends, opted to travel north to Kurdistan in the years following the 2003 invasion. For years, Kurdistan has had a special autonomous status within Iraq. However, while an autonomy agreement was reached between the Kurdish opposition and the Iraqi government in 1970, it was not until the establishment of a US no-fly zone following the

1991 Gulf War that Kurdistan became in many ways a *de facto* state (Stansfield and Ahmadzadeh 2007). From then on, it was responsible for its own domestic governance, controlled its borders, held elections, and had its own flag and national anthem.

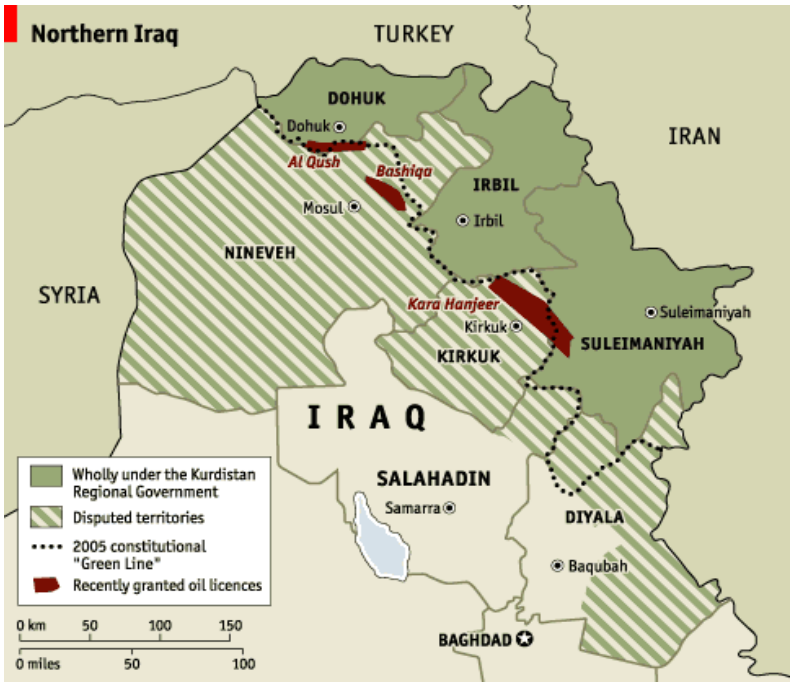

Figure 3 – Map of Northern Iraq. The Economist 2011.

Because of its autonomous status, relatively mixed population (despite being majority Kurdish), and strong economy, Kurdistan became an attractive destination for many Iraqis. Given that it formally remained a federal part of Iraq, all Iraqi citizens should have been able to travel freely to Kurdistan. In practice, however, there were checkpoints at land borders and at airports into the region, meaning that movement was controlled. Furthermore, until 2012, Iraqis from other parts of the country required a Kurdish citizen to sponsor entry into Kurdistan.[62] Renewal of residence permits was inconsistent, with extensions varying in length and often depending on a person's

[62] Though this requirement has since been lifted, Iraqis still can only obtain a one-week residence permit at land borders or the airport, and still require a sponsor if they wish to work in the region (DRC 2016).

background or place of origin (DRC 2016). Despite these restrictions, many Iraqis attempted to move to Kurdistan to recover a sense of comfort within Iraq before contemplating the option of leaving the country altogether.

Hossam and Aida, for instance, initially moved to Suleimaniyah, a city in northeastern Kurdistan, before deciding to come to Jordan. Hossam explained that work in Kurdistan was hard to come by, and that he did not like his time there. When I inquired why, he replied, "They treat you like a foreigner. I had to pass security like in a different country. And I got annoyed by this." He contrasted this to his treatment in Jordan by adding, "Here in Jordan, no. They are very nice, security was very nice. They just told me that if a Jordanian applies for my position, they have to give him the job. I said, ok, it is your country after all." Hossam highlighted the differential impact of being treated as a foreigner in a place that he considered his own versus being treated as a foreigner in a place that he understood to belong to others. Whereas being treated as a foreigner in Jordan did not bother him, he felt that nothing about him should have made him a foreigner in Kurdistan—a region that he conceived of as part of Iraq. Being recognized and treated as an 'other' at home profoundly disturbed him. Hossam closed his argument against Kurdistan by saying, "You know they call us *ʿarabana*?! The Kurds, they call the Arabs, *ʿarabana*." A colloquial word for 'wheelbarrow,' *ʿarabana* is often associated with poverty, and was clearly an insult.

Like Hossam and Aida, Dina was also a Baghdad resident who made an initial move to Kurdistan, settling in the city of Dohuk. A former professor of agriculture at the University of Baghdad, she moved to Kurdistan with her five children after her husband, also a professor, had been killed and she had been targeted as part of a violent purge of academics starting in 2005. Though she was able to live and even work in Dohuk, she

explained, “Life was very hard because of the language barrier, the high cost of living and, worst of all, because of the racism against Iraqis from other areas of the country. They made me hate myself and everything around me.” In addition to racism, Dina mentioned the language barrier. While Arabic is an official language for government purposes, Kurdish is the most widely spoken language. Iraqis who had spent some time in Kurdistan explained that, officially and unofficially, Kurds sought to emphasis Kurdish over Arabic in an effort to distinguish the region from the rest of Iraq.

For Iraqis such as Hossam, Aida, and Dina, the north of Iraq represented not a halcyon zone in a chaotic landscape, but rather an area of unexpected and startling difference. Their classification as foreigners, the predominance of Kurdish in public life, and the need to secure visas and sponsors all worked to undermine their attachments to Iraq as a country to which they felt all Iraqis could belong. This estrangement compounded experiences of displacement in Baghdad, leading the fiction of the unified nation to slowly crumble. When describing his family’s stay in the city of Suleimaniyah, Hossam emphasized the ways in which life remained fundamentally unstable:

> It was so hard to stay there! We had a residence permit for only two years so that I could work at a university there. After that, we had to renew it every two years. They told me that if it were not renewed, then we would have to leave. The rents were also very high and we had to move apartments a number of times. I just grew so tired of this, really. I just want to see my feet!

Hossam’s description of stability as the ability to see his feet was striking. Even though Suleimaniyah provided security, both physical and economic, the fact that a residence permit had to be renewed every two years, and that rents were exorbitant, meant that

there was no way to avoid feeling constantly on the move while living there. It was this feeling of constantly chasing comfort that Hossam wanted to leave behind. Aida, expressed a similar view: "It is beautiful, Kurdistan, but I do not want to go there again. Even though we went there for our honeymoon. I worry about the future. It is fine now, but what about in ten years? You can't count on it."

Within the literature on the anthropology of violence and suffering, strong emphasis has been placed on the ways in which people creatively work through and re-inhabit their worlds after episodes of violence (see, Das et al. 2000; Das, Kleinman, and Lock 2001; Das 2006; Nordstrom 1997; Schmidt and Schröder 2001). For many Iraqis, however, at issue was not (only) how they were to re-inhabit a wounded world, but what the world could—should—do for them.[63] That is, they were searching for a place that they could count on and, especially, count on not to change in unexpected ways in the future. Hence, the felt ambivalence about Kurdistan on the part of Aida, who wanted not only a place that was stable now, but that would remain so well beyond the future horizon she could see.

Conclusion

The views of Tareq, the young man whose refusal to return to Iraq opened this chapter, were emblematic of a broader sentiment felt by many Iraqis I met in Jordan. Though Tareq remained attached to Iraq, and expressed in his desire to visit, he did not want to

[63] Similarly, in her study of how people came to re-inhabit home in the Tamil regions of Sri Lanka following intense warfare, Sharika Thiranagama (2009, 131) explains how people desired not only to re-inhabit the world, but also for "the world to change for the subject."

return permanently, even if the situation stabilized. This chapter has explored how attachment to a place, its pasts, and its communities does not necessarily make that place 'functional' in the sense of making it possible for people to feel comfortable there. For many Iraqis, this growing discomfort was provoked first by a sense of unfulfilled hope and lost potential following the 2003 US-led invasion. Even among those Iraqis who were opposed to the invasion, there was still hope that the invasion could be recuperated to generate positive changes for Iraq. The withering of this hope made the horizon recede for many Iraqis, who felt that despite all of their considerable efforts, they could not make their lives better in Iraq. Compounding this loss of the future, profound alterations to Baghdad (and more broadly, Iraq), as a material and communal place, estranged many Iraqis from spaces that were once familiar to them.

In a context of continuing violence and political repression, the loss of hope and the sense of discomfort at being estranged in a place they considered home is what made life in Iraq untenable for many. Amina expressed this when she spoke of how hard she had fought to stay in Iraq. "I struggled to stay until something would change. Really, it was a struggle to stay there. However, when I left Iraq and came here [to Jordan], I asked [myself], Why did I stay all this time, struggling? For what did I stay all these years, waiting for what?" Similarly, Tareq's mother, who had been resettled in Chicago, expressed how much she liked America through a lament she shared with her son: "She told me that she was sorry she wasted her life in Iraq. Two days after arriving there, she said, 'I'm sorry I wasted my life there in Iraq, suffering and being scared for my family.'" Like Amina and Tareq's mother, my Iraqi friends repeatedly asked me: Why would they have stayed and endured violence and the daily threat of death when they saw no future and did not feel at home?

This pervasive sense that Iraq could not be the ground for a liveable life, however, did not lead to immediate departures from the country. Rather, it often precipitated a series of concrete actions that were undertaken progressively and, in their cumulative effects, served to detach Iraqis from Iraq practically. These logistical steps compounded and confirmed the finality of their time in Iraq. Unlike other refugees, such as the Palestinians, who left interrupted lives behind, evidenced materially by symbolic objects such as house keys, Iraqis' departures tended to be far more definitive, evidenced by neat folders filled with the vital paperwork that bureaucratically certifies a person. They obtained high school diplomas, university transcripts and degrees, birth and marriage certificates, passports, visas, medical reports, work attestations and reference letters, land deeds, and other legal papers. They often chose to finish their degrees in order to have formal certificates. They explored resettlement opportunities and some even began refugee processing procedures while in Iraq through special US resettlement programs for Iraqis who had worked with US forces or organizations. Most significantly, when they were able to do so, many sold houses and businesses.

Therefore, in stark contrast to Syrian refugees who overwhelmingly crossed into Jordan on foot at various unofficial points, and with little more than their clothing, the Iraqis I met came prepared. In part, this has much to do with geography: the distance between Baghdad and Amman is thousands of kilometres of unforgiving desert, which makes it impossible for those without the means to pay for the requisite transport and visas, and for people to cross illegally. However coerced it may have felt, then, the decision to leave Iraq for Jordan was one that only certain Iraqis could actually make. Tareq elucidated this invisible triage that determined mobility when he explained why

some of his family members were still in Baghdad, while he and his immediate family had left:

> They cannot leave Iraq. If you go to Baghdad now, everyone wants to leave. Really, honestly. However, maybe some of them cannot afford to live outside, or they have a steady job and salary [in Iraq], so they stay. Because when you leave Iraq, you have a mysterious future, you do not know what will happen to you. What will you encounter? Therefore, they do not have the courage to leave. However, they have to bear a difficult situation.

Willing and able to take the necessary leap into the mysteriousness that all departures inaugurate, many of my friends initially felt relief and comfort when they arrived in Amman. Despite the fact that they were now in a different country, they did not feel fundamentally displaced so much as in a place where their sense of comfort and of self could potentially once again stabilise. Reem expressed this feeling by poignantly telling me, "It is like our culture. We did not find any big differences between us. And you know what? I found myself here more than in my country. Really, you see yourself [here] more than in your country (*tashūf nefsak aktar min bilādak*)." Iraqis initially found common ground in Jordan. This sense of familiarity, together with the perception of finally being in an orderly place, meant that Jordan initially felt more comfortable, more like home—like the "old Iraq"—than Iraq itself.

2— GUESTS OF NO ONE

ʿAdel was sitting on a paper-thin mattress on the floor, a muted television flashing in front of him. A cantankerous fan filled the room with a droning hum. ʿAdel had been a university student in chemical engineering at Baghdad University in the years immediately preceding his arrival in Amman in 2010. As a student, ʿAdel had organised lectures at the university addressing the fraught political and ethno-sectarian situation in Iraq, together with some professors and fellow students. These events drew the unwanted attention of militia members at the University, who warned ʿAdel and his colleagues to cease their activities or face reprisals; they continued despite these threats, until one of the group members—a close friend of ʿAdel's—was assassinated. Though ʿAdel had not wanted to interrupt his studies, when his father found out about his extracurricular activities, he immediately forced him to leave for Jordan, where ʿAdel's uncle had been living since 2006. I asked ʿAdel what he thought of Jordan when he first arrived, and he fiddled with his laptop for a few minutes before explaining that his feelings and impressions had shifted over time, and that, though he once felt welcomed in the country, he could no longer envision a life of "dignity" in Jordan.

> At first look, I felt Jordan was good country, because I found electricity everywhere! In Iraq, this is a problem, you cannot imagine! When I left Iraq, at night after 11pm, it was so bad, so bad. You could not see your hand. Then I came here and I saw people going out after 10pm, going to the supermarket, shopping, hanging out, and I was shocked at first! Because this was not happening to me in Iraq! I had a job in Iraq, a small job, I went to my job at 6am, then university, and I

went to see my friend from 6pm to 10pm; after that, no one was in the street. *No one*. Because the situation was very bad. Generally, in Iraq, there is no life, because I want to live with my dignity. And in Iraq, you cannot live with your dignity, because you have to be sad in Iraq. To see that there is no electricity, and shut up; to see someone killed, and shut up; to see that there is not enough work and there is corruption, and shut up. Everyone has to be silent. And I cannot do this. So [when I arrived in Jordan], I felt shocked, and at first, I loved Jordan. I loved Jordan, I loved the atmosphere, and I loved rules. Because actually they have very good rules, and they have a system in general. A good system. In addition, it is an Arab country and Muslim. Then after one year, I hated my life. I hated my life in Jordan; I did not hate Jordan, but there is … they have a very … different way of thinking. Now, even if I had a job here, an apartment, if I were married, everything, I would travel. I cannot stay here. Because here, there is no dignity.

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Iraqis encountered a powerful and pervasive discourse concerning hospitality when they arrived in Jordan. On the scale of both the state and the street, hospitality was the framework within which their presence was understood, managed, and experienced (Lacroix 2004; Mason 2011). In general, Iraqis were termed "guests" rather than "refugees." In October 2008, for instance, then Prime Minister Nader Al-Dhahabi stated, "Iraqis in Jordan are brothers and guests in their second country until the end of their ordeal" (Al-Dustour 2008). This hospitality discourse consistently highlighted two issues: the extent to which Jordan's hospitality placed a heavy burden on its people and their meagre resources, particularly water; and, that despite these challenges, Iraqis, as fellow Arabs, were welcome indefinitely.

Hospitality toward Iraqis in Jordan was rooted in a history of bilateral relations between Jordan and Iraq. Following the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the British established monarchies in Jordan and Iraq, both headed by members of the Hashemites, a royal family tracing its origins to Mecca. More recently, Jordan-Iraq ties solidified in the context of the Iran-Iraq war, when Jordan immediately and unreservedly backed Iraq. This political alliance had crucial economic dimensions: Jordan received economic support and cheap oil from Iraq in exchange for the use of Jordan's port of Aqaba and overland trucking routes, which were Iraq's main supply lines during the war with Iran.[64] Moreover, from the late 1950s onwards, Jordan maintained an open border with Iraq, receiving members of the overthrown Hashemite dynasty in 1958, as well as regime opponents in the subsequent decades. Iraqi entrepreneurs have also been allowed to use Amman as their base for regional and international activities (Chatelard 2009). However, as a society-wide discourse, hospitality was anchored in far more than simply bilateral relations between Iraq and Jordan. Crucially, it mobilized a long history of transregional mobilities, linkages, and identities (Argenti 2017; Blumi 2013; Watenpaugh 2015). The concept of hospitality also resonated with Jordanians' "moral universe" and "normative repertoire" (Isotalo 2014, 60). Importantly, as guests, Iraqis were always already, albeit conditionally, included in the social world of Jordan.

This chapter begins by charting the history of transregionality in the Middle East to show how this broader context has informed how hospitality has been implemented

[64] This economic integration was furthered in 1989, when Jordan helped establish the short-lived Arab Cooperation Council, an economic-political alliance between Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Yemen that was meant to ease regulations on capital and labour flows and create a unified negotiating position on debt repayments to Gulf monarchies.

in Jordan. It then offers an analysis of the application of hospitality vis-à-vis refugees in Jordan that is grounded in an understanding of hospitality as a social system rather than a moral value. Finally, it turns to an ethnographic engagement with hospitality's limits, and how these were experienced and ultimately resisted by Iraqis. In exploring these topics, I argue that hospitality at once stabilised and unsettled Iraqis' sense of comfort in Amman, transforming Jordan from "a good country," where "you feel you are a human being," to one where, for many, no "dignity" was possible.

Jordan in Transregional Perspective

Described by almost everyone I spoke to as a *"maḥaṭa* or station—where everyone is from elsewhere and often going elsewhere, whether physically or imaginatively—Amman, and Jordan more generally, is a place where the foreigner is a familiar, even intimate, figure (see Tobin 2016). For the tens of thousands of Iraqis who relocated to Jordan in recent years, moving to the country meant entering a space where the provisionality of in/out categories of belonging were laid bare.[65] Doreen Massey (2005) has described this situation as "throwntogetherness," or the way that all places are made of multiple trajectories. The "throwntogetherness" of places means that we need to move beyond a simple identity politics to an understanding of the processes of "negotiation" through which people confront difference and "the range of means through which accommodation, anyways always provisional, may be reached or not" (Massey 2005,

[65] In making this argument, I build upon discussions with other researchers I met while in Amman. These colleagues gestured toward the ambivalent attachments both outsiders and insiders have to Jordan, and the utility of thinking about the situation of Iraqis within rather than outside of this ambivalence. I am particularly indebted to Kim Stolz, Kate Washington, and Géraldine Chatelard, whose insights and provocations pushed my research in directions it would not otherwise have taken.

154). Importantly, such processes are inherently localised, historical, and contingent, always an "invention" based on "judgement, learning, improvisation" (Massey 2005, 162). Nowhere is this improvised, contingent, and invented nature of place more evident than in Jordan.

When I first met Walid in 2012, he was working as a Refugee Status Determination Officer with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Amman. UNHCR had been actively recruiting Arabic speakers from all over the world to deal both with Iraqi refugees and the steadily increasing number of Syrians entering daily; not knowing where he was from, I asked him if he was Jordanian. He nodded, but then hesitated, his 'Yes' hanging in the air as if waiting to see if other words would follow. His answer was typical of most Jordanians in its complexity and multi-layeredness:

> Actually, my father is Nigerian and my mother is from Maʿan [a city in southern Jordan]. I know what you are thinking, how can I be Jordanian if my father wasn't?[66] Before 1948, my father travelled to Palestine, to the West Bank, where he was a merchant. He was still there after the war in 1948 [between Israel and the Arab states], when the West Bank became part of Jordan. Then, when King Abdullah I granted all Palestinians in the West Bank citizenship, my father became Jordanian and eventually moved to Amman. Also, now that I think about it, my grandmother on my mother's side is actually Syrian!

Another close Jordanian friend, Majid, was similarly from elsewhere via Palestine. His grandfather hailed from Tunis and had migrated to Jerusalem in the 1930s. After the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, Majid's grandfather similarly found himself under Jordanian

[66] To this day, Jordanian women cannot pass citizenship onto their children.

sovereignty and with Jordanian citizenship. Unlike Walid's father, however, he established himself in the West Bank rather than in Amman. In 1967, when the West Bank was occupied by Israel, Majid's grandfather's family was displaced into Jordan proper and ended up settling in Amman.

The stories of what brought Walid's and Majid's families to Jordan centred, like those of many in Amman, on war and its dislocating effects (see Tobin 2012). The modern history of Amman is often dated to 1878, when the Ottomans chose it as a resettlement area for a few hundred Circassian refugee families from the Russian Empire. Since then, Amman has seen the arrival, transit, and more or less permanent, more or less legal, resettlement of myriad ethnic, religious, and national communities (Hanania 2011). While Amman contained only about 2,000 people in the early 1900s, a series of forced displacements into Jordan quickly swelled the population (Ricca 2007, 34).[67] These included the arrival of people from the Najd region of Arabia fleeing the military advances that consolidated the Wahhabist rule of Ibn Saud in 1902 (Cicek 2017, 122), as well as the arrival of Syrian Arab nationalists and Druze fleeing repressive French rule in the late 1920s. Following these early migrations was the arrival of Kurds and Turks and the progressive settlement of local Bedouin tribes. The establishment of the Transjordan state under the British Mandate for Palestine in 1922 saw Amman's population again expand significantly, as the burgeoning bureaucracy not only required colonial administrators, but also attracted people from neighbouring cities. The following decades also saw the arrival of Armenian refugees fleeing Turkey, as well as the steady movement of Palestinian businesses away from Palestine, where competition

[67] Amman did see a small influx of Syrian, Palestinian, and Lebanese merchants in 1903, most of whom came following the establishment of the Hijaz railway linking Istanbul to Mecca.

with Jewish enterprises proved challenging. However, despite serving as a destination for various migrants, by 1947 Amman's population stood at just over 30,000 (Doan 1992, 27).

The unprecedented influxes of approximately 70,000 and 200,000 Palestinians following the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967, respectively, are watershed events in Amman's history. It was after 1967 that the sense of Amman as a "Palestinian city" was consolidated, an image that persists to this day (Shami 2007). Subsequently, the 1970s and 1980s saw the arrival and transit of many Lebanese fleeing the civil war, as well as the arrival of thousands of low-skilled labourers from Egypt, Syria, and Southeast Asia (Chatelard 2010c). The 1991 Gulf War, in which Jordan sided with Iraq, saw the punitive expulsion of nearly 300,000 Jordanians from Kuwait;[68] these 'returnees' were very often second-generation Jordanians from the Gulf who had never lived in, and some of whom had never even been to, Jordan (Van Hear 1995). Also a result of the 1991 Gulf War and the subsequent international sanctions placed on Iraq, thousands of Iraqis fled to Jordan over the following decade (Chatelard 2009). While many of these Iraqis did not stay, approximately 250,000 remained and were living in Jordan on the eve of the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq (Sassoon 2008). The 1990s also saw approximately two million people pass through Amman while either entering or exiting the Middle East, as well as the establishment of small communities of Somali, Sudanese, and Bosnian refugees

[68] Domestically, King Hussein faced a precarious situation in 1991. Compounding economic difficulties that were already fomenting unrest, the implementation of International Monetary Fund restructuring in 1989 set off significant bread riots, to which King Hussein reacted by implementing a program of political liberalization. This combination of economic instability with a suddenly more open public sphere allowed Jordanians to be more vocal, both about their displeasure with the regime and in their support for Iraq. Because of these multiple pressures, Jordan sought to remain neutral in the Gulf War, but eventually aligned with Iraq, a position which cost it dearly in terms of American and Gulf support (Ryan 2004; Shlaim 2009).

(Chatelard 2010c). Finally, since 2003, Amman has experienced two new influxes that are ongoing: the arrival, so far, of approximately 160,000—500,000 Iraqis and 600,000 Syrians.[69] Today, the population of Jordan stands at 9.5 million, 6.6 million of whom are Jordanian citizens and 2.9 million, or fully 30%, of whom are non-Jordanian (Ghazal 2016).[70]

The effects of these myriad movements into Jordan in terms of positioning it as a particularly open and receptive place have been accentuated by three other issues. The first is that, in general, the version of national identity promoted by Jordan's leaders has been a largely inclusive one, aimed at fostering unity between Palestinians and East Bank Jordanians following the 1950 annexation of the West Bank, which Jordan controlled after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. This unified identity was intended to generate spaces for various groups to co-habit (Eshnaiwer 2015; Massad 2001) and, in so doing, legitimate Hashemite rule over the East and West Banks.[71] Though more exclusivist discourses on identity have emerged in recent years (Shlaim 2009, 340),

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[69] For current Syrian refugee figures in Jordan and elsewhere in the Middle East, see: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria. Though most Syrian refugees are in northern Jordan, many also live in Amman. Prior to the establishment of Zaʿatari and other official camps in 2013, Syrians were allowed to self-settle in Jordan, many electing the capital city.

[70] Not only does Amman hold within it diverse populations, but it has equally welcomed variegated and often opposing political groups, "bringing together all of the tendencies in the Middle East political scene: pro-Saddam, anti-Saddam, pro-Baʿath, Kurds, Hamas" (Hamarneh 2007, 36); this list leaves out, crucially, Israelis and Iranians, both of whom have formal representation in the city.

[71] Following the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, the Emirate of Transjordan was established as a British protectorate with Abdullah I, a Hashemite, as its ruler. The Hashemites trace their ancestry to the Hejaz region of the Arabian Peninsula and, more specifically, the city of Mecca; in fact, they claim descent from the Prophet Muhammad. The Hashemites were a driving force behind the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans, and helped draw British promises of Arab independence after the war. These promises materialised only partially, as the Hashemites were given nominal control over some areas, such as Transjordan and Iraq. When Transjordan was granted independence in 1946, Abdullah I became the new nation's first king until his assassination in 1951. As a ruler, Abduallah I sought to implement what Avi Shlaim (2009, 66) terms an "expansionist agenda" that compelled him to grant Jordanian citizenship to West Bank Palestinians (even though they themselves wanted to preserve a separate Palestinian identity) as a way of consolidating his rule over a united East and West Bank.

these have been controlled and manipulated to secure diverse citizens' loyalty to the state, with both King Hussein and now King Abdullah II publicly speaking about the equality of Jordanians of all origins (Ryan 2010).[72] The goal of securing the population's loyalty has been particularly important given the fact that Jordanians of Palestinian origin make up the majority of the population (ʿAdely 2012). For instance, in 2002, King Abdullah II (2002) launched an initiative to assert Jordanian nationalism called "Jordan First." According to the King, this nationalism should act as "[...] a common denominator between all Jordanians regardless of their origins, orientations, views, talents, faiths or races. [...] It should be adopted by Jordanians in villages, *badia*, camps and cities."[73] This was followed in 2006 by the launch of the government campaign "We are All Jordan," aimed at creating "[...] a comprehensive national perspective based on common visions between the components of Jordanian society [...]."[74] These initiatives sought to foster a sense of loyalty to kingdom rather than kin or other regional identities.[75]

The second factor that has contributed to Jordan's relative receptiveness is that Jordan's ruling family hails from outside of the country. The Hashemites trace their origins to the Arabian Peninsula, specifically to the Hejaz region and the city of Mecca.

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[72] This is not to imply that such equality was either concretely pursued or achieved, only to note that the regime was aware that it needed to navigate questions of identity carefully in order to ensure its own survival.

[73] The mention of villages and *badia* (desert) on the one hand and camps and cities on the other was an indirect way of appealing to East Bank and Palestinian Jordanians, respectively.

[74] For more information on the initiative, see: https://rhc.jo/en/hm-king-abdullah-ii/we-are-all-jordan. Certainly, this strong focus on presenting, evoking, and cultivating a unified identity serves as evidence of the country's significant divisions. Nevertheless, the need for the regime to promote unity also meant that as a rule it tended to eschew divisive rhetoric.

[75] This was a crucial goal for King Abdullah II, who was acutely aware of the consequences his father had faced when choosing to side against the United States during the First Gulf War. In the lead up to the Iraq war, for instance, the "Jordan First" campaign was tied to the fact that Abdullah II intended to support the American effort and thus needed to ensure that citizens were united and, importantly, focused on Jordan rather than regional issues (ʿAdely 2012, 63).

Shadi, a Jordanian friend involved in the Jordanian protest movements in 2011,[76] was convinced of the very real limits on the type of anti-foreigner discourse the Jordanian government could realistically foment against either Iraqis or Syrians without calling attention to its own foreignness. "In the end, they are also not from here," he stated, "and if they push too far, eventually someone says it." In fact, at various times, tribes have invoked the royal family's foreign origins as a way to call into question the legitimacy of its leadership (Massad 2001, 273). The regime thus finds itself in a situation where promoting a largely inclusive discourse—or at the very least, a non-exclusivist one—vis-à-vis various groups in its territory is actually to its long-term advantage.

Finally, Jordan's only purportedly 'indigenous' inhabitants are Bedouin, or semi-nomadic tribes. These tribes, though deeply rooted in various localities throughout the country, nevertheless link their genealogies to ancestors in the Arabian Gulf—genealogies that are crucial to sustaining their local prestige and power (Jungen 2009). The external origins and related historical affinity for and identification with other places on the part of both leaders and local communities therefore generates a place, however contested, that is particularly open to others.

The Ottoman Legacy

Jordan's specific circumstances need to be situated in a much longer regional history characterised by forms of mobility and identity anchored in a socio-spatial logic that

[76] The 2011—12 protests in Jordan were motivated by both economic factors (food and fuel prices, corruption, inflation) and political concerns (lack of electoral reform and resistance to shifting to a constitutional monarchy). King Abdullah II enacted a series of reforms in response, including revisions to the constitution and the establishment of an Independent Election Commission.

neither categorically excluded outsiders from its delineations of belonging nor perceived cross-border movements and linkages as inherently threatening. In fact, in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, belonging was based not only on one's birth in a specific territory, but also on one's origin (*aṣl*)—or genealogical decent—and therefore one's relations to a particular community of people (Kedourie 1984). This particular form of identification was officially encouraged by the Ottoman administration's adoption and formalization of millets, or religious communities, as a way of managing widely dispersed and mixed communities.[77] Consequently, under Ottoman law, neither ethnicity nor citizenship was recognized, and most official documents, such as population registers, categorised people according to religious affiliation.[78]

With the exception of security and taxation, the Ottoman government gave millets a great deal of autonomy. They were permitted to establish and run their own houses of worship; they operated their own educational institutions; they had their own courts to adjudicate on a wide range of family and personal matters; and they were allowed to levy internal taxes. This approach made the law a decidedly communal rather than territorial matter, with individuals cohabiting in the same territory being governed by different rules (Chatty 2010, 50). Movement within the Empire was tolerated and, when economically or politically advantageous, even encouraged or forced (Tekeli 1994). However, wherever individuals found themselves within Ottoman territory, they

[77] The millet system was based on the Islamic concept of *dhimma*, which denotes a covenant of protection for non-Muslims living in a Muslim society, and which is granted in exchange for the payment of certain taxes. *Dhimmi* status was originally applied to Jews, Christians, and Sabians as *Ahl al-Kitab* (People of the Book), but was eventually extended to Sikhs, Zoroastrians, and Mandeans (Chatty 2010).
[78] Religious categories were broadly drawn, with little attention to sub-denominations within particular communities. Fiscal surveys carried out throughout the Empire sometimes supplemented religious affiliation with information on people's status, identifying them as peasant, townsman, or nomad (Kasaba 2010, 28).

remained tied to their millet rather than any particular place, and were subject to its regulations. The fact that communities were spread out throughout the Empire and that individual lives were dictated by their relations to a millet rather than a place, combined with constant movement, resulted in both a social reality defined by diversity and a generalized form of belonging that was social rather than territorial (Chatty 2010, 50).

This non-territorial sense of belonging institutionalized in the millets both allowed for and was bolstered by the extraordinary population movements that accompanied the demise of the Ottoman and other European Empires. Though a full accounting of such movements is beyond the scope of this chapter, suffice it to note that between the 1840s and the 1920s, the Ottoman Empire saw the influx of several million people from the Balkans and the Caucasus. While some of these movements were in response to the establishment of new European states (such as Bulgaria and Romania) or Russian expansion, many were planned as so-called 'population exchanges' under peace treaties with European states and Russia. The people who arrived in the Ottoman Empire were mainly from Muslim communities, and included Circassians, Chechnyans, Daghestanis, Ossetians, Abkhazis, Crimean Tatars, Albanians, Bosnians, and Kosovars.[79] In response to these massive arrivals, the Ottoman administration began developing a series of policies and agencies to manage the new populations. These included the Immigration Law (*Muhacirin Kanunnamesi*) of 1857, which stated that any immigrant family with limited capital would be granted a plot of state land for its use, and was exempt from taxation and conscription for six years as part of an attempt to assist settlement. Importantly, the Ottoman administration insisted on preventing any one

[79] In parallel to these arrivals, this period witnessed the expulsion and massacre of other minorities, most notably the genocide perpetrated against the Armenians (Watenpaugh 2015).

group from becoming a majority in any area of settlement, thus encouraging the movement of smaller communities throughout the Empire (Tekeli 1994).

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, migrants were resettled in a manner that increasingly instrumentalised them, both as sources of labour and as loyal subjects who could control or displace restive populations. The Ottoman state increasingly resettled them in restive border areas, where assistance was needed to bring nomadic populations under control; in areas where it wanted to impose population engineering in favour of Muslim majorities; and in places previously occupied by displaced minorities, particularly Armenians (Watenpaugh 2015, 10–11). Much of Ottoman resettlement work focused on assisting Sunni Muslim, with the implicit understanding that non-Muslims would be taken care of exclusively by their millets. Among other things, this segregation of the Empire's care toward only a segment of its subjects would be an important legacy for post-Ottoman Arab states—one which frequently clashed with the broader sense of non-territorial belonging generated by the policies discussed above. As Watenpaugh (2015, 11) notes,

> The late Ottoman experience with this multilayered transfer and resettlement project anticipates a critical engine of social and historical change. The unremitting frequency, throughout the interwar period and into the postcolonial era, of the displacement and dispossession of communities and populations for the benefit of other, but somehow preferred, displaced and dispossessed populations [...].

Importantly, however, in the midst of this upheaval, many displaced individuals remained committed to the "Ottoman-era values of cohabitation" often protecting

neighbours labelled as “other” or building alliances across sectarian or ethno-national lines (Blumi 2013, 5, 7).

The Ottoman legacy, then, is both one of diversity and voluntary mobility that generated non-territorially based understandings of belonging, and one in which forced displacement became common in the region, inflecting and influencing people’s relations to places and communities. The attachment of origin to a millet (and more generally to paternal descent) rather than exclusively to a specific territory continues to be salient in the Middle East today, and allows for the uncoupling of territorial presence from legal belonging. It is this uncoupling which has created the conditions of possibility for a relatively open and accessible protection space for large numbers of displaced people since it avoids tying the fate of many of those seeking refuge from deeply divisive debates over legal belonging. Further, it is this anticipated (even if never actualised) disassociation of spaces of belonging that have become temporarily overlain that acts to dissipate many tensions, and creates a shared moral space within which those displaced can and do actually live, sometimes for years.

Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism in the Postcolonial Era

Intersecting with this ambiguous Ottoman legacy has been a very specific post-colonial regional setting in which extra-statist nationalisms and ideologies, particularly Arab nationalism, have continuously vied with state nationalism. Paradoxically, in an effort to legitimize their governance, many ruling regimes actually espoused an official pan-Arab nationalism for the state that integrated their territories and peoples into a much large

geopolitical project (Hinnebusch 2001, 141).[80] In Syria, for instance, the 1964 Constitution stated, "The Syrian Arab republic is a part of the Arab homeland. The people in the Syrian Arab region are part of the Arab nation and work and struggle to achieve the Arab nation's comprehensive unity." Similarly, the 1970 Interim Iraqi Constitution stated that the state's "basic objective is the realization of one Arab State [...]" and that "Iraq is part of the Arab Nation."[81] Amatzia Baram (1990, 428) notes that many symbols and rites of Arab states "did not operate according to clear-cut territorial boundaries because they had pan-Arab potential that was often realised."[82] Moreover, before 1970, government efforts to tie a population to a particular pre-Islamic and pre-Arab (and thus decidedly national) territorial identity had been undertaken only by the Egyptian monarchy in the 1920s and Abd al-Karim Qasim's regime in Iraq (1958—63) (Baram 1990, 429).

Pan-Arab thinkers, acutely aware of and sensitive to the ethnic and religious diversity of Middle Eastern states, actively avoided defining pan-Arabism in exclusionary ethno-racial terms (Baram 1983). Instead, they opted for a far more open definition based on a common Arab language and a shared history, what Michel Aflak (1993, 80), one of the founders of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath party,[83] called a "living

[80] This Arab nationalism found a historical footing in the writings of the Arab sociologist Ibn Khaldoun who theorised the concept of *ʿaṣabīia*—a bond of social solidarity and shared purpose based on tribe or kinship—whereby the strength of a group's solidarity was crucial in determining its political power.
[81] Neither of these constitutions is currently in effect. The new 2005 Iraqi Constitution significantly toned down the pan-Arab overtones of the previous Constitution; nevertheless, it still explicitly referred to the diverse character of the state and its people, as well as the many layers of belonging that define it: "Iraq is a country of multiple nationalities, religions, and sects. It is a founding and active member of the Arab League and is committed to its charter, and it is part of the Islamic world."
[82] For instance, most Arab flags share the same colours—green, red, black, and white—representing different Arab-Islamic dynasties.
[83] The Baʿath Party was originally established as a single party, before it split into several different groupings.

memory."[84] In this regard, Dawn Chatty (2010, 300, emphasis in original) has noted that "[t]he *nature* of post-Ottoman Arab society—as separate from its *politics*—has been such that it has tolerated and acknowledged multiple layers of belonging in the struggle to make new places in the world."[85] Therefore, there has been a tendency in the Middle East to recognise the legitimate non-assimilation of minorities, while allowing for their economic and even political inclusion.[86] Post-independence efforts at creating a single homogenous nation within Middle Eastern states have therefore never been wholeheartedly embraced, which has led to a felt ambivalence about the need for the "single-majority cultural hegemony" (Chatty 2010, 31) that lies at the heart of the European nation-state project.

In parallel with Arab nationalism, Islamism is also a powerful transnational discourse in the region. Tamim Barghouti (2008, 2) argues that the nation-state in the Middle East is a colonial formation that has had to contend with the existence of "a non-colonial political culture [...] by which most people perceive themselves as belonging to an Umma and of the political bodies that govern them as Dawlas." The Umma is a group of people characterised by its non-racial and non-territorial nature, as well as an understanding that a government ruling over a portion of the Umma remains accountable to the whole (Barghouti 2008, 37). The Dawla, in contrast to the Western

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[84] It is impossible for me to do justice to the complex involvement of minorities in the development of pan-Arabism, either as ideology or state policy. However, it is important to note that many of the founding pan-Arab thinkers and political activists hailed from minority groups; for instance, Michel Aflak and Constatin Zureik were Greek Orthodox and Zaki al-Arsuzi was Alawite.

[85] This is not to romanticise pan-Arabism, but simply to highlight its potentialities. Politics, as Chatty suggests, have often diverged from aspirations, and pan-Arabism has very often been used as a form of political domination by ruling elites.

[86] For instance, the tradition of allowing certain religious minorities to govern aspects of communal and individual life according to their own legal traditions persists. This in no way means that such minorities are not discriminated against; it does mean, however, that such discrimination is generally grounded in the contingency of minority relations with ruling regimes rather than in their existence as minorities as such.

understanding of the state, refers to "any authoritative political arrangement. It is temporary, not territorially fixed and usually associated with the ruling elite" (Barghouti 2008, 57). Consequently, the Umma predates any political arrangement, making it the site of sovereignty. The Dawla, in contrast, is a temporary arrangement and an instrument of governance that can be changed and that is always in the service of the whole Umma, not only the portion it is ruling over. Unlike a state, then, which can create a nation, a Dawla can never generate an Umma, since the Umma by definition precedes any governance arrangements. It is in this sense that appeal to an Islamic Umma transcends nation-states, though it does not necessarily displace them.[87]

Provisional Permanence

Discussing refugees in post-Second World War Europe, Hannah Arendt (1968, 294) argued that their predicament was neither necessary nor inevitable. Rather, it stemmed from a very specific "political organisation" in which "[m]ankind, for so long a time considered under the image of a family of nations, had reached the stage where whoever was thrown out of one of these tightly organised closed communities found himself thrown out of the family of nations altogether." The refugee, in Arendt's view (1968, 300), is therefore someone without political community, left only with the "abstract nakedness of being nothing but human."[88] The refugee's failure to be properly situated

[87] Islamists generally agreed with Arab nationalists that Ibn Khaldun's concept of *ʿaṣabīīa* was a pre-colonial form of Arabism. However, they highlighted the fact that contemporary Arab nationalism, as *ʿaṣabīīa*, was grounded in emotional force holding people together, rather than any specific ideological or ethical content. Such content to guide the direction of Arab nationalism could either be imported to the region—in the form of Western ideas, such as liberalism—or could be rooted in an indigenous form of Islam (Barghouti 2008, 73).

[88] This conceptualization reverberates in Giorgio Agamben's (1995, 99) notion of 'bare life' as "human life included in the juridical order solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed)."

within established categories renders her at once a "polluting" element and a dangerous one capable of unmasking and, even, undoing, the very system that created her in the first place (Douglas 1966).[89] This view presages Giorgio Agamben's (2008, 93) understanding of the refugee as "a disquieting element in the order of the Nation-State, that is so primarily because, by breaking the identity between the human and the citizen and that between nativity and nationality, it brings the originary fiction of sovereignty into crisis."

Arendt's insight is key to situating displacement experiences in the Middle East. In recognizing the politically and historically contingent nature of the refugee, Arendt brings to the fore the historically European state-nation-territory trinity, in which the state is assumed to have both a specific desire to control movement into and across its territory and an intimate attachment to its territory. It is only because of these desires and attachments that the refugee, as a *mobile* figure detached from proper *territorial ties*, becomes threatening to the state. In the decades following the First World War in Europe, the figure of the refugee became central to this particular vision of the world based on territorial states, providing the necessary contrast to the figure of the citizen (Soguk 1999). This territorialized view saw a strong link between culture, identity, and territory, a linkage that made the refugee—or the person who had lost these linkages through movement—an aberration and exception. People's lives were seen as related to singular places and their financial and symbolic investments and historic ties were understood to orient them to those same places (Hammond 2004). In such a view,

[89] This idea of the potentially disruptive influence of the refugee has been picked up in the broader refugee studies literature, where Victor Turner's concept of "liminality" has been adopted in order to highlight refugees' marginalization and the ways that they retain agency, resist exceptionality, and act creatively (Brun and Fábos 2015).

movement and linkages across borders became anomalous and threatening, and concepts of home and exile were and remained clearly distinguishable (Malkki 1992; Shami 1996a; Zolberg 2006).

However, as Susan Ossman (2013, 39) pointedly observes,

> States [...] are made in motion. [...] They do not act alone to direct the flows of migration or trade, but in concert with commercial enterprises, other states, and international agencies that aid or hinder their efforts to draw up and secure their borders. Like individuals, states may share systems of belief or language with one another. They may have family connections, or common military and economic interests. [...] Is not the state always on an "ongoing journey," a subject that sometimes struggles to maintain itself? States have diverse relationships to their territories. They can conceive them as terrains of permanent settlement, as work houses or passageways.

In effect, as Ossman points out, states differ in their identities, in how successfully they maintain themselves, in how they are entangled with a variety of other actors, and in how they attach themselves to their territories. This means that the assumed static relationship between the refugee and the state needs to be assessed with respect to the type of state in question. That is, if states are different subjects constantly under construction and caught in particular sets of relations, then they do not all necessarily establish themselves through the foil of the refugee, nor do they necessarily view movement across and into their territories with the same sense of disruption. The bio-political idea of bare life, with its emphasis on exceptionality and exclusion, accepts the premise that the refugee materialises in all instances of forced exit from a state.

In the Middle East, however, the Ottoman legacy of widely dispersed and established minorities, the various movements that have marked the region, and the general espousal of pan-Arabism and Islam at the state level have all produced overlapping senses of belonging, heritages, and cross-border identifications. Arendt (1968, 292) termed this entangled history an "interterritorial solidarity." Similarly, Milan Kundera (2011) uses the term "median context" to characterise identity formations such as pan-Arabism, which are neither local nor global, but rather inhabit a middle space that generates its own attachments, frictions, and effects. As Chatty (2017, 190) describes, "with identity and security based on family, lineage, and ethno-religious millets, movement did not represent a decoupling, or deracination, but rather a wide horizontal network of support and solidarity." As a result, at least in part, of this alternate socio-spatial logic, the Middle East has proved a relatively favourable region in which to seek refuge—in spite of the fact that displacement has continued unabated. Of course, outsiders can and are still construed as an enemy, a threat, or undesirable. Sometimes they can even be killed. However, the simple act of exiting a nation-state does not immediately render a person a refugee or bare life.[90] Put differently, state-sanctioned protections, rights, and obligations are not the only ones to which people can make appeals and on which they can depend. Numerous groups—Arabs and Kurds, Christians, and Muslims (of various denominations)—find themselves *always already*

[90] Jordan severely limits the entry of Palestinians formerly resident in Iraq and Syria to enter the country, despite their very low numbers. This exclusion of a few thousand Palestinians was linked to Israeli proposals for turning Jordan into an "alternative" Palestinian homeland (*al-watan al-badīl*). The exclusion of Palestinians, then, is part of an attempt to undermine this policy outcome, and does not derive from the fact that Palestinians are outside of their country of origin. That is to say, *if* Israel—as Iraq for instance—were not making claims on Jordanian territory *through* the Palestinians, then the mere fact of their being outside of their country would not pose a threat to Jordan.

potentially included across various territories, however nebulously.[91] Moreover, in Jordan, that many insiders are construed and construe themselves as partial outsiders means that being a legal non-citizen is not an *a priori* reason for exclusion, and certainly, not one that applies uniformly. This potentiality for inclusion, in turn, provides the general conditions of possibility for a "provisional permanence," in contradistinction to the "permanent temporariness" that has so often been seen as the fate of refugees in the region (Allan 2013).

Consider the following taxi ride that I took one day. I left the Hashmi al-Shemali branch of the Families' Development Association—an NGO that I volunteered with early on in my fieldwork—and walked down the steep street leading to a major traffic junction in the hopes of finding a taxi. The rush hour traffic swirled around me, until finally an empty taxi appeared up ahead. As I settled into the dusty back seat, the driver asked me where I was from and why I was in that area of the city; he gave an approving nod as I explained that I had been volunteering with a local NGO. As storefronts flashed past on the winding streets, he started telling me about Jordan, heaping unending praise on King Abdullah II. His talk was interspersed with long drags on his cigarette, as he absentmindedly zigzagged around various obstacles—people crossing, cars haphazardly

[91] It is in this regard interesting to note that the commonly used Arabic word for foreigner, *ajnabi*, is generally used to refer to the non-Arab foreigner, who is linked to ideas of extra-familial belonging. The Arab, on the other hand, is not *ajnabi*, since s/he is construed as belonging to a unified Arab nation, even when holding a different passport. Airport customs lines, for instance, are frequently divided into citizens, Arabs, and foreigners (*ajānib)*. The term *ajnabi* is also the legal/technical word used to designate a person from another country (i.e. an alien). When talking of an Arab, I have found that the term *gharīb*, stranger, is generally used (by my interlocutors and other Arabs more generally). Being *gharīb* is also a label that a person can acquire, i.e. after being absent from a place for an extended period; indeed, it is not unusual for people to refer to such a person as *gharīb*, or a stranger. This distinction between the foreigner and the stranger echoes the distinction made in ancient Greece between *Xenoi*, strangers who were Greeks and thus were bound by a cultural and linguistic connection, and *Barbaroi*, strangers who were culturally and linguistically other.

stopped, carts overloaded with watermelons for sale. He ended his lauding of the King by saying:

> The King treats you, and other foreigners, the same as Jordanians. Libyans, for example, are not charged more to go to Jordanian hospitals. Everyone is treated the same because the King treats them the same. I was in Saudi, and there, unlike in Jordan, they treat everyone like a foreigner. This is a hospitable country (*balad muḍīāf*). There are Iraqis, Syrians, Libyans. All the people.

The central idea in the taxi driver's claim was that in Jordan the difference—the distance—between insiders and outsiders was intentionally collapsed, creating what he considered a hospitable country.

Ghada, the director of a small local NGO working on integrating people in Amman across divides such as class, religion, and national origin through urban renewal projects, similarly argued for the particular capacity of Jordan to accommodate myriad others. She sketched the following image of Amman during the summer of 2006—a particularly burning summer in the Middle East, with Iraq convulsed by daily violence and on the brink of civil war, and Lebanon under intense and unrelenting Israeli military bombardments. In Amman, Ghada explained, the streets were pulsating with the overlaying presences, not only of thousands of Iraqis and Lebanese, but also of expatriate Jordanians returning for their holidays, Gulf Arabs unable to vacation in Beirut, and an ever-growing number of UN employees, US military personnel and contractors, NGO workers, and researchers using Jordan as their base of operations. The city felt as though it was bursting at its seams—crowded, crammed, and congested. Taxis, once common, were almost impossible to find, precipitating acrimonious

competition between stranded and impatient bystanders on the city's larger roundabouts. Thursday night outings began with hours spent bogged down in traffic and often ended in the same manner. Apartments for rent disappeared as soon as they became available, and it seemed that everyone's neighbour was from elsewhere. Ghada used this description to situate a party she threw one night:

> We had people over for dinner and there were Palestinians, Jordanians, Iraqis, Lebanese, Westerners sitting around the table. I looked around and then I turned to my husband—he is Jordanian, a Bedouin, from Salt—and I told him, '*Yalla*! Soon we are going to put you all on reservations and come and visit, and watch you make *mansaf*![92]

Ghada laughed at her own recollection, adding,

> The truth is that, in many ways, it is hard to tell who is original and who is other here. Everyone is the same, everyone feels victimized, everyone has grievances and everyone has access to something that others do not, no one group has everything, not even the Jordanians of Bedouin origin. [...] In a sense, it is incredible that we have all made this place our home.

According to Ghada, Jordan's hospitality was tied directly to the fact that it was impossible to clearly distinguish whom the country 'belonged' to in a traditional sense—who, in other words, the owners or sovereigns were, the people who, at least in theory, should have "everything." Unlike the taxi driver who argued that this was due to the decisions of the King, Ghada suggests that this blurring of the in/out distinction

[92] *Mansaf* is the national Jordanian dish, though variations are found throughout the Arabian Gulf region. It consists of rice cooked with lamb, yogurt, and a variety of roasted nuts.

stemmed from the fact that no one—not even the ostensible 'natives'—could claim full sovereignty over the country.

Potted Plants in a Garden: Jordan's Hospitality Approach

At the end of our interview, Rami, a Jordanian working with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in Amman, turned in his chair to face a pristine white wall adorned only with a map of the Middle East. The map had Jordan at its center. Rami pointed to the map and said:

> The thing with Jordan is that while it has let everyone come in, it has done so partially. Like a potted plant in a garden. If the Palestinians are the biggest pot in the garden, then the Iraqis are a smaller pot, and so on. At least, that is probably how they feel. Like they belong, like a plant in a garden, but not quite. Jordan is a poor country, but it has marketed stability.

Rami's metaphor of the potted plant in a garden is an apt one, capturing a fundamental aspect of the Jordanian, and more broadly Arab, approach to dealing with those seeking refuge—an approach that stems from the historical experience of intense interregional mobility, contact, and connection, as well as the political and socio-economic pressures of the present. On the one hand, Jordan has allowed large numbers of people onto its territory for a more or less indeterminate amount of time; on the other, it has categorically foreclosed the possibility of formal integration via citizenship for the vast majority of these individuals.[93] This ambivalent policy has effectively positioned Jordan

[93] Palestinians in Jordan are the exception to this rule; the vast majority of Palestinians, with the exception of persons from Gaza, hold full Jordanian citizenship based on a 1954 Nationality Law that granted citizenship to any Palestinian residents of the West Bank following Jordan's incorporation of the

as a transit country, understood as a stopover location where refugees and other migrants can spend considerable and often indeterminate amounts of time, but generally intend to travel onward to another destination (MMP 2017). Examining how foreigners assert claims of place in Johannesburg, Landau and Haupt (2007, 13) have described a similar form of "inclusion without membership." This sojourner status was described by King Abdullah II (2007, emphasis added) in a 2007 interview:

> Jordan has always been the refuge of those escaping conflict in our region. [...] Despite our small size and abilities and our limited natural resources, *we share with the Iraqis our livelihood* and we provide them with facilities and services and will do so until they can return to their country and partake in Iraq's reconstruction. Jordan since its founding has been—and will continue to be—a refuge for anyone who seeks it, *especially our Arab brethren*. The important thing is that whoever lives on Jordanian soil must respect the laws and regulations of this country and preserve its security and stability. That includes the Iraqis living in Jordan.[94]

West Bank in 1950. However, it should be noted that in recent years, Palestinians have been confronted with an arbitrary policy whereby the citizenship of many is revoked without notice (HRW 2010). For a detailed discussion of citizenship in the Arab world, see: Parolin, Gianluca. 2009. *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and Nation State*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

[94] The King's views—widely held in Jordan—echo Kant's discussion of how best to manage trespass in a way that guarantees the rights and security of both insiders and outsiders. In developing a theory of how people could live without war, Kant's (1957 [1795], 20) third article for the achievement of peace addresses the issue of universal hospitality:

> Hospitality means the right of a stranger not to be treated as an enemy when he arrives in the land of another. One may refuse to receive him when this can be done without causing his destruction; but, so long as he peacefully occupies his place, one may not treat him with hostility. It is not the right to be a permanent visitor that one may demand. A special beneficent agreement would be needed in order to give an outsider the right to become a fellow inhabitant for a certain length of time. It is only a right of temporary sojourn, a right to associate, which all men have.

Hospitality as System of Obligation

Though it is often thought of as a romanticized moral value, hospitality according to Julian Pitt-Rivers (2012, 501) is best understood as a system for managing the enduring challenge of "how to deal with strangers." In this sense, it is a "duty-based" system (Chatty 2017, 178) or "language of obligation"—"a politics based on care and produced as a moral imperative" (Ticktin 2011, 16). In an influential essay on hospitality, Pitt-Rivers (2012) compellingly argues that a stranger is inherently threatening not because he is an outsider but because, being an outsider, he is full of unknown possibilities. Is he an enemy? A friend? Wealthy? Poor? This inherent unknowability is what requires all societies to have a system to manage encounters with others,[95] and what accounts for the pervasively hostile attitude toward outsiders. Conceptualized as a system rather than as a value, hospitality emerges as a structured, ritualized mechanism that manages reciprocal threats and suppresses hostility. In so doing, it "creates a moral space in which outsiders can be treated as provisional members" of a community (Shryock 2004, 36).

Hospitality achieves this through a series of inversions that socially incorporate a stranger as a guest. This transformation means that "from being shunned and treated with hostility, he must be clasped to the bosom and honoured and given precedence" (Pitt-Rivers 2012, 508). Crucially, in suppressing hostility, hospitality enforces a reciprocal obligation to be respectful, yet requires that guest and host "at no point

[95] See also Marc Augé (1995, xiv–xv), who argues that borders, or "frontiers," should be thought of as "the minimal and necessary distance that ought to exist between individuals to make them free to communicate with each other as they intend. [...] A frontier is not a wall, but a threshold. It is not for nothing that in all the world's cultures, crossroads and boundaries have been the focus of intense ritual activity." In making this argument, Augé is indebted to Heidegger's (1971a, 154) theorisation of dwelling (*bauen*) and the horizon as a boundary that is not a place where "something stops but, as the Greeks recognised, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing."

within the context of a single occasion be allowed to be equal, since equality implies rivalry" (Pitt-Rivers 2012, 509, emphasis in original). Therefore, while a guest is honoured, protected, and respected, he is never granted rights or responsibilities. Where a guest claims rights, he loses his status as guest, as he is claiming to be equal and, in so doing, brings out the hostility held in abeyance by hospitality.

Hospitality, Pitt-Rivers (2012, 513) notes, is grounded in ambivalence. This is because it simultaneously imposes a duty to be open to others while retaining the right to welcome them—what Derrida termed the ethics versus politics of hospitality (2000; 2001; 2005), and what Andrew Shryock (2004, 37), in the context of Jordan, describes as "an ambience of privileged inclusion and (no less pronounced) a feeling of precise containment." The paradox of hospitality, then, is that the very act of defining someone as in need of hospitality—as a guest—reaffirms the host's sovereignty over a place and the guest's alterity (Andrikopoulos 2017; Candea and Da Col 2012; Herzfeld 1987; Samanani 2017; Shryock 2012). Hospitality and sovereignty, then, should not be thought of as oppositional modes of encountering others, but rather as intimately and necessarily linked. It is because of this connection that a host is able to augment his prestige, honour, and reputation by being hospitable rather than hostile to the outsider. Chatty (2017, 193) similarly argues that across the Middle East, "hospitality to the stranger is deeply rooted in notions of individual, family, and group reputation. Public culture around the generosity of the father figure rule [...] is significant. The state is seen as the family which is hospitable to the stranger. Providing hospitality/asylum increases one's reputation for generosity."[96]

[96] Many scholars who write about hospitality reference Marcel Mauss' (1990) work on the moral economy of the gift as central to their theorizations. Through a comparative study of historical and ethnographic

Given the pervasiveness of (forced) mobility in the Middle East, as well as the linkages this has generated, hospitality has emerged as a crucial mechanism in constructing sovereignty at all scales in the region. For instance, in explaining hospitality in Jordan, Shryock (2012, 24) notes, "A house without guests, without the spaces necessary to take them in, and without the materials needed to prepare food and drink, is not only weak, it is shameful. This is widely understood." From the individual house with the appropriate sitting room in which to offer tea to guests to the nation-state able to grant land and provide services to refugees, sovereignty emerges as "the ability to act as host" (Shryock 2012, 24). It is because of this association of sovereignty with hospitality that "it makes sense to most Jordanians when the Hashemites describe Jordan as a house, and Jordanians as a family. Such rhetoric is a show of mastery" (Shryock 2012, 24; see also ʿAdely 2012).

Operationalizing Hospitality

Many scholars have noted that Jordan has neither adopted the 1951 Refugee Convention nor implemented a domestic asylum system. Moreover, while the country's constitution does include a provision granting protection to political refugees,[97] many scholars have argued that it has largely dealt with refugees via regulations devised on an ad hoc basis (El-Abed 2014; Kagan 2011; Mason 2011; Stevens 2013; Zaiotti 2006). This emphasis on the absence of legal mechanisms, however, obscures the fact that Jordan has—if not a fully-fledged refugee regime—then certainly a generalised legal and policy framework

material, Mauss clarified that in the moral economy, forms of hospitality and, more generally, generosity serve to increase a person or group's status.

[97] See the Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at http://www.parliament.jo/node/137 (original Arabic) and http://parliament.jo/en/node/150 (English translation).

for dealing with various migrant groups on its territory that emerges from its complex history of migration and development, as well as its views on hospitality.

At the most general level, all foreigners without distinction are subject to the 1973 Law No. 24 concerning Residency and Foreigners' Affairs. This law provides foreigners with various avenues to securing long-term residence rights, of which many Iraqis in Jordan availed themselves. These include securing an employment contract or entry to an educational establishment; having a demonstrable and legitimate source of income (either domestic or from abroad); investing in commercial or industrial ventures in Jordan; or possessing specific skills. Arab nationals are generally exempt from visa requirements (except Iraqis) and from paying residence permit fees; moreover, there are a number of exceptions that can be made by the Minister of Internal Affairs or the Director of Public Security, including granting residence permits that last longer than one year or granting them to individuals whose official travel documents have expired. Françoise De Bel-Air (2007) has characterized this policy as one of "segmented assimilation," in which specific subgroups from within a displaced population are welcomed, "composing a transversal, globalized elite, involved in consumption and select leisure infrastructure."[98] In the post-2003 period, class and professional identities have in fact been central to many Iraqis' ability to build relatively stable lives in Jordan (Chatelard 2010b).[99]

Individuals who cannot secure long-term residence under the provisions of Law No. 24 are generally dealt with within the framework set up between the Jordanian

[98] Anne McNevin (2013, 182) has characterized this as the process whereby "borders are increasingly disaggregated for different types of human traffic."
[99] Hala Fattah (2007) similarly argues that Iraqis who came to Jordan in 1958 following the toppling of the Iraqi monarchy were also integrated into their respective social classes.

government and UNHCR.[100] For Iraqis, this includes the 1997 agreement that established UNHCR's office in the country; the 1998 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Jordan and UNHCR, which established a general legal framework for all refugees in the country; a 2003 Letter of Understanding pertaining to Iraqis specifically; a 2007 Royal Decree allowing Iraqi children to access public schools regardless of residency status, together with a 2008 governmental decision to waive annual fees; and a 2011 General Pardon Law that cancelled all overstay fines for Iraqis holding expired visas.[101]

While the MOU provides legal recognition of refugees as such, Jordan has resisted official recognition within its own legislation, referring to Iraqis and Syrians, as "guests," "brothers," or "visitors" (ILO 2015), and invoking a hospitality rather than human rights discourse when addressing their presence.

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[100] While some of this framework applies to all refugees in Jordan, there are additional separate agreements concerning refugees from different national origins. This effectively means that refugee groups can have different rights and privileges depending on the additional agreements. Rochelle Davis and her colleagues (2016) identified four criteria that determine these differential policies for refugees across the Middle East: refugee population size, racial background, duration of displacement, and public awareness about their plight. Generally, refugee groups that are larger, of (Semitic) Arab background, most recently arrived, and prominent in the media tend to benefit from more targeted policies, agreements, and programs than other refugee populations.

[101] For the full text of the 1997 Agreement between UNHCR and the Jordanian government, see: http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3a124.html. For the 1998 Memorandum of Understanding, see: http://carim-south.eu/databases/legal/Jordan/Bilateral Agreements/LE2JOR002_AREN.pdf (original Arabic) and http://carim-south.eu/databases/legal/Jordan/Bilateral%20Agreements/LE2JOR002_AREN.pdf (English translation). For the 2003 Letter of Understanding (in Arabic and English), see: (UN 2005, 2222:207–16). For information on the 2007 Royal Decree granting access to public schools, see: Chatelard, Géraldine. 2010. "What Visibility Conceals: Re-embedding Refugee Migration from Iraq." In *Disposession and Displacement: Forced Migration in the Midlde East and North Africa*, edited by Dawn Chatty and Bill Finlayson, 17-44. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Davis, Rochelle and Abbie Taylor. 2012. *Urban Refugees in Amman*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of International Migration. For a detailed discussion of the development of relations between UNHCR and the Jordanian government, see: Stevens, Dallal. 2013. "Legal Status, Labelling, and Protection: The Case of Iraqi 'Refugees' in Jordan. *International Journal of Refugee Law* 25(1): 1-38.

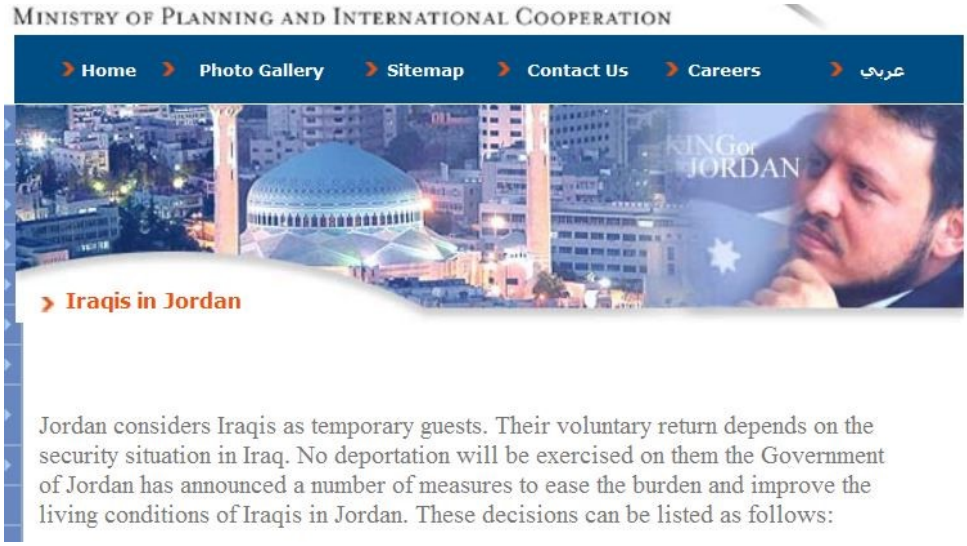

Figure 4 – Jordanian Government Website concerning Iraqis in Jordan. 2012.

The MOU allows UNHCR to protect and provide services to individuals who fall under its mandate. It accepts the 1950 Convention definition of a refugee and ensures that Jordan respects the principle of *non-refoulement*, whereby refugees cannot be forcibly returned to their country of origin. The MOU also empowers UNHCR to undertake refugee status determination interviews, even with individuals who entered Jordan illegally. While the MOU places a six-month time limit for UNHCR to process refugees for third country resettlement, in practice refugees engaged in the resettlement process have been allowed to stay in the country indefinitely until their cases have been resolved (Stevens 2013, 12).

In their work, UNHCR and other organizations have faced a stringent operational framework whereby no "separate and parallel services" can be provided to refugees (UNHCR 2009, 18).[102] In order to meet the needs of Iraqis, and other refugees, they

[102] This staunch resistance to parallel systems is the outcome of the Palestinian experience, where an entirely separate system of administration was established, with its own health, education, and civil administration departments (in addition, of course, to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, or UNRWA, which provides services specifically to Palestinian refugees, and operates throughout the Middle

have therefore had to focus on reinforcing the capacity of Jordan's public infrastructures and services, and to target and deliver assistance to both Iraqis and Jordanian host communities on the basis of vulnerability (Chatelard 2011; Chatty and Mansour 2011; Seeley 2010). The Jordanian approach has thus been described as a "discretionary toleration regime" (Chatelard 2010b, 13) that provides access to physical security and basic public services for the needy, and more varied opportunities for integration for those with means, without formally assimilating Iraqis (Crisp, Janz, and Riera 2009, 18).[103]

In addition to this legal framework, since late 2007, Iraqis have been able to access subsidised medical treatment at public hospitals. Importantly, and in contrast to many Syrians, Iraqis were not forced to settle in designated areas; rather, settlement patterns emerged organically, and were largely determined by their financial means and personal connections. Finally, though Jordan has generally had a default open border policy with Iraq, since 2008 it has required Iraqis to obtain visas in Baghdad prior to arrival at the border; though this additional bureaucratic procedure has slowed cross-border movement, it has not halted in-migration from Iraq, which has continued, fuelled by persistent insecurities in Iraq.

East). According to Jordanian NGO workers I spoke with, a desire to avoid repeating this scenario was the main reason aid for Iraqis had to be distributed through already established institutions and structures. Riina Isotalo (2014) has termed this reticence on the part of Jordan and other Arab states to offer refugee-targeted services and programs a "fear of Palestinization."

[103] Given that it shifts a significant amount of responsibility for managing, caring, and protecting refugees to UNHCR, this regime has also been likened to what, in the African context, has been called the UN "surrogate state" (Kagan 2011; Slaughter and Crisp 2008). Though it seems to evoke Mariella Pandolfi's (2003, 369–70) conceptualisation of the humanitarian system as a "migrant sovereignty" that is largely delocalised and independent from local forms of power, the "surrogate state" for refugees is decidedly different, neither independent of nor parallel to local forms of power. It is based on the so-called "grand compromise" in international refugee policy, whereby Global South states offer the vast majority of refugees safe haven and permit international organisations to operate only if the international community takes on most other responsibilities for refugee needs (Kagan 2011, 3).

Hospitality's Offerings in Protracted Conflict Situations

The lack of clarity at the heart of Jordanian policy, rooted in the ambivalence inherent to hospitality, has been faulted for placing Iraqis and other refugees in a "grey zone" where privileges and protections are extended, but concrete rights remain out of reach (Mason 2011; Seeley 2010). Traditional rights-based asylum systems, however, also have many shortcomings. A prominent one is the fact that the demarcation of a clear refugee category necessarily excludes many people from the protection space created. In protracted conflict settings like Iraq, people often find themselves moving across categories of migration. For instance, an Iraqi refugee in Jordan who was rejected for resettlement outside the Middle East might try to establish a business in Jordan. Meanwhile, an Iraqi businessperson who worked and lived in Jordan prior to 2003 as a regular migrant might, by 2007, have found that returning to Iraq was impossible. A medical tourist who came for a routine surgical procedure might have decided to stay and work with an uncle or a cousin, or might have decided to apply for resettlement through UNHCR. Not everyone starts as a refugee, and not everyone ends up as one.

No matter who they are, what their initial reasons for coming to Jordan, or what migration category they fall under at present, the vast majority of Iraqis left Iraq, or are hesitant to return, because of felt insecurities—of one type or another. Such insecurities, however, fall short in most cases of the standard full-fledged "persecution" that is still used to assess the right to refugee status. As a result, the applications of many Iraqis who have sought resettlement through UNCHR and Western embassies have been rejected. Even with more flexible definitional criteria, it is likely that many Iraqis would still have been excluded from Jordan had they been let in under a proper asylum

regime.[104] As it stands, then, Jordan's approach has simultaneously allowed many Iraqis the opportunity to flee extremely harsh living conditions while neither hindering the entry of the most vulnerable Iraqis nor denying them the ability to apply for resettlement elsewhere should this be necessary. In foregoing a clear legal category, then, Jordan has created a wider protection space for Iraqis fleeing multiple short- and long-term challenges to their well-being.

In addition to legitimating and thus protecting against a greater range of vulnerabilities than most rights-based asylum systems, Jordan's approach also allows it to act not only as a transit space, but also as a gathering place. In his celebrated memoir, "*I Saw Ramallah*," Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti (2000, 43-44), vividly evokes the affective landscape of his life after being forced from Palestine and as he navigated across various countries, from Egypt to Hungary. He captures the texture of his experience through the mundane image of the family at breakfast:

> Politics is the family at breakfast. Who is there and who is absent and why. Who misses whom when the coffee is poured into the waiting cups. [...] Whom do you long for this morning? [...] Where are the children of this mother who, in her slightly crooked spectacles, sits knitting a pullover of dark blue wool for the absent one who does not write regularly? [...] Politics is the number of coffee-cups on the table [...].

The dispersal of the family is central to Barghouti's story. One of the most poignant moments in his memoir comes when he recalls his first meeting with his parents and

[104] Even UNHCR, which had initially given *prima facie* status to all Iraqis, has since 2009 reverted to a case-by-case assessment of refugee status.

brothers in Amman following their separation due to the 1967 war, of the joy of "discovering the presence of the others for the first time in that place" (Barghouti 2000, 25).

Similarly, for Iraqis, the dispersal of the family was one of the most deeply felt consequences of the post-2003 events in Iraq. Tareq, a twenty-three year old Iraqi who had first left Baghdad for Damascus in 2007 with his mother, often spoke to me about what had befallen his family. He and his mother had lived in Damascus until 2011, when she was resettled to the United States.[105] Alone, Tareq decided to move to Jordan due to the deteriorating security situation in Syria. Thinking of what had happened to his family one evening, he said:

> My family is like a bomb. They exploded, so each one is now in a separate place. I have an aunt in Canada. My mom, my sister, and my cousins are in America. I have another sister and uncle in Germany, my cousin in Australia, and another cousin in New Zealand. Another aunt is in Libya. She and her family returned to Iraq a day before Gaddafi fell. Now they are back in Libya, and life is going very peacefully, normally. I have another aunt in Syria, but she and her family returned to Iraq a week ago. Who else? I do not know! I still have family in Baghdad. Before 2003, some went to the south of Iraq. I also have an uncle in Kurdistan, in Suleimaniyah. I do not think we will ever be back together. It is really difficult. It is really difficult to be reunited.

[105] Unlike Tareq, who eventually moved to the United States through the UN resettlement process, his mother was able to go to the United States on a family reunification visa since her daughter was already living there as an American citizen.

Many Iraqis evoked this image of the "exploded" family, scattering like so many pieces of shrapnel, moving outward and away from itself. The difficulty, even impossibility, of piecing the family back together was one that Iraqis ultimately accepted as a reality of life, what Paul Ricoeur (2004) terms "the work of mourning, understood as the acceptance of the irreparable." However, in Jordan, Iraqis were able to bring their families together—if not as total wholes, then in various 'wholesome configurations.' This gathering was facilitated in large part by the number of ways in which Jordanian territory could be accessed, allowing family members of different il/legal statuses the ability to meet and live together, however fleetingly.

Here, let me offer two images of such gatherings. Amina lived in Amman with her husband, Murid, and their youngest daughter, Nayla. They owned their apartment in the city, and had official residence permits. During Ramadan in the summer of 2012, I was invited several times to join them for the breaking of the fast. On each of these occasions, I saw the ways in which Amman acted as a gathering place for Amina's family. Suʿad, her mother-in-law, a stately woman, was visiting from the Irbil, in northern Iraq, where she lived with one of her sons. Amina's daughter-in-law had come from the United States, and was staying with her parents, who lived in Jordan, as her father was a professor at a university in Karak, a city in the south of the country. In the summer, her daughter-in-law's entire family—from abroad and from Iraq—came to Amman to meet each other. Finally, a cousin was also visiting from Iraq, but had come not on a tourist visa like Suʿad, but as a medical tourist, to have a small operation and also visit the family.

A few days after this dinner at Amina's house, I visited Bassam, whose apartment was impossibly crowded during that particular Ramadan. His uncle was visiting from

Baghdad to escape the scorching Iraqi heat. His aunt, who lived in Jordan, was temporarily staying with him—along with her three children—while she was settling her divorce from her Jordanian husband. I was fascinated by the way that Bassam's apartment gathered a tourist (his uncle), a naturalised Jordanian citizen (his aunt), Jordanian nationals by birth (his niece and nephews born to a Jordanian father), as well as a refugee and asylum-seeker to the US (Bassam). It was in Amman, in the apartment of the refugee, that this family concretely materialised.

Such gatherings that brought together people living all over the world, and who held various statuses vis-à-vis the Jordanian state, were common among Iraqis. By allowing the space for such encounters, Jordan enabled Iraqis to engage in "*munāsabat*." *Munāsabat* are occasions or events, more or less formal, more or less special, that mark the cadence of everyday life. Weddings, funerals, the birth of a child, a birthday, a high school graduation, the arrival of a distant relative, Friday prayers—all are *munāsabat*. Importantly, *munāsaba* also means relation. Such moments, then, are shared occasions that serves to relate people to each other. If Jordan offered Iraqis anything in particular, it was this: an ordinary place where different family members could come together and *be* a family, in the physical, concrete, morning-at-the-breakfast-table sort of way.

The End(s) of Hospitality

"I don't think it's a cliché," Salwa shot back, shifting in the sofa's depths.

> In Jordanian Bedouin culture, or Bedouin culture without attributing Jordan to it, you're a wanderer, [...] you come and you find a settlement, you find people who

> have pitched up a tent, you're welcome for the first three days, then you have to explain yourself. Therefore, if you are just a weary traveller and you need to rest for a couple of days and drink some water and just be well fed, you know to move on after three days. However, if you have business, you stay and that is when they ask you, 'What is your business?' [...] I think part of it is that. That history, that ingrained *thing* that runs through us, that this is how we deal with people, this is how we deal with strangers, you welcome, you open, and then you ask them, 'So ...'.[106]

Salwa let out a generous peel of laughter as she gazed out of her apartment window at the cloudy Amman winter sky.

> We have that in our history. We carry that instinctually, I think, that you are welcoming at first but then you need to ... to figure out what is going on. And it translates into urban culture with people giving you a cup of coffee when it's time for you to leave, it translates into refugees coming and you know, "Welcome, welcome," and then it's like, "Ok, now what?" There is constant, you know, friction (*ihtikak*), [...] you have to ... you have to deal with them.

A second-generation Palestinian born and raised in Kuwait until the 1991 Gulf War forced her family to return to Jordan—a place she had only ever transited through on the way to visit family in Palestine—Salwa worked with local NGOs assisting Iraqi refugees in the 2006—07 period. In this exchange, she gestured to the fact that there is a

[106] This prohibition against asking a guest questions about who they are or what they want has been documented as central to Arab notions of honour. For more on Arab understandings of honour, see: Fares, Bichr. 1932. *L'Honneur chez les Arabes avant l'Islam*. Paris: Librarie d'Amérique et d'Orient Adrien-Maisonneuve.

necessary temporal limit to hospitality, one that inaugurates an uncomfortable 'after.' Simply put, a person cannot be a guest forever (Pitt-Rivers 2012, 512). Iraqis, however, were in Jordan indefinitely; the vast majority did not intend to return to Iraq nor did they know when, or even if, they would secure resettlement elsewhere. Underscoring Salwa's observation that, after a time, a certain friction emerges vis-à-vis the guest, Pitt-Rivers (2012, 516) argues that the status of guest is eroded over time, and that a guest must therefore either leave or be incorporated as a permanent member of a community.

Officially, Jordan required neither. That is, it neither forced Iraqis to leave nor provided them with an avenue for permanent incorporation; it simply let them stay. Consequently, by maintaining a hospitality framework to manage their presence, Jordan effectively used the guest designation as a "status barrier" despite the provisional inclusion it extended (Pitt-Rivers 2012, 512).[107] By offering hospitality but *only* hospitality, Jordan both legitimized Iraqis' presence in a powerfully relevant cultural idiom while also containing and delimiting their impact (Shryock 2004, 37).

That hospitality came to be a status barrier was a shock to many Iraqis, who had assumed there would be an easy transition to life in Jordan, as what ʿAdel described an "Arab" country (and, for many, an Islamic-majority one). Iraqis frequently spoke to me about their dismay at encountering this exclusion in Jordan. Imm Hadi and her husband, Abu Hadi, had arrived in Jordan in 2012, and constantly complained about the attitudes of Jordanians toward them. They were among several Iraqi families I met who had moved to Jordan from Syria rather than directly from Iraq. Imm and Abu Hadi had moved their family of five children to the city of Aleppo in northern Syria in 2005,

[107] Michael Kagan (2011, 3) has described this as a policy of "benign neglect" whereby states such as Jordan can claim to protect refugees simply by not deporting them.

before the conflict there pushed them to settle in Jordan. Their critiques of Jordan stood in stark contrast to their praise of Syria—a contrast that centred on their divergent sense of welcome in the two countries. "It was much better in Syria, we could work there," Abu Hadi told me one day, as we sat in the family's living room. "The Syrians were very good," added Imm Hadi as her face lit up under the glow of her memories. She sat with a smile, at a loss for words, in the end simply adding, "We did not feel estranged in Syria (*ma ḥasseina b-il-ghurba fi Sūrīa*)." Abu Hadi shifted his considerable weight in the white plastic chair on which he was seated, stroked his thick black beard, cleared his throat, and said, "The tensions with Jordanians here can be seen in simple things. Like football. Last time there was a match between Iraq and Jordan [a match Iraq won], the kids were too scared to go to school for three days." He stopped before adding sarcastically, "All of Jordan rises for football!" My face must have expressed some sort of skepticism, because Abu Hadi immediately called for his daughter, Abeer, to confirm his story. She did as much, telling me about how not only the students, but also the teachers verbally attacked her when she returned to school after the match. "In general, I am discriminated against in school," Abeer continued. "For instance, even when I do better on an exam than my Jordanian classmates, the teacher always gives them the higher marks." Imm Hadi shook her head and muttered under her breath, saying, with a tone of finality that closed the subject, "What can we do? We are guests here (*Shu bidna naʿamal? Nehna ḍuyūf hon*)."

Unlike their time in Syria, where they never felt "in exile," or out of place, in Jordan, Imm and Abu Hadi constantly felt that Jordanians made them feel different, foreign, lesser than. The question asked and answered by Imm Hadi—What can we do? We are guests here.—was repeated by many other of my Iraqi friends whenever such

scenes were described to me. Taken together, the question and its answer demonstrate the paradoxical way in which being a guest, ostensibly a good thing, came to be experienced as bereft of dignity. In reaction, Iraqis attempted to mitigate the effects of, if not to overcome, the status barrier that being a guest had become by redefining their presence in Jordan in more empowering terms. While in other places this resistance often takes the form of overt rights-claims, for Iraqis it crystallised as a strident denial of Jordanian hospitality. They became bad guests, ungracious in their turn, refusing what was offered and, in doing so, not showing the requisite respect owed to a host (Pitt-Rivers 2012, 215).[108] Embracing the role of the bad guest was a way of simultaneously abiding by and transcending—partially, imperfectly, and always temporarily—the limitations and moral obligations that hospitality imposed on them while in Jordan. This process was akin to what Landau and Haupt (2007, 9), in the context of Johannesburg, described as non-citizens' attempt to "overcome the opposition to their presence" by drawing on "a variegated language of belonging that makes claims to the city while positioning them in an ephemeral, superior, and unrooted condition where they can escape localised social and political obligations."

"This Country Lives Off of Catastrophes"

"Their money is their religion (*Dīnahom dīinārahom*)," Amina told me in shockingly direct terms, when I asked her why she felt that hospitality was irrelevant to her stay in Jordan.

[108] In the context of South Africa, Landau and Haupt (2007, 14) also remarked that few refugees deployed the "language of rights" afforded by the country's Constitution and asylum laws to justify their presence; rather, they appealed to "norms of reciprocity."

> What does welcome have to do with it? I bought my house! Nobody had to welcome me. I didn't take money from them. I paid for it. And now, I don't live off of them. You see, it's my home and my money. I bought from them. Therefore, they have to welcome me. It is not a matter of hospitality.

Amina was making explicit the fact that hospitality cannot be a question of money; that is, because she had purchased property in accordance with Jordanian law, then there was no actual welcome in question (Shryock 2008, 415).[109] The accusation that the exchange of money, or the reduction of encounter to market relations, rendered the very concept of hospitality inapplicable was pervasive and went beyond the question of individual transaction, such as purchasing a private home. Jordan was receiving millions of dollars from the international community for Iraqi refugees; Salwa described this as a "spewing of money related to Iraq." Moreover, Iraqis were themselves investing massively in the country. For many Iraqis, it followed that Jordan's openness was a strategic choice that had been bought and paid for, not generously extended to them.

Various scholars and journalists have detailed the instrumentalisation of hospitality as a way of transforming the presence of vulnerable others—often fleeing instability, but not always refugees—into an important source of rents and revenue for the Jordanian state (see Seeley 2010; Stevens 2013).[110] For instance, at the height of the influx of Iraqi refugees into Jordan in 2006—08, the Jordanian government inflated Iraqi refugee numbers to well over half a million—when survey-based estimates placed

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[109] A Jordanian Bedouin storyteller speaking with Andrew Shryock (2012, 23) stated as much when he said, "Today, there is no hospitality. Today, everything is business. We buy and sell everything, and there's no shame in it."

[110] The economic instrumentalization of hospitality that Iraqis experienced is situated within a broader commodification of hospitality for tourism and as a marketable heritage product in Jordan (see Shryock 2004).

the population at only around 170,000 (FAFO 2007). Hundreds of millions of dollars were therefore pumped into the country because of and for Iraqis. For instance, UNHCR gave $21 million, or nearly 60% of its operating budget, directly to the Jordanian government in 2007, and the US gave $200 million in supplemental funding for Iraqi refugees in 2008, of which fully $110 million went directly to the government (Seeley 2010). In 2014-15, the US government increased aid to Jordan from $660 million to more than $1 billion per year, to help the country defray the costs of hosting Syrian refugees (Mohammed 2015; TOI 2013). The imposition of visa requirements for Iraqis in 2008 generated a new revenue stream for the government, estimated at around 70 million USD (Yusuf Mansur as quoted in Stevens 2013, 33). Moreover, both Iraqis and Syrians invested heavily in Jordan: Syrian foreign direct investment added up to $1 billion in 2013, and Iraqi investments between 2004 and 2008 helped fuel a GDP per capita growth rate of around 8% over these years (Al-Khatib and Lenner 2015; Dhingra 2014; The Economist 2013).

As Amina articulated, this instrumentalisation made hospitality fundamentally suspect. Bassam expressed this feeling forcefully one day, as I was helping him fill out an asylum application to Australia. I was sitting in his living room, carefully reading the instructions, his aunt's noisy cooking reverberating in the background. Bassam was rummaging through something in the hallway and I heard him mumble an inaudible complaint about Jordan. Still intent on the paperwork in front of me, I absentmindedly ask him if Jordan might not be providing some sense of stability for different people in the region, however incompletely. He stopped whatever it was he was doing, rushed into the living room, stood in front of me with his hands on his hips, and gave me a pointed look that said, "You can't be serious!" Then he said,

> Look, this country lives off of catastrophes (*hay al-balad yaʿīsh ʿal nakbat*). There's nothing here. Palestine, Iraq, Syria. Tell me, where did all the money go?! All the money that they got for us, for Iraqi refugees? Nowhere, we don't see it! But they say, we need money, we have many refugees, and in the end, we just sit here with nothing. They just took the money.

"I Invite You to a Restaurant, but at Your Expense"

The Jordanian state's ability to "profit off the misery of its neighbours," as one Jordanian UN staff member put it to me, was paralleled by interactions that Iraqis had with Jordanians that the former viewed as exploitative (*istighlāli*) because of the common Jordanian assumption that all Iraqis had money. Complaints about these exploitative acts were a constant throughout my fieldwork, the most common complaint being that of the neighbour who borrows money only to never return it.

Such complaints were frequent in the home of Dana and Jad. On a particularly cold afternoon, Amman's streets gushing with rainwater, I braved the weather to stop in on them. I found that I had interrupted them. The mattresses lining the walls of the living room were covered with two sets of books, stacks of papers, and a colourful assortment of pens. Dana hurriedly moved the books to the side while explaining that she and her brother had been studying for an NGO English class they were attending. Jad brought us tea and biscuits, and after the requisite discussion of Iraqi politics and laments and encouragements concerning their stalled resettlement applications, Dana began speaking about their time in Jordan, initiating a long conversation about guests, hosts, and the ties that (should) bind them.

Dana: The Jordanian community has no respect within it. In Iraq, we always had war. I was in the second grade when the war with Iran began. Then when I finished high school, the Gulf war started and then there was the embargo. Finally, there was this last war. They [Jordanians] have a stable situation, but still, they are full of problems.

Giulia: Why do you think there are all these problems here even though there is no war?

Jad: There is no education (*maku tarbīa*).[111]

Dana: In Iraq, it used to cost foreigners a dinar—just a dinar—for a residence permit. No one ever treated them differently, as if they were strangers. Here no, they take advantage and they are unhappy with us here. They have a greedy look (*naẓara tamāʿ*) whenever they look at us. They are strange in their thinking. In Iraq, we never said, "This person is an Egyptian, this person is a Palestinian." No, on the contrary. Everyone was the same. But here, you say hello and they reply only if you buy something from them or if you have money.

Jad: We do not have this strange culture. There is nothing necessary [for them] (*maku lāzim*). If you aspire for a state that respects you as a human being, then … Why are we saddened here [in Jordan]? Because we know the value of the Palestinians and the Jordanians in Iraq was greater than that of the Iraqis. I swear. There were [residential] compounds for Palestinians. They had their own independent land, and it was prohibited for any government

[111] The word *tarbīa* here indicates a proper upbringing or good manners, not necessarily a formal education.

entity to interfere with them or to punish them no matter what they did. They were respected and appreciated. By God, their word was like a sword over the head of an Iraqi, and he is a Palestinian, he is nothing. But we had a law that said to respect the guest, the guest is always right, as is the foreigner, and the Arab (*Lākin ʿandna al-qānūn kān yaqulak iḥtarim al-ḍeif wa al-ḥaq dāʾimān wayya al-ḍeif, wayya al-ajnabi, wayya al-ʿarabi*). Let me tell you something, the Egyptians, they did not forget. I heard from friends who went to Egypt that Egyptians are happy to receive and welcome Iraqis. They do not make the Iraqi feel as if he is a stranger (*Ma yaḥasassūn al-ʿIrāqi anu huwwe gharīb*). They [Egyptians] tell you, for example, "I'm the owner of this building; I constructed it with money which I brought from Iraq. I worked in Iraq and I brought the money I made." So they did not forget! Contrary to here [in Jordan]. Here, despite their food coming from Iraq. In truth, the only country that benefited 100% from Iraq is Jordan. Because it used to receive 50,000 barrels [of petroleum] daily at the expense of the Iraqi government. This means that Iraq paid for the transportation. Part of the oil was free, and they took the rest at preferential prices between eight and ten dollars a barrel. Now they take 15,000 barrels daily but the situation has changed. Iraq cannot afford to sell lower than the global price anymore. But then the King [Abdullah II] visited Iraq and thus they lowered the price by an additional four dollars. So a barrel became priced at 22 dollars, which is less than the

global price.[112] As a people, did they appreciate Iraq's deeds? I am not talking about the government. The people? No.[113] We Iraqis can sense it. They have a certain view of Iraqis, they think that every Iraqi in Amman stole in 2003. And, yes, there are Iraqis who stole, and even now, there are government officials in Iraq who send their families to live in Amman, and they live a luxurious life. Maybe not even the King himself lives a life this luxurious. So, their view on Iraqis is that they have it all. As though we are all like that. Therefore, their eyes are on the Iraqi's hand (*ʿayūnihim ʿala īd al-ʿIrāqi*). They love to take from the Iraqi home; they consider it a gain and an achievement. Iraqis like us, for instance, often live in apartments like this one, which is cut in half. This is one of the exploitations of Iraqis. [...] The apartment next door belongs to the owner of the house. He throws water from the reservoirs. We share the apartment [the other half of the split apartment] with Syrians. Because we are Iraqis and they are Syrians, he throws away the water and the electricity. This past summer, it was very hot, and he made us pay for his electricity [consumption]! It is as though I

[112] For a more detailed discussion of Jordan's political and economic relations with Iraq, see: Ryan, Curtis R. "'Jordan First': Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations and Foreign Policy under King Abdullah II. *Arab Studies Quarterly* 26(3): 43-62.

[113] One explanation I heard for this while I was in Jordan was that the Iraqi-Jordanian relationship at the state level was not clearly understood by the Jordanian public. In particular, Jordan's dependence on free or extremely cheap Iraqi oil was not widely known; as Jad mentions, about half the oil going from Iraq to Jordan was given freely, while the other half was sold at five times below the Mediterranean price (Yusuf Mansur, personal communication, June 14, 2012). In contrast, Sarah A. Tobin (personal communication, May 14, 2019) suggests that Jordanians were actually keenly aware of the agreements with Iraq concerning oil. They conceived of such agreements, however, as being between the Jordanian and Iraqi leadership, much as they thought of oil as an abundant resource that belonged to the leaders of Iraq, not to the Iraqi people. So though Jordanians might have accepted the fact that members of Saddam Hussein's family lived in Jordan as the price of business, the same attitude was not extended to ordinary Iraqis. Paradoxically, Jordanians considered water to be a scarce public resource that refugees, Iraqis, and others, were draining from the Jordanian public.

invite you to a restaurant, but at your expense. Everyone [foreigners] who works here transfers money overseas. They have to transfer because those who come to work here have families and they have to provide for them. The Iraqis are the only ones who do not transfer a single dollar abroad. And about 80% of the factories in Iraq, in the private sector, were shut down and they came here. An Iraqi is forced to employ a certain number of people from this country with a salary no less than 350 JD. If an Iraqi employs an Iraqi, he pays him 150 JD. He is Iraqi and he gives Iraqis 150 JD. But when a Jordanian comes, he's forced to give him 350 JD.

Dana: This is why there are no real relations between us. I went to the wedding of my neighbour's daughter, and even brought a gift, but we do not have real relations with them.

Giulia: Real relations?

Dana: Yes, because here it is necessary for relations to be about interest (*lāzim al-ʿalāqat biha maṣlaḥa*).

As they described Jordanians' lack of manners, their strange culture, their absent sense of duty, and their engagement in relations of interest, Dana and Jad were gesturing toward the absence of what Pitt-Rivers (2011) conceptualizes as "grace." While Marcel Mauss (1990, 3) famously argued that all types of gifts are grounded in "obligation and economic self-interest," and are accompanied by behaviour that "is only a polite fiction, formalism, and social deceit," Pitt-Rivers (2011, 440) counters that gifts can be gratuitous, and that this gratuity should not be categorically reduced to a "sociological delusion." For Pitt-Rivers, grace is the general concept that captures the wide range of free gifts people give to one another. It is "always something extra" (Pitt-

Rivers 2011, 425), "over and above what is due, economically, legally, or morally; it is neither foreseeable, predictable by reasoning, nor subject to guarantee. It stands outside the system of reciprocal services" (Pitt-Rivers 2017, 59). As a manifestation of grace, hospitality is not only about providing what is necessary or expected, such as food, a place of refuge, or a feast. Rather, it also must be offered graciously and gracefully (Pitt-Rivers 2011, 437). What this means in practice remains necessarily nebulous, since it has nothing to do with items and gestures reducible to calculation.

For instance, as he discussed hospitality with his Balga Bedouin friends in Jordan, Andrew Shryock (2008, 418) was told that it is "not just a matter of food and drink. Hospitality is from the soul; it's from the blood. It's giving generously of yourself." Shyrock's Balga host, for instance, operationalised this generous giving of oneself by claiming that he would be willing to sacrifice his son to protect the guest anthropologist. Shryock (2008, 418) defines this astonishing willingness to sacrifice a son for the sake of the guest as "a morality beyond law, beyond rights (cosmopolitan or local), beyond "the proper thing to do." Similarly, Jad described how Jordanians and Palestinians in Iraq—whose word was like a "sword" over Iraqis' heads—were of greater "value" than Iraqis themselves and how Iraq, at a time when it faced economic sanctions, gave its precious resources to Jordan for free. This expansive generosity that came at the cost of the Iraqi hosts was at once a source of pride for Jad—who clearly felt ennobled by having been part of it—and of resentment and sadness, given that the same type of hospitality was not extended to Iraqis in Jordan.

Jordanians often framed the attitude Iraqis encountered as the unfortunate consequence of the harsh economic reality besetting Jordan, combined with the ostentatious displays of wealth on the part of a small group of extremely rich Iraqis.

Iraqis acknowledged both these realities, but consistently refused these excuses for not being more welcomed. Amina, for instance, rejected all my attempts to try and speak of how her ability to purchase a house in Jordan—where rates of home ownership are extremely low—might have impacted how Jordanians perceived her. "Ok so some [Iraqi] people have money," she responded to my suggestion angrily, "So what? Is this attitude acceptable? Only to want something from you, to only love money? We are not like that, in Iraq, we were not like that. Wherever you go [in Jordan]—taxi, shop, store, everywhere—they try to cheat you. This is not acceptable!"

Guests of No One

In the accusations they levelled at Jordanians, Iraqis always hinted at this absence of grace by highlighting, as Jad and Dana did, the ways in which the welcome extended to them was largely a matter of money and self-interest. It was not that Jordan and Jordanians did not provide refuge or services; it was that these actions were calculated and not imbued with grace. One can understand this through the contrast between the hospitality offered by a home and by a hotel: while both spaces offer hospitality, they do so according to "two parallel modes of conduct" (Pitt-Rivers 2011, 445). The hospitality of the home is governed by the heart and the principle of grace, whereas the hospitality of the hotel is governed by the head and the principle of law (Pitt-Rivers 2011, 445). Jordan can be understood as extending the hospitality of the hotel, which is akin to Mauss' obligatory gift, rather than a question of the soul and the blood. For Iraqis, however, as for Pitt-Rivers (2011, 445), "the affective side of life cannot be obliterated," and it was because Jordanians did not offer a more expansive hospitality, that Iraqis

came to deny that Jordanians were truly hospitable and that they, Iraqis, were actually guests.

By undermining Jordanian claims to hospitality, Iraqis justified their presence in Jordan by deftly repositioning themselves as contributors to the country. In so doing, they often cited the fact that many Iraqis established businesses, rented and purchased apartments, invested and spent money, were the target of foreign aid and investment, and brought reverse remittances from Iraq. Dana described this by saying, "They think we take from their well-being, but no. We spend here as opposed to all the other foreigners. We are a benefit [to Jordan]." Similarly, Bassam repeatedly explained that "All Iraqi people, even the poor people, they brought money with them, they did not come to take from the [Jordanian] government." In fact, there is considerable evidence supporting this claim that Iraqis—far from burdening the economy—were instead a massive boon to it.[114] Yusuf Mansur, a Jordanian economist, the CEO of the Envision Consulting Group, and a frequently cited expert commentator on the economic impact of Iraqis and Syrians in Jordan, spoke to me at length about his views on Jordan and refugees. In June 2012, I visited him in his offices to find him sitting behind a large desk, cigarette in hand, a cup of steaming coffee in front of him. He leaned back in his chair and explained why Iraqis were what he has called elsewhere "a human gift" (Mansur 2015):

> Iraqis were massively beneficially to the economy. They invested heavily, particularly in real estate when land laws were changed in 2004 to allow foreigners

[114] This is also true for the more recent influx of Syrian refugees. See: Al-Khatib, Bashar and Katharina Lenner. 2015. *Alternative Voices on the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan: An Interview Collection*. Ramallah: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung – Regional Office Palestine.

> to purchase land. They created opportunities for local businesses. Between 2004 and 2008, the country saw 8.1% GDP per capita of real growth. For me, the issue with the Iraqis is that Jordan didn't hold onto them. The doctors, professors, engineers. It was fantastic human capital. Such a lost opportunity. Instead, almost all of these people are now in Europe, America, Australia.

This sense among Iraqis that they were valuable contributors to the Jordanian economy meant that a class idiom was often deployed in their refusals of Jordanian hospitality. One day, I visited Bassam to inquire about a barber course he was taking. He had just returned from his course, and explained that he had been cutting the hair of a few clients, one of whom was Jordanian. The man struck up a conversation with Bassam, as is common in this situation. He asked him where he was from, and when Bassam stated that he was Iraqi, the man immediately expressed sympathy. Rather than evoking receptivity in Bassam, the man's sympathy provoked his anger. He told me,

> They [Jordanians] are stupid! They do not know our situation in Iraq; it is one thousand times better than here! Still, when they find out that you are Iraqi, they say, "Oh *haram* (pity), sorry for your situation. But you are welcome here, you are our guests." What is this? I was shocked today! If I manage to travel to another place, I swear to you, I will work in anything—restaurant, mall, coffee shop. That is what happened with all Iraqis in the US, Canada, Australia. Yassin is now working in a restaurant and Sami too. However, here, no! I will not. All of our life, Jordanians were working in Iraq as [manual] workers. Ok, I am a refugee here without work, but still my situation is better than theirs! I say, "No! *Haram* for your situation, not for my situation! I feel sad for you; when your tank of gas is

> finished, I will cry for you because where will you find 10JD to pay for another?" If I have to work here, I will go directly to the free trade zone, which is 80% Iraqi. I will not work for a Jordanian. The truth is I cannot love them. I tried. However, their blood is heavy (*dammun it'īl*) [i.e., they are unpleasant].

Bassam's outburst highlights his categorical rejection of a subordinate status of any type and the affective stance that such a status evokes. In his frustration, Jordanians emerge as formerly dependent on Iraq, poor, and deserving of pity. Iraqis, in contrast, are better off, despite all their hardships; they even have some opportunities to work, if they really wanted to do so. For Bassam, then, it was not only a matter of rejecting all actual offers of hospitality, but also of framing Jordanians as impossible hosts. He did so by arguing that his situation, no matter how challenging, would always remain better than theirs, meaning, in effect, that Jordanians had nothing to offer, since they were the ones in need.

This is not to imply, of course, that someone who is poor cannot be hospitable. On the contrary, even someone who has very little can create a "hospitable effect by means of language and deft manipulation of space" (Shryock 2012, 24). For instance, a host can repeatedly and warmly welcome a guest, and the offering of even basic food or drink requires a precise choreography of gestures that establishes a sense of giving and receiving. My point here, however, is that, as a social system, hospitality functions to establish the sovereignty of the host through the host's ability to provide for the guest. At stake in Bassam's claims that Jordanians could not even provide for themselves, let alone others, and that Iraqis could provide for themselves in the space of a host, was nothing less than the logic of hospitality itself.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the history, implementation, and consequences of Jordan's hospitality approach in order to situate the paradoxical and powerful ways in which it simultaneously included and excluded Iraqis, thereby at once offering the possibility of comfort while always holding it at bay. In an effort to overcome the status barrier of being seen as guests, Iraqis imaginatively and discursively worked to recast themselves not as guests but as producers—people who gave rather than received. They claimed that Jordanian hospitality was suspect at best and absent at worst, and, in so doing, they eroded the sense of moral obligations incumbent on them as guests. Though the only way they could have completely escaped from the status barrier of the guest would have been to leave Jordan, they were still able to find some room to manoeuvre within the role, investing it with a sense of empowerment and agency. They did so by refusing to play it well. That is, they became, discursively and concretely, bad guests. They critiqued, insulted, and called into question Jordanian intentions. "Their money is their religion"—a damning accusation that allowed Iraqis to shift the discourse and social arrangements they were caught up in away from hospitality, which was the only framework by which Jordanians could claim a "higher place" in the socio-economic orderings. Iraqis thus freed themselves from the constraints of hospitality and re-framed themselves as productively tied to Jordan. In making this shift, Iraqis effectively expressed their power and reclaimed a sense of dignity, even if, in the end, many agreed with ʿAdel that life in Jordan could not actually ever be truly dignified.

While Iraqis worked to undermine the legitimacy of the hospitality discourse in their lives and resist their forced recognition as guests, they were still confronted with its terrifyingly real effects in their everyday lives. Given Jordanian labour laws that

made it difficult for any but the most financial well-off to secure employment or legal residency (Bassam's boasts notwithstanding), many of my Iraqi friends found themselves without much to do, as first days, then months, then years began to pass. Despite their imaginative work, the material realities of the guest status produced a sense of entrapment that coloured almost every discussion I had with Iraqis. In effect, while at first Jordan was understood and experienced as a 'functional' place that should have allowed for a sort of effortless living, over time the necessary limitations of hospitality increasingly brought to the fore the "un-ready-to-hand"-ness of Jordan as a place (Heidegger 1962). As it became obvious to Iraqis that they were living in a malfunctioning place, they were compelled to become Heidegger's problem-solvers. Specifically, they worked to live, and not only think themselves, beyond the entrapment of hospitality. This work to feel more comfortable in Jordan was a contingent process that is the focus of the next two chapters.

3— BEING PRODUCTIVE

I met Waʾel at a Ramadan *iftar* organised for Iraqis at the Jordan River Foundation in South Marka. He was deftly manoeuvring his way through the maze of plastic chairs and tables, taking pictures of the festivities, and stopping, every once in a while, to show someone a picture he had just taken. In his late twenties, Waʾel was friends with Bassam, who introduced him as a fellow member of what they called the "base" (*qāʾida*)—the apartment of two Iraqi brothers that acted as a meeting space for a group of young Iraqi men in Amman. Like many other members of the "base," Waʾel had come to Jordan alone, his family still in Baghdad, and had been waiting several years to be resettled to the United States. He sat next to me for the meal, and we soon started talking about his love for photography. As Waʾel surveyed the boisterous crowd enthusiastically listening to a poetry recital, his gaze dropped and his hands gently fiddled with the camera's lens. He paused for a long time before saying:

> My life is good now, but it is sad at the same time. Why sad? Because I feel, inside of myself, that I have a lot of power and that my abilities are good. I believe in myself, I could do many things, special things. I could have a good job. I have many ideas, even for small projects. However, I feel useless here, as though I am in a jail. There is nothing to do, just sitting, like this, waiting. It is so boring. I am taking a hairdressing course now, but it is just something to pass time. If I had known I would be here this long, I would have organised to take a longer, better course. Maybe I could even have gotten a Masters or studied at the airport near Marka. But our goal is not available here. We can have no goals. Life is boring. Our

> thinking is not stable. Our sleep is not stable. There are no guarantees. There is no way to make smart investments. It is terrible.

After saying this, Waʾel glanced at me, quickly, as though by mistake. Clearing his throat, he finally smiled, but his brown eyes darkened, liquid with emotion, as they shimmered in the unforgiving phosphorescent light. Then, suddenly, he laughed, raised his hands, and said, "*Ani hadīga*!" This expression literally translates, "I am a garden"; I heard it frequently among Iraqis, who used it to poke fun at and, I think, dissipate the tension associated with the fact that they were constantly sitting around with little to do.[115] Though they did not intend it in this manner, this expression deftly captures the particular dilemma of the eternal guest, who, unable to move about a house freely, not only sits in but also literally becomes the space (the loveliness of a garden notwithstanding) where he was initially greeted and offered hospitality.

This encounter with Waʾel occurred half way through my fieldwork, and brought into stark relief a common tension between trapped potential and the inability to cultivate and use it productively. Many other Iraqis evoked this "sense of embodied inability" (Samanani 2017, 246) or "existential immobility" (Hage 2009, 97), and drew on the same image—of "just sitting, like this"—when they spoke of their lives in Amman. Most often, they described the affective state associated with this situation as "boredom"—a boredom that Waʾel and others not only endured and feared (see O'Neill 2014), but actively worked to hold at bay.

In the preceding chapter, I discussed how Iraqis conceptually pushed back against the discourse of hospitality within which they were framed as guests of Jordan.

[115] While a garden can also be associated with ideas of growth and activity, the sense here was of a garden as a place to sit in and therefore a place of stasis.

By challenging this discourse, they were able to sustain their sense of comfort in Amman by recasting themselves in a different, and more agentive, role. Notwithstanding these imaginative efforts, however, Iraqis still had to confront the material reality of being forced guests in Jordan, particularly the entrapment between restrictive Jordanian labour laws and a weak economy on the one hand and an uncertain resettlement process on the other. Though they could legally secure residence rights in the country through business investments, real estate holdings, bank deposits, or formal employment, in practice these avenues to "financial citizenship" (Appadurai 2002, 32) were unattainable for the vast majority of Iraqis I met. When I asked an expatriate NGO director what she felt was the biggest challenge Iraqis faced in Jordan, she replied without hesitation, "Work and the integration that comes from it. Most Iraqis would be working now if they could get the right paperwork." Most Iraqis I met, however, were not able to work. Moreover, when they did find employment, it was generally ad hoc and temporary even for those with a university education; for instance, Mariam tutored young Iraqi schoolchildren, Lana's husband served coffee at funerals, and Bassam worked as a field assistant and translator for foreign researchers. Such work, however, was never steady enough to break the hold of boredom and the fear that it animated: that the decision to leave Iraq, logical at the time, might not have been the right choice after all. Boredom, then, radically called into question the gamble Iraqis had made in leaving Iraq. "Had I known the waiting would be this long," Lana told me one day as we watched a Bollywood movie and looked after her three children, "I would not have left Baghdad. It was bad luck."

As an affective state, boredom was characterised by my Iraqi friends as a temporal modality in which they no longer felt effectively in control of time and, as such,

became acutely aware of its passing. In making time meaningless—paradoxically emptying it of value while making it painfully noticeable in daily life—boredom was a widely shared form of suffering that corroded people's sense of social value. Writing about the "long-lasting experience of powerlessness" among the unemployed in France, Pierre Bourdieu (1997, 222–23) argued that faced with the loss of "a function or mission, of having to be or do something," such individuals sought out ways to still feel alive, to be seen by others, to force something, anything, to happen. This imperative to exert one's capacity is one that I understand in terms of the ability to feel sovereign over and for oneself.[116] In the case of the workers and youth Bourdieu observed, avenues to recuperate sovereignty often took the forms of gambling, violence, or dangerous games that reintroduced a sense of expectation, and thus of control over time, even if only momentarily.

For Iraqis in Jordan, this opportunity was rooted in Jordan's "throwntogetherness." That is, the ambiguity around who belonged and who did not belong in (and to) Jordan created a productive gap, or a slippage, that made it possible for Iraqis to act like hosts without undermining their status as guests and thus threatening Jordanian sovereignty. This ability was further accentuated because of the stereotype that Iraqis were wealthy and had relatively few needs, and because they arrived at a time when the refugee humanitarian system was still being established and was therefore relatively uncoordinated. Taken together, these realities allowed Iraqis, in

[116] I intentionally use the word "feel" rather than "be" here. Wendy Brown (2003) and Judith Butler (2004), among others, have noted that the self is never as sovereign as we would like to think. In this sense, my argument is not that Iraqis ever became fully sovereign over themselves in Jordan or elsewhere, nor that such a state is possible in general. Rather, I contend that their circumstances in Jordan made the project of regaining a *sense* of sovereignty central to their efforts at feeling comfortable there.

practical everyday terms, to inhabit the status of host vis-à-vis each other and, eventually, vis-à-vis more recently arrived refugees from Syria.

This chapter begins by clarifying how this productive gap materialised and offering some theoretical reflections on boredom, work, and the question of social value. It then turns to an ethnographic exploration of how Iraqis became everyday hosts, focusing on their involvement in humanitarian assistance. I think of this engagement as an everyday form of sovereignty, or what Farhan Samanani (2017, 248) terms "an everyday mode of taking responsibility for others, partly in order to constitute oneself." In taking responsibility for others, or coming to "care for" others in the sense of responding not only to their practical needs (based on notions of responsibility and duty) (Reich 1995), but also to their need for human connection and understanding, Iraqis materialised their sovereign capacities. They sought to ward off boredom and, in so doing, make time once again meaningful by living it productively. Their work was called into question, however, and their sense of social value was weakened, by inevitable tensions between their *de facto* status as everyday hosts (to other Iraqis and Syrians), and their enduring inability to escape the status of guest (of Jordanians).

Iraqi Guest-Hosts and Everyday Hospitality

Traditionally refugees have been spatially segregated from host communities by being placed in camps. This approach limits their interactions and impacts to a defined space, and allows governments and international organisations to deal with them exclusively and separately from host communities that are often conceptualised as a single homogenous entity serving as the backdrop to refugee displacement (Chambers 1986). Iraqis, however, were living *in* Jordan *with* Jordanians. As a major population of

refugees sharing urban space with others throughout the Middle East, Iraqis were critical in formalising the place of host communities as objects of humanitarian, governmental, and journalistic interest (UNHCR 2009; 2010).[117] Host communities became readily identifiable "objects" that were fixed, both spatially and socially: in geopolitical and legal terms, the host community was Jordan as a state; in communal terms, host communities were Jordanians, as designated by formal citizenship. However, the scalar nature of hospitality and its consequences for Iraqis refugees—and the interchangeability of state and citizen as host—was relatively unproblematized in practice. A few months into my long-term fieldwork in 2012, however, I realised that most of the Iraqis I was meeting counted very few Jordanians among their friends, or even among those individuals with whom they had sustained interactions. A Jordanian NGO worker explained the reason for this situation succinctly later in my fieldwork by stating: "Iraqis are actually quite closed. They stick together; they have formed a tight community. They buy from each other, help each other, and generally avoid Jordanians." Though Iraqis and Jordanians lived in the same neighbourhoods, their interactions were episodic and largely ritualistic, related, for instance, to issues of cultural reciprocity, such as visiting a neighbour to offer condolences for a deceased family member. This was true even for Iraqis who had been living in Amman for several years.

[117] Host communities, in fact, have come to be thought of with greater nuance and are now provided with services as an integral part of the UN/NGO humanitarian refugee response. In late 2013, the growing centrality of host communities to refugee programming culminated in the establishment of the Host Community Support Platform (HCSP) to address the impacts of regional displacement crises on Jordanian host communities. The following year, the Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis (JRPSC) replaced the HCSP: http://www.jrpsc.org/.

In the everyday, then, who exactly was the host to Iraqis? For Julian Pitt-Rivers (2012), hospitality is a formal system that has specific and fixed territorial limits. A host ceases to be a host beyond the threshold of his door, just as a guest cannot be a host in another's space. In this approach, host and guest are clear categories that allow for no ambiguity. A host always has complete sovereignty over his space and any host-like actions on the part of a guest are necessarily an unwanted and threatening usurpation of a host's position. However, I found Pitt-Rivers' clear distinction between guest and host not to be the case in Jordan, where the unresolved ambiguity around questions of belonging generated a certain elasticity, or a productive gap, in the functioning of hospitality at the scale of the everyday. I therefore suggest that Iraqis effectively became everyday hosts, or guest-hosts, for other arriving refugees, despite Pitt-Rivers' argument that such a situation is impossible. As guest-hosts, Iraqis did the practical work of hospitality: welcoming; helping people navigate the humanitarian system; providing housing, financial assistance, and moral support; and distributing in-kind and monetary support from wealthier Iraqis to poorer families. By performing these actions and roles, they accrued the power and prestige associated with the host's ability to extend hospitality.

In addition to the inherent ambiguity surrounding the notion of belonging in Jordan, this ability of Iraqis to be hosts was generated by a set of interrelated factors specific to the Iraqi situation. First, many Iraqis who came to Jordan had some money, though the amount varied from those with extreme wealth to those who had to live frugally. I think it is fair to say, however, that the vast majority of Iraqis had a certain measure of financial privilege vis-à-vis Jordanians, which contributed to the pervasive stereotype of the wealthy Iraqi. Though this stereotype was frequently attributed to the

visible consumption of an elite group of Iraqis living in Amman's wealthiest neighbourhoods, it came to define Jordanian views of most Iraqis. Consequently, many Jordanians felt that Iraqis neither needed nor deserved the forms of inter-personal hospitality that they readily extended to Syrians (at least initially). In her recollections of working with Iraqis in 2006—07, Salwa explained,

> There were a lot of stereotypes about Iraqis going around. There was a lot of tension around the fact that many of them were middle-class and upper class living in Rabieh and Abdoun.[118] People were saying that the rich Iraqis that are coming, they are actually people who stole from Iraq. So people thought they were lying, that they did not need to take these spaces, they did not need all of this, they are rich, not refugees, they should not be given all of this support.

Because of these assumptions, though Iraqis were cast as guests of Jordan at the national level, relatively little was done for them by ordinary Jordanians who felt that they not only did not need but also did not deserve hospitality. Stated differently, Jordanians largely rejected the role of everyday host. This rejection was facilitated by the fact that there were few inter-personal ties between Jordanians and Iraqis. I was consistently told that this was a consequence of Iraq's isolation while it was under international sanctions in the 1990s, as well as of geography—the "giant desert that separates civilization in Iraq from Jordan," in the words of Sara, a project coordinator for the local branch of an international NGO working with Iraqis and other refugees.

Finally, the international and government response to Iraqis in Jordan only began in earnest a few years after they started arriving, and took time to really gain

[118] Rabieh and Abdoun are two of the wealthiest neighbourhoods of Amman.

momentum. The common story I heard was that initially Iraqis had enough money to take care of themselves, so that, as Tamim, Sara's colleague, put it, "the vulnerability took time to settle in." When the humanitarian response began in earnest in late 2006 due both to growing need among the Iraqis already in Jordan and a surge in arrivals from Iraq, most NGOs and UN agencies had little to no operational experience in an urban context where Iraqis had self-settled in multiple neighbourhoods.[119] Despite this lack of experience, multiple UN agencies, international and local NGOs, and the Jordanian government, attempted to provide a range of services and programs for Iraqis, including health care access; educational, vocational, and recreational programs for adults and children; psychosocial support; in-kind and financial assistance to the most vulnerable families; and legal aid.

When I met with Sara and Tamim in early 2013, Sara explained that the humanitarian response to the arrival of Iraqi refugees had not only been delayed, but also, crucially, had not been structured by a "well-coordinated regional response plan," like the one that would later be set up under the auspices of UNHCR for Syrian refugees.[120] Such a plan would have allowed organizations to understand what was being done and by whom, to access the latest data on the Iraqi population's needs, and to consequently better tailor their programming. Sara expanded on her initial point by saying:

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[119] In fact, the Iraqi crisis is credited for expanding and consolidating UNHCR's policies and work for urban refugees (Crisp, Janz, and Riera 2009; UNHCR 2009; 2010).

[120] Officially called the "Regional Refugee and Resilience Framework," or 3RP, this UNHCR-led coordination mechanism brings together over 270 UN, NGO, and private sector partners to address Syrian refugee needs under a unified framework that covers both humanitarian and development needs. See: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria. The Jordanian equivalent is the Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis (JRPSC). See: http://www.jrpsc.org/.

> We did not have much institutional coordination; it was done on an ad hoc basis with each organization deciding what kind of work they wanted to do. Even [needs] assessments were not coordinated. I think the level of maturity in this response [to the Syrians] is much higher compared to that with Iraqis. And the level of transparency is much greater. Now the figures and numbers and funds are all there, you know what's being promised, what's being received, and where it's going. With Iraqis, the numbers were all over the place. Even the number of refugees. There was a huge difference between the UNHCR and [Jordanian] government numbers, and the [government] numbers could increase by several hundred thousand overnight. So, we were never sure.

Effectively, the lack of coordination and transparency meant that NGOs were often operating in the dark, duplicating programs, having difficulty assessing Iraqi needs, and even finding it problematic to locate Iraqis.

To address these daunting challenges, many organizations turned to Iraqis themselves, who did the work of network building on their behalf (Campbell 2006; Couldrey and Herson 2010; Crisp, Janz, and Riera 2009; Jacobsen 2006; Landau 2004; UNHCR 2010). That is, Iraqis mobilised their personal networks—which were one of the few ways for outsiders to gain access to the dispersed and loosely-knit Iraqi community in Amman. The reliance of NGOs on Iraqis was widespread, and resulted in NGOs hiring them without officially employing them. Salwa, who had worked on several projects for Iraqis, including a series of activity camps for children and teenagers, explained,

> We could not hire Iraqis, even though we knew that the Iraqis would be the best people to help us. So, we hired 'assistants.' We paid them well. We gave them a

> 'transportation allowance,' because you could not pay them anything else, since the Jordanian government would not allow that we pay them [a salary]. As a civil society, we found ways around that.

As Salwa mentioned, Iraqis could not officially work for NGOs; such employment was reserved for Jordanian nationals as a way of ensuring that international aid money was channelled into the Jordanian economy. However, to get work done on the ground, NGOs needed Iraqis. The 'hiring' of Iraqis was therefore an open secret and a practice tolerated by the Jordanian government. The allowances that Iraqis received were modest, averaging 100—150 USD per month. Iraqis helped NGOs recruit Iraqi participants for training workshops, educational activities, children's camps, and vocational and language courses, as well as for health and other social services. They did the physical work of knocking on doors, explaining the details of programs, and encouraging Iraqis to participate. They were, in many ways, the crucial human infrastructure that enabled many NGOs to implement their programs.

Boredom and the Absence of Work

I was sitting in Mariam's living room one day, waiting for her to return from running some errands; with me sat Imm Yasser, an older Iraqi woman, who was in Jordan with her husband, son, and granddaughter. She was in a particularly somber mood, as her family had just come up on the one-year anniversary of their arrival in Amman.

> I do not like staying put at home. I love working. I am not talking about housework. That sort of thing is secondary. The important thing is to go out there and work. Anything, as long as I have a job. I used to [work] back in Iraq as a

> seamstress. I would see people come and go, faces would change, and there would be unique discussions. With my job, it felt entirely different. Not everything inside the house, house, house, cleaning, cooking, and sweeping. Here, I am just sitting here. If you do not work, it becomes boring. The human being, when all he does is sleep and eat, it is shameful, shameful, for humans to act like animals. To only eat and sleep. Why did God create us with a brain? To work, to come and go.

In theorising boredom, Lars Svendsen (2005) differentiates between "situative boredom," as a feeling firmly tied to certain situations in the world, and "existential boredom," as a state of being.[121] This distinction can be understood physically: "While situative boredom is expressed via yawning, wriggling in one's chair, stretching out one's arms and legs, etc., profound existential boredom is more or less devoid of expression" (Svendsen 2005, 42). The boredom experienced by Iraqis aligns with Svendsen's "existential boredom" in the sense that it was untethered from any specific event yet it coloured their lives as a whole; empty of expression, it was described repeatedly as an endless sitting, or what I conceptualise as an arrested sense of sovereignty. For Waʾel and others, this boredom indexed a profound but frustrated desire to engage in a productive activity that could give meaning to time and to life. It was thus characterised by the absence of goals and the difficulty of making "smart investments"—or the inability to know where and how to effectively use one's energy

[121] Svendsen (2005, 109–10) articulates this more precisely as a difference between boredom as emotion and boredom as mood. Whereas emotions are most often specific, of limited duration, and related to a particular object, a mood is general, has no temporal limits, and is objectless. This distinction is possible because Svendsen conceptualises moods as the mechanism through which individuals are attuned to their surroundings; as such, a mood concerns the world as a whole and, when boredom is experienced as a mood, it indexes a condition whereby people feel that the world, as a whole, is boring.

and abilities—what Adam Ramadan (2013) describes as the impossibility of directing the activities of daily life toward a predictable future.[122]

While described through the physical metaphor of sitting, which denotes a sense of immobility, this boredom was not devoid of activities per se; Imm Yasser says as much when she speaks of eating and sleeping. On their own, however, such compulsory actions reveal a person whose life exists through necessary repetition, but who does not actually live, in the sense of being socially engaged in the world. For Imm Yasser, such a form of life reduced people to being "like animals." Her analogy echoes Dostoevsky's (2009) characterisation of boredom as a "bestial and indefinable affliction," indefinable because it describes not so much a something as its absence.

Writing about daily life in the Palestinian refugee camp of Shatila in Lebanon, Diana Allan (2013, 163) observed an important gendered dimension to the experience of boredom or what she terms "forced idleness." Men, who shouldered the heavy social expectations of being able to support a family, experienced unemployment and its associated boredom acutely. In contrast, women, who were not expected to be able to financially support a family, were less susceptible to feelings of boredom, since they

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[122] This emphasis on the desire to be able to effectively use—or invest—one's abilities, and to want to have a sense of control over one's life through work, could be seen as coinciding with what scholars have termed a "neoliberal subjectivity." Neoliberal subjectivity is defined principally as a vision of "people owning themselves as though they were a business" (Gershon 2011, 539) or of "how people should take themselves to be a bundle of skill sets which navigate responsibility and risk in a world that putatively operates always by market principles" (Gershon and Alexy 2011, 799). However, while the desire of Iraqis to regain a sense of sovereignty can be read as a simple iteration of neoliberal subjectivity, particularly given their generally middle-class status and identification, I understand it in different terms: as a fundamental (and universal) need to feel alive. Ghassan Hage (2005) characterises this as the need for "existential mobility," and Michael Jackson similarly (2013, 166) describes it as an "existential imperative":

> In spite of being aware that eternity is infinite and human life finite, that the cosmos is great and the human world small, and that nothing anyone says or does can immunize him or her from the contingencies of history, the tyranny of circumstance, the finality of death, and the accidents of fate, every human being needs some modicum of choice, craves some degree of understanding, demands some say, and expects some sense of control over the course of his or her own life (Jackson 2002, 14).

were able to draw meaning from household tasks and motherhood even while living in the camp. Among Iraqis, however, I found complaints about boredom to be as common among women as among men. This is likely because many Iraqi women in Jordan had previously worked in Iraq or had, at the very least, completed their education and aspired to enter the labour market. Lana, for instance, who had been a lawyer and had worked in high-level ministerial positions in Iraq, was tortured by her endless days of cooking, cleaning, and childcare. She often spoke of the unfairness of not being able to work in Jordan and how bored she was "just staying in the house, cooking and cleaning." According to Lana, "living here [in Jordan] is not living." One of the innumerable times that she complained of being bored, she framed the issue in explicitly feminist terms: "In Iraq, it wasn't like this. For me, the woman, if she works, she can do anything. She can program her life, her work, and her family." Similarly, Rana, who was in Amman with her brother while they waited to be reunited with their mother and younger brother already living in Chicago, often expressed her frustration at never having been able to practice as a civil engineer. She had completed her degree in the field just a few years before leaving Baghdad in 2011. She described her life in Amman as "empty," and often lamented that she was forgetting what she had learned at university. "I wish I was doing something! Work, it is very important, it makes you feel alive." Even though they were not expected to work outside of the home in the way men were in Jordan, Iraqi women such as Imm Yasser, Lana, and Rana nevertheless experienced the inability to do so as profoundly debilitating. While they (unlike men) still had housework to structure their days in Amman, they experienced their daily tasks not as a respite from but as evidence of boredom: only someone with nothing meaningful to do would engage solely in such "secondary" work. For many Iraqi women,

gainful employment was central to their life histories, and its absence therefore provoked the same existential boredom that it provoked among men.

Suffering from existential boredom, Iraqis became profoundly aware of time, experienced negatively as "losing time," "wasting the day for nothing," and a "waiting" during which no "experience" was possible. Most poignantly, they also spoke of the absence of the "present," which came unravelled by its emptiness. As I helped Lana prepare lunch one day, her young daughters kept pestering her about the various English words for the vegetables we were cutting. She abrasively sent them away and then immediately regretted her harshness. "They started remembering words today, but I am not in the mood," Lana explained, continuing: "I'm thinking all the time. Sometimes, I feel my head will explode. We are praying. That is all we have to do. Only praying. Living here is not living. You cannot earn enough money from work here. I am so depressed from the waiting and not doing anything."

In writing of the psychic pain of young Moroccans faced with dire poverty and few future prospects, Stefania Pandolfo (2018, 225) describes her interlocutors as "plagued by a forced inactivity, the lack of work raised to ontological and theological significance as a lack of deeds." The forced inactivity faced by Moroccan youth is a situation characterised by "entrapment and void" that leads "the self to feel itself like a corpse, losing the sense of existing." For my Iraqi friends as for Pandolfo's Moroccan interlocutors, the absence of work generated this pervasive sense of what I have here termed boredom in daily life because, as Bourdieu (1997, 222, emphasis in original) observed,

> employment is the support, if not the source, of most interests, expectations, demands, hopes and investments in the present, and also in the future or the past

> that it implies, in short one of the major foundations of *illusio* in the sense of involvement in the game of life, in the present, the primordial investment which – as traditional wisdom has taught in identifying detachment from time with detachment from the world – creates time and indeed *is* time itself.

This irruption of time into the lives of Iraqis, what Joseph Brodsky (1997) characterises as the "invasion of time into your set of values," made their inability to impose some sort of order on it all the more evident and painful.[123] This was especially the case because, unlike other refugees, such as Palestinians, who are born into the conditions of waiting and boredom (see Allan 2013, 161–89), Iraqis felt that they had made choices (however coerced) that led to their predicament in Jordan.

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A few weeks after the *iftar* in Marka, I was sitting in a café in Jabal Luweibdeh when Waʾel called me. He asked if he could stop by to chat, a request that he had never made before. When he arrived, he fell into the chair in front of me, visibly dejected. I ask him what was wrong, and he explained that a few Iraqi acquaintances with his same "pending status" for resettlement had recently received rejection letters. I tried to cheer him up, but Waʾel remained enveloped in the shadow cast by his acquaintances' rejections. "I am nothing here, nothing, nothing. I always felt in my life that I was strong, that I could deal with anything hard. Now I feel that inside of me, I am weak. Sometimes, I talk to God, especially when I pray, and I tell him: I am small and weak." At this point, Waʾel lowered his shoulders and tightened his arms around his chest,

[123] This resonates strongly with Zygmut Bauman's (2007, 46) conceptualisation of refugees as trapped within a space of "frozen transience [...] a duration patched together of moments of which none is lived through as an element of, let alone a contribution to, perpetuity." That is, though refugees experience time, the time they experience does not solidify into history, either personal or collective.

curving his back forward, as he flinched, physically enacting his fear for me, adding: "I tell God: please be careful with me." A peal of laughter then escaped from Waʾel's lips, blowing apart and thus bringing into sharper focus the intensity of emotions animating him. "I am laughing, I know," he continued, "I laugh, but inside, I am sad for myself. All of my friends left. Why just me?" I asked him what he would do if his case were rejected. He said he would stay in Jordan—figure out a way to live here—while looking for another way to leave the Middle East. He then added, "I don't know if I made the right decision to leave my country, my friends, everything. Sometimes I think about it. I do not know. All of my friends in Baghdad, they are working, and here, you cannot do anything. Everyone [in Iraq] has his or her life. They have their job, they are married, and they have children."

Like Waʾel, the overwhelming majority of Iraqis I met had family members who had chosen to stay in Iraq, and not always because they lacked the resources to travel. On the contrary, many Iraqis in Jordan were dependent on remittances *from* Iraq, meaning that at least some of their family members were actively working and doing well for themselves. Moreover, Iraqis in Jordan either had generally been gainfully employed in post-2003 Iraq or had been pursuing higher education. Concerning work, then, they were involved in what Bourdieu termed "the game of life," even if the broader context in Iraq became progressively more hostile to their sense of comfort. In writing about transnational Lebanese migration, Ghassan Hage (2009, 98) suggests that people migrate because, "They are looking for a space and a life where they feel they are going somewhere as opposed to nowhere, or at least, a space where the quality of their 'going-ness' is better than what it is in the space they are leaving behind." In leaving Iraq, Iraqis did not assume that life would become idyllic. However, they did expect that the

quality of their life, or "going-ness," would not be worse. That the lives of family and friends in Iraq were dynamic despite the immensity of hardship they faced only amplified the boredom that permeated the lives of Iraqis in Jordan.

Social Value, Care, and Hope

While some Iraqis remained imprisoned by this boredom and its distortions of time, many struggled to free themselves from its weight. Iraqis' desire to resist the corrosive effects of boredom and to restore their sense of sovereignty dovetailed with the urgent humanitarian need for people with knowledge of the Iraqi community. For instance, Mariam volunteered for the Jordan River Foundation, a royal NGO that focuses on child safety and community empowerment.[124] She asked me to join her one morning at a session on family issues, such as fighting between neighbourhood children, which had been organised for Iraqi, Syrian, and Jordanian women. When we arrived at the centre, Mariam guided me to a spacious room where a group of women had already gathered. They all seemed to know each other, and it was clear that they all knew Mariam, descending on her all at once and peppering her with kisses. As we waited for the session to begin, most of the women were huddled in small groups, chatting, and drinking tea. Mariam was the one who had recruited these women for the session, and so I took the opportunity to ask her how she had selected them. She explained that the NGO had requested that she find a certain number of Iraqis, Syrians, and Jordanians, preferably some Muslim and some Christian; the Iraqis and Jordanians she already

[124] Royal NGOs, or RONGOs, are NGOs with official ties to different members of Jordan's royal family. For instance, the Jordan River Foundation (JRF) is chaired by Queen Rania. For more information about the JRF, see: https://www.jordanriver.jo/en.

knew, while the Syrians she identified through her neighbours and friends in the area. Samia, the centre director, approached, and when Mariam introduced us, she spoke glowingly of Mariam's work. "Without Mariam," she explained, "we would not be able to do this work! She is the one who knows the people."

Though the financial remuneration they received was certainly important to Iraqis, I never heard them say that they worked with NGOs specifically for the money. Humanitarian programs offered the opportunity to be busy, to have a purpose, and, most importantly, to have obligations to and expectations from others (Bourdieu 1997, 240)—leading to the possibility of a reconstituted sense of productive, that is, socially valuable, self.[125] Working for NGOs, then, provided an exit from boredom by allowing Iraqis to regain and exert a sense of sovereignty. Najwa, an Iraqi caseworker for the local branch of an international organisation, explained that after five "bad" years in Jordan doing nothing and facing a difficult financial situation, she finally decided "to stop suffering at home alone, and to go out, to help myself and my family, and then to help others." The importance not only of being productive, but also of doing so by connecting to and caring for others was crucial to Iraqis, because this helping of others had a reciprocal force in their lives: as Najwa evocatively explained, it "helped me to find another hope, to live."[126]

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[125] In a different context, Janelle Taylor (2008) powerfully illustrates that the ability to take care of and be accountable to others is central to our understandings of what constitutes people as human. Chronicling her mother's dementia, she argues that people suffering from dementia are often denied social recognition because they are understood as no longer being able to take care of others—that is, they no longer have a socially recognised function.

[126] In this sense, Iraqis' approach contrasts with neoliberal subjectivity's emphasis on an individual's capacity for 'self-care'—"the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions" (Brown 2003, 42)—because Iraqis inextricably tied their own self-care to the ability to care for others.

Iraqis' attitude evokes Heidegger's (1962) notion of "*sorge*," meaning 'care or 'concern'; for Heidegger, care is a central motif in the relation of people to one another (and to being). In Heidegger's philosophy, care is best understood as an existential-ontological state characterized, in part, by a desire to attend to the world—and therefore to the presence of others in it. As John Borneman (2001, 41–42) describes, for Heidegger, human experience "is defined not in a simple succession of discrete 'nows' but in the temporal constitution of care. Humans, then, are not blind egos following deterministic sequences of events, of cultural paradigms and rules. They plot sequences of experiences in narratives organized around for whom and what they care." Similarly, by becoming involved in the humanitarian system, Iraqis were therefore able to conjure what Nawal termed "hope," as understood by Gabriel Marcel (1973, 143), who argued that, "There can be no hope that does not constitute itself through a we and for a we." Marcel evocatively described hope's plurality its "choral" nature, in that hope requires a person to open themselves up to others, to free themselves from the lonely imprisonment of a difficult situation—in this case boredom—and its attendant temptation to despair. For Iraqis, then, the ability to feel useful, to be able to take responsibility for others, was crucial to a reconstituted sense of authorship over their lives and of comfort in Jordan. Becoming guest-hosts, however, meant necessarily assuming a precarious position since no matter how well Iraqis inhabited the role of host, they only ever inhabited it—they never actually came to *be* hosts in the formal sense.

Layal

Joyously loud, witty, and often irreverent, Layal was a critical resource for other Iraqis in Marka Shemaliyeh, a working class neighbourhood of East Amman where many Iraqis lived due to the affordable rents and a vibrant street life. When I went to visit her one early spring morning in March 2013, I found her alone with her youngest son, Nadim, a wide-eyed five-year old. She was busy looking for her hijab, late, she explained, to meet a friend with whom she was going to attend a Mother's Day event for refugees at the Nour Zein Foundation Center in Marka Janoubiyeh. "Do you want to come?" she asked me, followed quickly by, "Come on let's go then!" I did not even have the chance to say a word before Nadim took my hand and dragged me out as Layal closed the apartment door. We met her friend, a woman named Randa, on the stairwell, and headed out together. As Layal thrust herself into the busy street in search of a taxi, I asked Randa how they came to know each other. "Oh, I have only been here four months and when I first arrived, I heard from other Iraqis that Layal was the person to go to if you had any questions." "Questions about what?" I inquired. "About anything! About everything! How to do things here, the neighbourhood, the UN, programs for assistance, like that." I asked, "Did you just go to see her or did someone introduce you?" Randa laughed and replied, "I just went and knocked on her door!"

When we arrived at the Nour Zein Foundation Center, the festivities were already well under way, the main hall packed primarily with women and a dizzying number of children. There was a stage set up, and, as we found the few remaining seats, a prize distribution was wrapping up to raucous applause. Layal recognised a number of women seated in the row in front of us and went to sit with them, leaving Randa, Nadim, and me to listen to an Iraqi woman who has just begun singing. Suddenly, Randa began

crying, a constant, silent flow of emotion oozing from her eyes. She whispered to me that the music reminded her of how much she missed her extended family still living in Baghdad; the decision to leave Iraq had been her husband's. Layal turned around suddenly with a smile on her face—perhaps to see if we were enjoying the music. Seeing Randa, she immediately became serious and whispered to the women near her. They then all turned and stared at Randa, an uneasy shock settling over them, as though Randa's feelings echoed somewhere in their depths. Layal reached over her chair to caress Randa's arm and said quietly, "She is new to exile (*hiyye jadīda ʿal ghurba*)."

Randa was one of many people I met for whom Layal was a first point of contact, a critical resource, a constant source of moral support, information, and even financial assistance. For Layal, this "work," as she called it, was central to her sense of self in Jordan. She had come to Amman in 2007 with her husband and four children. A schoolteacher in Iraq, Layal felt immensely alone in Amman, spending most of her time at home taking care of her young children and, on occasion, tutoring some neighbourhood children for a very small fee. Still, she explained, after two years she felt "so bored and sad with myself, as if I was no longer a person," and began searching for something to do. Like many others, she became a volunteer for the local branch of the Jordan River Foundation in Marka Shemaliyeh. This outreach position allowed her to meet many Iraqis, and her work grew from there. When I first met her in 2012, Layal still worked for several local and international NGOs, linking them to Iraqis in the neighbourhood or helping organize small seminars. She was also responsible for registering Iraqis so that they could use the local public health centre free of charge. Over the years, her volunteering work allowed her to accrue a certain 'humanitarian expertise': she knew the ins and outs of NGO and UN services and rules, and had

intimate knowledge of Iraqis' needs. She therefore also began "volunteering" to help other Iraqis on her own, that is, outside of the purview of any specific program. The work clearly became her: she was confident and outgoing, a giver of solicited and often unsolicited advice, an intermediary, and a lifeline. Her two cell phones were constantly ringing and buzzing.

A few days after our meeting with Randa, Layal invited me to join her for a meeting she had set up between an Iraqi family looking for an apartment and a Jordanian landlord, Imm Qais, a woman whose family owned a large number of apartments in Marka Shemaliyeh. Layal and I strolled along one of the main thoroughfares of Marka, its sidewalks overflowing with children returning from school, vegetable and fruit stalls, awkwardly parked cars and motorcycles, and regular groupings of young men chatting and smoking. Layal finally spotted the Iraqi couple walking on the other side of the street and waved to them. When they joined us, she introduced them as Abu and Imm Fadi. They were from Mosul and Nineveh in the north, respectively, and were impeccably dressed, he in a full suit, she in black pants and a colourful blouse. They exuded a charming and easy warmth. As we walked toward Imm Qais' home, Layal and Imm Fadi exchanged a flurry of information about their pasts in Iraq—where exactly they used to live, their favourite Iraqi dishes, what they missed most about their lives there—and their current situation—how many children they had, their struggles with the UN resettlement process, life in Amman. I walked behind them keeping pace with Abu Fadi, who looked around, breathing in the intermingling smells of exhaust and fresh bread. Abu Fadi told me how much he liked Marka: "It is so much more alive than Gardens, where we are living now. Maybe it [Gardens] is a nicer neighbourhood, but here you feel that there are people!" I asked

him how he came to contact Layal and he echoed Randa by saying, "By reputation! People told me she is a good person and she knows how to do things here." As we approach Imm Qais' home, I noticed that she was already waiting for us; she greeted Layal warmly and told us that the apartment she wanted to show us was just a few blocks ahead. A Syrian family was currently living there, Imm Qais explained, but they found the rent too expensive and wanted to move to a smaller apartment.[127]

After climbing two flights of stairs, we were ushered into a large apartment that felt much smaller, its high ceilings notwithstanding, due to the inordinate amount of dark wooden furniture and heavy drapes on all its windows. Imm Firas, the mother of the family, led us to the main living room, where an army of small children, as well as her two eldest sons and their wives, joined us. After formal courtesies were exchanged, and tea, coffee, fruit, and sweets laid out in front of us, Layal deftly took over the conversation, tacitly acknowledging her role in connecting Abu and Imm Fadi, Imm Qais, and Imm Firas. She seized on one of Imm Firas' complaints about the opacity of UN assistance in Jordan and the conversation unfolded from there.

Imm Firas: God knows people's conditions. The rent here is very high, 150 JD.[128] I am looking for a smaller apartment.

Layal: Try to look for something with furnishings that are more modest.

Imm Firas: I am looking for an unfurnished apartment, so it is cheaper.

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[127] This section of the chapter introduces a number of Syrian families that my Iraqi friends who worked with NGOs encountered. However, my intention in discussing these encounters is not to center Syrian refugee experiences in Jordan. Simply, at the time of this research in 2012, the number of Syrians in Jordan was increasing daily, and Syrians were becoming the focus of humanitarian efforts generally. That my Iraqi friends were visiting Syrians, then, was a consequence of this shifting humanitarian attention to a "new" refugee population. In the forthcoming scenes, then, what I am interested in is not so much the experiences of Syrians themselves, but the ways in which these encounters influenced Iraqis' sense of self and comfort in Jordan.

[128] Approximately 210 USD.

Layal: Have you applied for an appointment with the UN?

Imm Firas: Yes, we have an appointment.

Layal: When you go, do not tell them that you are living in a furnished apartment; just say that you live in an empty apartment. Tell them that you pay around 125 JD. Get a contract from the bookstore and fill it out.[129] This way, you can get something because if it is furnished and your rent is around 200 JD, they will not give you anything. You need to tell them that you are in debt.

Imm Firas: Yes, but actually we are in debt!

Layal: Yes, you might be, but you also need to be organized and say something that is very clear. You need to know how to say things. When you go to the interview, you need to mention things so that you get coupons [i.e. humanitarian support]. If your narrative is clear and proper, you will get aid immediately.

Imm Firas sighed and the room fell into an awkward and wounded silence; I fiddled with the warm glass of tea cupped in my palm. Finally, Layal cut into the silence by saying, "May God return you to your country."

Abu Fadi interjected at this point, telling Layal that he went to UNHCR and was given an appointment and a yellow card. "I don't know what is happening," he said, rubbing his forehead with his left hand. He asked if he should also consider the advice she had just given to Imm Firas when he went for his appointment. "No," Layal stated confidently. "The yellow card is simply to register you with UNHCR; it is not about

[129] It was common to find contract and receipt template booklets in bookstores.

financial need."[130] Abu Fadi nodded and then explained that he was also worried his family's file might not be accepted because of his former ties to the Baʿath party. "No," Layal replied, "In Australia, they usually approve files, because they do not care about ties to the Baʿath.[131] Even in Sweden, they do not care. But there is no point asking to go to America." This talk of resettlement countries prompted Imm Firas to ask Layal how they, as Syrians, could end up in a country like Sweden. Layal explained:

> Actually, it is better to do it directly, without going through the UN, because they do not have specific programs for Syrians.[132] You need to know a Syrian there [in Sweden] who can provide a work contract for you. If he gives you a work contract, then, through the embassy, you can get a visa, but the trip is at your expense. Once in Sweden, you will not be part of any aid program, because you have gone there on a work contract, so you should have work lined up there for you. It should be legal work, where you pay taxes. In this way, many Syrians have now left.

This discussion about alternate, work-based routes to resettlement outside of the Middle East led to a long discussion about the politics and violence convulsing the region. Imm Firas, in particular, was keen to discuss the broader geopolitics at play in the Syrian war. Suddenly, Layal interrupted Imm Firas, impatiently putting down her cup of coffee and clearing some unruly crumbs from her black abaya. "Imm Firas knows

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[130] UNHCR provides asylum-seekers with a yellow card as a form of identification and proof of registration with the organisation.

[131] This discussion was about nominal Baʿath membership, which was often a requirement for certain public servant positions, such as university deans.

[132] Layal here was gesturing to the fact that many countries, particularly the United States, had specific resettlement quotas for Iraqis, whereas other refugees were resettled in line with general refugee resettlement quotas. This has since changed for Syrians, but at the time of this exchange, it meant that their chances for resettlement via the UN system were slim. Though I was never able to ascertain how much more expedient it was for them to apply directly to embassies, I often heard that this was the best way for Syrians to leave the region.

about politics and she knows about Iraq. I do not care about those things. Give me something to do at the UN or the local organizations, and I will do it for you. This politics where we can change nothing really frustrates me. Do not tell me about politics, because we cannot do anything!"

Finally, Imm Qais, silent throughout this exchange, asked Abu Fadi, "So, how do you see the country?" This offered a segue to broach the reason for our meeting: transferring the rented apartment from Imm Firas to Abu Fadi. Abu Fadi explained that their apartment in Gardens cost 350 JD a month,[133] and that they wanted to leave, both to pay a lower rent and to be in a livelier area. Imm Qais demurely asked how much he would be willing to pay for Imm Firas' apartment. And so began a delicate back and forth mediated skilfully by Layal who, when Imm Qais insisted on a rent of 200 JD—fully 50 JD more than what Imm Firas had been paying—said, imploringly: "Imm Qais, we are all struggling people. What do you think of 160 JD?" Imm Qais cleared her throat and slowly nodded her head in agreement. Layal smiled, satisfied. The rent transfer complete, Layal then proceeded to explain when running water was available in Marka[134]—Thursday—and when the electricity and water bills arrived—every two and three months, respectively. "You should only do your washing on Thursday, when the water comes, or else you will use up all the water in the water tanks, which are shared

[133] Approximately 490 USD.

[134] Given water scarcity in Jordan, running water was rationed and provided to Ammani neighbourhoods on different days. In Marka Shemaliyeh, it was Thursday; in Jabal Amman—where I lived during fieldwork—water came on Wednesdays. The issue of water scarcity was pervasive in the media and in scholarship on Jordan, which made it seem as though most people grasped its urgency. However, this was not always the case, even among Jordanians, and encouraging responsible water usage remains a critical government goal. For instance, in a documentary about a government initiative to train Jordanian women to be plumbers, most of the women who participated in the program did not know at its outset how little water Jordan had or why water did not come regularly. See: https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/earthrise/2017/05/jordan-water-wise-women-170516110004513.html

with another apartment. It is not like Iraq; there is no water in the country. In the end, we are guests here," Layal said with a tone that was at once helpful and disciplinary.

The atmosphere in the apartment relaxed now that the business was settled, and the discussion fragmented into many conversations, interrupted regularly by the children's laughter and screams. In this cacophony, I caught Imm Qais leaning over toward Layal, who was sitting next to her. She was worried that she would lose the rent. "How can I know that they will keep their word?" Layal assured her that Imm and Abu Fadi were good people and that she need not worry. Imm Qais straightened her back and settled back into the couch.

When we finally left Imm Firas' apartment, Layal and I accompanied Imm and Abu Fadi to the main road to find a taxi. They were endlessly thankful and took turns praising Layal for helping them. Layal responded with the required humility and counter-blessings, but was also visibly pleased and proud. In helping them find an apartment, Layal both used and augmented the honourable reputation she had acquired. That Imm and Abu Fadi approached Layal based on her reputation, and that Imm Qais was confident enough to rent an apartment to a couple she did not know based largely on Layal's word, indicated the extent to which she was trusted. In the subsequent months, other Iraqis and Syrians would reach Layal's door, guided there by Imm and Abu Fadi (as well as by Imm Firas). Effectively, in the broader Iraqi networks that traversed Amman and beyond, Layal became a critical node—what Abdoumaliq Simone (2004), in his study of how the urban poor in Johannesburg mitigate their precarity in the city through similar networks, terms "people as infrastructure." The ability to amass knowledge and skills that she then deployed in being responsible for others allowed Layal to feel that she had a purpose while in Amman. This, in turn,

provided her with a sense of comfort, notwithstanding the many challenges she faced. She passionately gestured to the importance of being able to *do* something when she explained to all of us in Imm Firas' apartment that she was not interested in politics—an arena where she was utterly powerless—but in the practicalities of daily living, where she could productively accomplish something for others.

Bourdieu (1997) contends that it is precisely the mundane aspects of work, and not only its financial reward, which generate a sense of productive value. The goals of work are operationalised through "demands and commitments – 'important' meetings, cheques to the post, invoices to draw up – and the whole forth-coming already given in the immediate present, in the form of deadlines, dates and timetables to be observed – buses to take, rates to maintain, targets to meet" (Bourdieu 1997, 222). This nitty-gritty of daily work in effect structures a person's day and orients action, in the process giving meaning to social life by generating a "feeling of counting for others" and thus providing "a kind of continuous justification for existing" (Bourdieu 1997, 240). One morning, as we were sitting together on her kitchen floor cleaning lentils, Layal confided, "Without this work, I would have died a long time ago. My husband tells me that I am not a woman anymore, I have become a man!" The reference to gender here is telling; in making it, Layal's husband was attributing to her the intertwined notions of agency, responsibility for others, and power usually associated with men in the patriarchal world Layal inhabited.

In doing her "work" with and for Iraqis (and Syrians), however, Layal was not merely becoming responsible for them and, through this, reinvesting time with meaning and reconstituting a productive sense of self and hope. She was also becoming a powerful broker—a guest-host. In the connections and advice she dispensed concerning

humanitarian, logistical, and financial matters, she was not only helping people, but also managing their lives as refugees, as guests, while in Jordan. Writing about Greek volunteers working with asylum seekers in Athens, Katerina Rozakou (2012, 572) describes how, notwithstanding their desire to challenge the dominant hospitality discourse of the state vis-à-vis refugees, the volunteers nevertheless "became involved in power relations and practices of management and control of life [...] by offering refugees [...] advice [...] aimed at matters of everyday life: child care, the management and organisation of the domestic space, legal and medical matters." Similarly, Layal's work was as much about reaching out to others in solidarity as it was about generating a feeling of "precise containment" (Shryock 2012, 24), as she explained the implicit rules that 'guests' needed to follow while in Jordan. In the scene at Imm Firas' apartment, for instance, Layal carefully explained to Imm Firas how to transform the realities of her situation into a persuasive narrative in order to maximise the aid she could receive (Fassin 2012, 71). She also managed Abu Fadi's expectations by telling him that he should not expect any support from UN agencies given his financial status. And while she skilfully negotiated on behalf of Abu and Imm Fadi to obtain a lower rent from Imm Qais, she also reminded them to carefully manage their water consumption not only because of water scarcity in Jordan, but also because they were guests. As guests, they needed to monitor and circumscribe their behaviour so as to not infringe on their hosts. Though subtle and not always intentional, it was as much through the ability to exert such disciplinary 'nudges' as it was through the act of helping others that Layal's sense of self as sovereign, capable, and useful materialized.[135]

[135] My use of the idea of the 'nudge' here draws loose inspiration from its use in behavioural economics and political theory, where it is understood as a positive incentive to shape behaviour without overt

Despite the significant importance that her work held for her, however, Layal was nevertheless disquieted by a certain discomfort that she often alluded to though had difficulty articulating. Fundamentally, this discomfort had to do with the contradictions of being a guest-host. After helping organise yet another information session for Iraqi women on the rights of the child, she to me in frustration,

> It is all just words. The rights of the child—it is all words, just words. All the work these NGOs do, even the work I do, it is all just words, because in the end, what rights do children, or other people have, really? A month ago, for instance, an Iraqi family I know had a disagreement with one of their Jordanian neighbours over the kids and play space outside. Though the Jordanian kids were just as much to blame as theirs [i.e., the Iraqis], when the police came they only took the Iraqi father to jail!

I tried to push back, telling Layal that her work was vital to so many lives. But Layal shook her head, clearly troubled. Quietly, she added, "I don't know. Sometimes it feels like it is all for nothing. What can I *really* do? Information about resettlement is not resettlement, and a landlord can kick someone out at any time. Really, I think about this often. I am very confused about this, I have mixed feelings." The limitations to the help Layal was able to offer fuelled constant concerns about whether or not she was able to be truly responsible for others and, in turn, whether in fact she was really being productive at all. These doubts acted as a powerful corrosive on the sense of purpose Layal derived from her work, which she described as literally keeping her alive.

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coercion or sanction. See: Thaler, Richard H. and Cass R. Sunstein. 2008. *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Nada and Bilal

Nada was effortlessly driving through Amman's dizzyingly intricate roads, Bilal occasionally giving her directions from the back seat. Nada and Bilal were both Iraqi volunteers working for the local branch of an international NGO. Nada had arrived in Amman in 2006 from Basra, a single mother with a young son. Though she had been resettled to the United States in 2009, she had decided to return to Jordan shortly thereafter.[136] Nada liked her volunteer work with NGOs because "it keeps me busy. If not, what would I do?" Bilal and his family had also left Iraq in 2006, but they had come from Iraqi Kurdistan; nearly six years later, they were still waiting for resettlement. In the meantime, Bilal had worked for several NGOs and, when I met him in 2012, had built a vast network of contacts in the Iraqi community. Nada finally slowed down as we reached al-Mahatta, an area in the Hashmi al-Shemali neighborhood of East Amman named for its position next to the former Hejaz railway station. She, Bilal, and I were about to start a day of what were generally termed 'home visits.'

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NGOs working with refugees in Amman engaged in 'home visits' to better understand the living conditions and needs of refugee families. The information collected during these visits was meant to more accurately inform the distribution of assistance—such as rent support and the allocation of gas canisters or food baskets—as

[136] Nada was one of a handful of Iraqis I met who returned to Jordan prior to obtaining a US green card or passport. She explained that she found it difficult to find gainful employment at the height of the financial crisis in the United States, and that she had felt very lonely as a single mother in a new and unknown country. Her 'return' to Jordan, however, was not without its challenges. She found herself in the same situation she had previously faced and that her fellow Iraqis were confronting: the inability to find work and an uncertain future. In fact, Nada was considering applying for resettlement to another country, such as Sweden.

well as referrals to other NGOs working on specific issues, such as providing medical assistance or mental health support. Moreover, home visits were seen as an effective and dignified way to collect important information for three reasons.[137] First, they placed the burden of movement, and its attendant financial costs, on organizations rather than on refugees, who ordinarily have to present themselves at organizational offices to receive services. Second, meeting refugees in their own homes was a way of respecting their agency, since this arrangement allowed them to be the hosts and to structure the interaction as they saw fit. Finally, going to people's homes evidenced an interest in the totality of their life in Amman. That is to say, such visits did not have a single objective in mind, as is the case with many traditional humanitarian programs, such as giving out food coupons or offering a training course. Instead, the idea behind home visits was to create a bond with refugees that could make them feel that NGO staff were interacting with them as human beings to other human beings, rather than as humanitarian workers to victims. Samer, an Iraqi volunteer teacher at the same NGO where Nada and Bilal worked, explained that the general UN humanitarian approach emphasized gathering "data" rather than focusing on "the person." The home visits, in contrast, engaged with people using what he termed "everyday talk," a form of narrative engagement that was not about eliciting a clear biography (à la UN), but rather about understanding people's lives by asking, for instance, "what they cooked that day."

In this sense, home visits aimed to restrain, if not reverse, the use of dominant humanitarian practices through an attempt to be "close to people, to try and listen to

[137] This approach was systematized in 2013 for Syrian refugees. Data from home visits done by NGO and UN personnel are now shared and used to apply the inter-agency Vulnerability Assessment Framework. The Framework aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the vulnerabilities of Syrian refugees in order to effectively prioritise interventions and support advocacy work (UNHCR 2014a; 2014b).

them, and to understand their problems and what they need," as Nada explained when I asked her what we she hoped to achieve during the visits. For Bilal, home visits were about more than just assessing refugee needs in order to fairly and effectively distribute financial and in-kind assistance, important as this was. One morning, as we were preparing to head out on visits, I saw him try to explain the purpose of the home visits to a new Iraqi volunteer who pressed him by asking, "But what do you do? Don't people just need money?" Certainly, most refugees needed money, but for Bilal, as for others, they did not need *just* money. Home visits, Bilal explained, were also about providing "something extra" (Pitt-Rivers 2011, 425), beyond what was planned or expected. This something extra, according to Bilal, was another human being's presence, a being-together that was its own justification, not a means to an end. One can think of the distinction that Nada, Bilal, and others tried to draw between their practice and what they considered "standard" humanitarian approaches in terms of two types of care identified by Heidegger (1962). The first, *besorgen* (taking care of), is a minimal care that responds to "what" people need in a basic manner, while the second, *fürsorge* (solicitude or caring for), is an attention to other humans not merely "as objects of service" but as "selves oriented to others" (Reich 1995). Central to home visits, then, was this implicit idea of trying to provide what Mariella Pandolfi (2006, 262) calls "une autre écoute"—another way of listening in the form of one's presence—or what Andrew Shryock's (2008, 418) Bedouin interlocutors described as a "giving generously of yourself."

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Nada had driven us to al-Mahatta because during a home visit to a Syrian family the previous day, she had been alerted to the presence of another Syrian family in the

neighbourhood. Therefore, here we were, standing on a sidewalk in al-Mahatta, waiting for Bilal to call the family and get specific directions to their apartment. In the end, we caught sight of two boys, perhaps six or seven years old, coming out of a nondescript beige building and walking towards us. They guided us back to their family's apartment on the ground floor from which a woman's voice, friendly but hurried, told us to wait a moment as she shut the blinds. She popped her head out of the door as she put on her hijab, and welcomed us in. We stumbled into a tiny living room, with one sofa and some floor mattresses. It felt even smaller than it was due to laundry hanging from a makeshift line that extended from the window frame across to a door-less doorway, blocked by a makeshift curtain. A child, almost invisible under a thick yellow blanket, was sleeping at the foot of the sofa, where the two boys who greeted us now dutifully and quietly sat down. Nada, Bilal, and I also settled down, while the woman, Imm Walid, went to the kitchen to make coffee. She returned, offered us each a cup, and then sat down by the sleeping child, her two boys behind her; it was a poignant portrait, her face framed by her hijab, framed by her children, framed by the whitewashed walls of the room.

A cat, white and black with a cruddy eye, slinked in through the open front door. The children pounced on him happily. Nada laughed, while Imm Walid shook her head disapprovingly and explained that she disliked the cat but it kept the children entertained. Iraqi accents, thick and heavy, rarely passed unnoticed, and Imm Walid asked Bilal and Nada, "Are you Iraqi?" "Yes," Bilal replied. Imm Walid then launched into exalted praise of Iraq, saying, "After my country [Syria], I love Iraq the most. Iraq is very close to Syrians." Bilal asked if the children were in school, and Imm Walid nodded, "Yes." "Do you have kids?" she asked us in turn. Nada and Bilal did, a boy and three girls

respectively, and this resulted in a lively chat about the many challenges of parenting, especially outside of one's country. When a lull in the conversation came, Imm Walid fidgeted and caressed the head of her sleeping child. Then, suddenly, the cat leapt across the room chasing some invisible prey, startling all of us, and provoking an outburst of collective laughter. As it died down, Nada casually asked Imm Walid if her family was registered with UNHCR and, if so, could she see their registration paper? Imm Walid nodded vigorously, went into another room, and returned with a paper. As Nada copied down the information into her notebook, she began to ask a series of pointed questions.

Nada: Where are you from?

Imm Walid: Hama.

Nada: How much is the rent?

Imm Walid: 90 JD per month, but we will soon move to the apartment on the first floor, which will cost 120 JD per month.[138]

Nada: How come?

Imm Walid: Our friend, who is living in that apartment, is getting married and will take the apartment we are currently living in.

Nada: Where is your husband?

Imm Walid: He is working. He works in construction.

Nada: How much does he earn?

Imm Walid: About 200 JD per month.[139]

Nada: How long have you been in Jordan?

[138] Approximately 125 and 170 USD, respectively.
[139] Approximately 280 USD.

Imm Walid: One year.

On it went—a perfectly choreographed back-and-forth. Nada asked if she could see the rest of Imm Walid's apartment. Imm Walid stood, an implicit yes, and Nada and I silently followed her as she drew the curtain blocking the doorway to reveal an austere bedroom and a small bathroom facing each other. In the small space connecting the bedroom and bathroom was a kitchen that Imm Walid had improvised; bags of vegetables were on the floor and a whole eggplant and a small mountain of chopped mint lay abandoned on a cutting board. We returned to the living room without comment, where we chit-chatted a while longer before thanking Imm Walid for her hospitality and leaving with assurances that we would be in touch with her again.

We drove uphill, the streets a chalky, dusty yellow despite being paved. A group of five women walked up ahead, dressed head to toe in black with veils drawn across their faces and over their noses. We were now in Jabal Nasr to visit another Syrian refugee family, identified by a Syrian man whom Bilal had met at an NGO event a few days prior. We walked down a tight alley off a bustling street, up a few steps, past some haphazardly abandoned garbage bags, to arrive at a ground floor apartment. We knocked and an elderly woman opened and introduced herself as Imm Basel. She guided us first through a laundry room that had been set up in what had likely been an entryway corridor and then through a kitchen. Both bore the traces of hastily suspended activity: clothes half wrung dropped into plastic basins, dirty dishes covered in soapy water echoing with the sound of water trickling from the faulty faucet. Past this suspended activity that evoked a strange sort of still life, we entered a proper living room with sofas on two sides, mattresses along another, and a gas heater squarely in the

middle. We had already had coffee, but Imm Basel insisted on bringing us Nescafe. Nada and I took turns going to the bathroom, before we were all comfortably seated.

Abu Basel, Imm Basel's husband, reclined on the mattresses in front of us, and explained that they had been in Jordan eight months. They had come from Homs alone, though they had a daughter who was married to a Palestinian and lived in Amman. As he recounted their story, Imm Basel left quietly and we heard her rummaging through papers in another room. She returned with a picture, and handed it to me, saying, "This was our house in Homs." It was a traditional Syrian house, with an open internal courtyard. I handed it to Nada, who beamed and excitedly said, "It's just like Bab al-Hara!"[140] We all smiled. Abu Basel engaged in a courteous series of indirect questions meant to elicit our biographies. When he confirmed that Bilal and Nada were Iraqi, he said, "We had many Iraqi friends in Syria. They decided to go to Turkey now, but some of them returned to Damascus. We have been trying to convince them to join us here in Jordan." A long conversation ensued about displacement in the Middle East, how different regional countries treated refugees, and the ongoing tragedy of the Syrian war. Long silences punctuated the discussion, making the words exchanged seem like bursts of gunfire.

Abu Basel and Bilal were both smoking, and Imm Basel asked Nada and me if we smoked. We both said we did not, but then Nada added that she loved smoking nargileh, or the water pipe. Imm Basel's eyes lit up. She excitedly explained that she smoked

[140] Bab al-Hara (The Neighbourhood's Gate) is one of the most popular television shows in the Arab world. It is part of a genre of nostalgic television shows set in the "Damascene milieu." It tells the stories of a Damascene neighbourhood during the 1930s, when Syria was under French rule. For more on Bab al-Hara, see: Al-Ghazzi, Omar. 2013. "Nation and Neighbourhood: How Bab al-Hara Dramatized Syrian Identity. *Media, Culture and Society* 35(5): 586-601; Nassif, Helena. 2015. "Home under Siege: Bab al-Hara, Televising Morality and Everyday Life in the Levant." Phd diss., University of Westminster.

nargileh every day. In Homs, they had a collection of nargileh made of crystal, the biggest of which was several meters tall; to better illustrate her point, Imm Basel stood and raised her right hand well above her head to impress upon us the extra-human dimensions of the nargileh. This provoked a lengthy and at times clamorous debate on the quality of various types of nargileh tobacco and, especially, on whether Lebanese or Bahraini tobacco was the best—a debate that ended in a stalemate. Bilal then gently stubbed out his cigarette and asked, "Abu Basel, are you registered with the UN?" Abu Basel shifted his weight on the mattress, propping himself up on his left arm more firmly, and hesitated before replying tersely, "No." "You should register," Nada jumped in. "That way your medical bills would be covered. Do you not take any medication?" "No," replied Abu Basel. Nada was clearly thrown off by Abu Basel's curtness, but quickly recovered and insisted, "Still, you should register. Maybe in the future you might want to leave to resettle elsewhere. Why don't you register?"[141] Abu Basel fell into a melancholy and frustrated silence. Finally, he said,

> I do not know. What am I going to do there? I am sixty-four and my wife is fifty-seven. We had not even intended to come to Jordan! We were on our way home from Mecca, when we decided to stop in Amman to visit our daughter. We stayed when we heard that it was too dangerous to return. I worked in Homs for more than twenty years; we had a car, a home. Now what?

Imm Basel started restlessly shifting on the couch, repeatedly smoothing out invisible wrinkles in the fabric of her long dress. She was overtaken, it seemed to me, by some

[141] At the time of this visit, there was no formal resettlement program specifically for Syrians, though they could apply to the general resettlement program. Nada, and other humanitarian workers like her, however, believed that formal quotas might soon be instituted, and that it was therefore wise to encourage people to register in the meantime.

internal affective commotion as she listened to her husband's voice. She poignantly added, "We barely have enough money to get by. It is so cold!" As she said this, she pointed accusingly to the gas heater in the middle of the room. "We need another one," she forged ahead, sensing that perhaps we could help her. "We bought this one for 140JD. They are very expensive!" Abu Basel sighed and let out a prolonged cough. He then told us that there were other Syrians in the area that we should visit; one family was just around the corner. Nada looked at Bilal and asked if we had the time for one more visit. He winced, and said that we would return tomorrow, since we already had additional visits organized for the day. We finished our coffees before Imm and Abu Basel both walked us to the front door.

Once we were far enough away, Nada began complaining, "Sometimes it is difficult to know when people are telling the truth." She shook her head, disappointed. "People lie then?" I asked, uncertain of her meaning. Bilal said, "Yes, of course. We always have to try and assess what they say." We kept walking unhurriedly, and then I asked, "So how do you know? How do you know who is lying?" Nada stopped dead in her tracks, turned to me and exclaimed, "*How* do I know who is lying? From experience!" She then headed off down the road with renewed determination. "You start paying attention to small things," she continued as we caught up with her, "not only what people are saying, but also what they have and what they do." She paused and then challenged me, "For instance, how can you know that Imm and Abu Basel were lying?" Drawn into this game of judgement, I was taken aback, unsettled. "I don't know," I replied hesitantly. Nada scoffed and explained, "They complained about their living conditions, and said they needed a second heater, yet they bought a very expensive heater that I would not even have bought for myself!"

It was midday, and we were all hungry, but Bilal suggested that we push on and visit one more family before taking a lunch break. So it was that we found ourselves standing on the Italian Hospital street in Wast al-Balad, a chaotic entanglement of people, honking cars, and overflowing souvenir shops, once again lost.[142] Finally, after a long telephone conversation, Bilal said he thought he understood how to get to the home we were looking for. He cut across the street heading toward an unusually narrow staircase wedged between buildings. We climbed higher and higher, winding and turning. Perplexed, I looked up and saw an older woman wearing a red sweater looking down at us from one of the many windows. She must have been wondering what we were doing there. We climbed until the staircase spat us out onto a rooftop, which had a small concrete shed-like construction. The entrance was open, though covered with bright blue and orange tarps. A woman wearing a black abaya and brown hijab demurely pulled the tarps aside, allowing us to slip into a small, cave-like room. Imm Rayyan welcomed us repeatedly and sent her youngest boy, a shy but curious four-year old, to go buy some soda from the shop downstairs. We protested, but the child was already rushing down the stairs. We sat in semi-darkness, the heavy tarps providing privacy by depriving the small room almost entirely of natural light. Nada asked Imm Rayan if she had other children, and Imm Rayyan said, yes, that she had three other boys. They were at school at this time of day. The young boy returned with cans of soda, and Bilal and I each took one. Once it was clear that Nada did not want any, the boy quickly and excitedly grabbed a can, popped it open, and slouched down by his mother. Imm

[142] The Italian Hospital in Amman was established in 1927 by the Associazione Nazionale della Sanità Militare Italiana Mobile (ANSMI—National Association of Italian Military Mobile Health). It was the first hospital in the city, and it is currently run by the Comboni Missionary Sisters.

Rayyan, noticing our poorly hidden shock at the improvised home, told us that her family had been living "like this, like in a camp," for three years, ever since they had come from Iraq. Nada looked around, stood, and pulled aside a curtain hiding a space with blackened walls barely large enough to fit the family's small stove and fridge. She sat down again, silent.

Imm Rayyan cupped her left hand in her right as she explained that, though she was from Fallujah, her husband was Egyptian. Nada smiled and asked, playfully, "And where did you meet this Egyptian?" Imm Rayyan caught her lighthearted tone and let out a genuine and generous laugh before her eyes suddenly welled up with tears. They met in Iraq, she said, and, though her husband had initially found work when they moved to Jordan, he subsequently suffered an injury and had not worked in over a year. Imm Rayyan looked down and removed a piece of fluff from her abaya before she gently added, "You know this is not the first time you visit me."

We were all somewhat tired and distracted after our previous visits; hearing this piece of information, however, both Nada and Bilal were forcefully drawn back into the moment. "When?" Nada inquired. "A few months ago, but we haven't received any aid yet," Imm Rayyan replied. Disconcerted at this piece of news, Bilal reassured her that they would look into what happened and see what they could do to help. "Are you registered with UNHCR?" he then asked. Imm Rayyan nodded yes, and brought out her paper and handed it to Nada, who performed her customary copying practice. As she did, Imm Rayan explained that UN registration was not very useful for them since, because her husband was Egyptian, they could not apply for resettlement as a family. At this point, Bilal interjected, very matter-of-factly, "You know, Imm Rayyan, there are ways to deal with this. Many families face similar situations, because of nationality or

because a family member is rejected [for resettlement].” We all fell silent. Bilal was alluding to the widespread practice of strategic divorce, whereby families decide to break apart in order to secure resettlement for some members. I sensed that Imm Rayyan had also understood his implication. In response, she simply smiled and asked us if we would like some coffee or tea. We declined and, after some time chatting, stood to leave. As we carefully descended, Imm Rayyan, her arm around her little boy’s shoulders, watched us until we were no longer in view, though the boy’s loud “Byes!” echoed off the walls accompanying us down.

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Whenever I accompanied Nada and Bilal on their visits, I found them to be simultaneously both exhausted and fulfilled by their work. On this particular day in March 2013, we visited three other families before parting ways in the late afternoon. As we tumbled into Nada’s car after the final visit, she and Bilal spoke about the mixed feelings they had concerning their work.

Nada: You know, I love this work, we all do. What would I do without it? Before, I felt that I was doing nothing here. I came from Iraq and was just sitting at home, bored. Now, I can use my own experience here to help others. It [the work] is hard and tiring, there is a lot of pressure. It is hard not being able to do very much for people. However, even if we can help only a little bit, it is important, it can make a difference. We try to listen to people, to be close to them, and to see how we can practically help them. We do our best. Still, I often feel uncomfortable going into people’s homes.

Giulia: Why is that?

Bilal: There is not much aid, and people are suspicious often, because we take their information, and then, as you saw with Imm Rayyan, nothing happens.

In all the homes we visited, Nada, Bilal, and I were uninvited and perhaps unwanted guests. Much of Nada's discomfort at being in other people's space stemmed from this troubling fact. The nature of "finding" Iraqis and Syrians in Amman required a snowball approach, whereby one family led to another and so on. Initial home visits, then, were largely unplanned, with families having either very short notice that we would come or none at all. The families I met with Nada and Bilal could not hide the mix of suspicion and surprise that our visits provoked. Despite technically being guests in people's homes, we were very much—and paradoxically—still hosts. The intentions motivating home visits notwithstanding, the reality was that refugees remained anxious for information and material assistance, a dependence that made it difficult (if not impossible) for them to refuse our visits and questions, or even to limit our access to formal areas generally reserved for guests, such as living rooms. Rather than offering a generous presence, then, we were very often bad guests (Shryock 2012). Our presence was a trespass, as without warning we knocked on people's doors, provided them only scant information about ourselves, and then proceeded to walk through their bedrooms and bathrooms, solicit UN documents and other papers, ask about financial matters, dispense advice, and, inevitably, make assessments about need that were grounded in our own judgments about the truthfulness of people's stories. The desire to offer a different way of listening often went unfulfilled, then, and our presence, far from being generous listening, was more often a demand for people to display the proper evidence

of hardship—what Didier Fassin (2012, 109) has described as being subjected to a "truth ordeal."

Indeed, despite Nada and Bilal's commitment to do things differently, entrenched ways of doing humanitarian work came to reassert themselves in such daily interactions. The commitment to "everyday talk" as a way of engaging with people often succumbed to the time constraints of home visits. All under an hour, and usually closer to twenty minutes, the visits' short duration pressured Nada and Bilal to employ an interrogation-style questioning that focused on collecting data—reinforced by Nada's copying down of information in her notebook—rather than listening to stories. The pressures imposed by the witnessing of people's struggles and suffering were immense. In this context, Nada and Bilal were often compelled to propose solutions, such as UNHCR registration or strategic divorce that, though effective, were nevertheless grounded in a bureaucratic indifference to people's lived experiences and life trajectories (Herzfeld 1993). Most importantly, given the extremely limited resources they were working with, frontline workers like Nada and Bilal inevitably became the ones who actually decided which stories were credible. In so doing, they implemented and actualized humanitarian taxonomies of vulnerability, need, and deservedness that were at odds with the desire to engage people as human beings rather than as mistrusted refugees (Daniel and Knudsen 1996) or as "objects of governance" (Soguk 1999, 189).[143]

[143] Didier Fassin (2012) argues that the difficult situation Bilal and Nada found themselves in was due to a paradox at the heart of humanitarian work. Namely, humanitarian work today is guided primarily by a politics of compassion that is also a politics of inequality, given that it focuses its attention on individuals in dire need. However, this same politics of compassion that guides humanitarian work is also a politics of solidarity with these same individuals. For Fassin (2012, 3), "this tension between inequality and solidarity, between a relation of domination and a relation of assistance, is constitutive of all humanitarian government." This tension is unresolvable since compassion is a sentiment that allows for no possible reciprocity on the part of the individual receiving it, ensuring that the exchange at the heart of humanitarian work—whatever its intentions and execution—remains a profoundly unequal one.

Though people tolerated our physical and social trespass, they always found a way to confront us about the purpose of our intrusion. When asked why we were visiting, Nada most often replied that she and Bilal wanted to get to know families and understand their needs, so that, when aid was available, it could be distributed appropriately. Despite the fact that she was regularly asked about the purpose of her work, Nada always seemed upset by the question. She almost always mumbled her answer, and her tone was almost always apologetic. As I accompanied her, I realized that, for Nada, both the trespass into other people's homes and the inability to offer reparations for it made the experience of home visiting a fraught one. This discomfort made Nada and other Iraqi volunteers question the work they were doing, in effect confronting them with the possibility that they were not actually doing much good at all. Like Layal, Nada and Bilal worried about their inability to shape outcomes in people's lives, despite the fact that they were the representatives of 'aid' organizations. Nada painfully expressed this on our last day of visits together when she asked me rhetorically, "We say, God is generous; God is generous—and then *what? (Allah karīm; Allah karīm—u baʿdein?)*.

Bassam

Between 2010 and late 2011, Bassam had volunteered for a small NGO in Hashemi al-Shemali while periodically lending his support to specific projects run by other organisations, both local and international. When I met with him again in February 2012 at the beginning of my long-term fieldwork, however, he had stopped working for NGOs altogether, explaining that there were too many problems related to the distribution of aid, and too many complaints about how NGOs allocated their resources.

As one of the frontline staff members, Bassam had been constantly assailed with such criticism. Moreover, ever since an Iraqi NGO beneficiary had given out his cellphone number to a few friends, it had migrated to innumerable cell phones, and he found himself answering phone calls all day. After he stopped working with NGOs, he did occasional work with some researchers—collecting data and doing translations—and also kept himself busy by attending various courses offered by NGOs, the latest of which was a computer course. When I visited him one afternoon in September 2012 at his apartment, his bedroom door stood ajar, and I caught a glimpse of haphazard piles of blankets, clothes, and even suitcases stacked on top of one another. He laughed as he noticed my quizzical expression and explained that he had just received all these items as donations from five wealthy Iraqi families who had recently contacted him. "How did these families find you?" I asked. Bassam explained that they simply got his number from other wealthy Iraqis who had already provided cash and in-kind donations to him so that he could then distribute them to needy Iraqi families. "I actually do not know who some of them are," he said.

I wanted to clarify exactly how this redistributive system with him as a central nexus had materialised. Bassam explained that the original group of donors were Iraqis who had previously supported the small NGO he had volunteered with in Hashmi al-Shemali. When he quit his work there, he stopped collecting monetary and in-kind donations. Then, one day, one of the donors, a well-established businessman, called him and insisted that they meet in person.[144] Bassam made his way out to the posh

[144] I often asked Bassam whether some of these families might be interested in speaking with me. Even in cases where he did know their identities, he was reluctant to introduce me, stating that they were not interested in being known and, in fact, sought to keep a low profile by funnelling their assistance through him. That is to say, Bassam perceived my interest in these families as a potential burden on them that

neighbourhood of Abdoun to meet with him at the local Starbucks. There, the businessman pressed him on why he had quit, urging him instead to remain involved. Bassam recounted,

> He said to me, "Do it, not for you or for me, but for the poor [Iraqi] families." So I continued by myself. You see, he trusted me, not the organisation. That is how I became a sort of go-between for wealthy Iraqis who wanted to give, but did not know how to. This man, for instance, he gives money regularly, but he also gives meals and money for fifty families twice during Ramadan.

Bassam was not paid for this service. Yet since he was generally required to go collect money and in-kind donations in person, donors covered his transportation costs. When I inquired as to whether or not these donors ever asked him about how he distributed donations, Bassam explained:

> No, they do not ask. Before they can even ask, I always invite them to see some people. But they do not come, they trust me. When they contact me for the first time, they have already asked about me before. Therefore, they trust me completely.[145] Today, I have a new donor who found out about me from another donor, who is my friend. They were driving together, and the guy [the new donor] wanted to stop at the Hussein Cancer Center to give a little bit of money, 400 JD.[146] My friend asked him, "Why do you give this money to the Center when we have

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might compromise their willingness to donate. Consequently, he guarded their privacy (and, perhaps, also his own position of centrality) with extreme care.

[145] While trust was essential to Bassam's work, it might also be the case that the wealthy Iraqi donors did not want to witness hardship firsthand. Bassam, in effect, provided a useful service to the wealthy, allowing them to feel and act charitable without experiencing the discomfort of confronting poverty face-to-face.

[146] Approximately 560 USD.

Iraqi refugees and they are poor and needy?" The guy said, "Really? I did not know." And my friend replied, "Ya, I will give it to my friend Bassam." So he gave me the money and this other guy's phone number. I called him to say thank you for helping us, and I explained a little bit about my work. They just know me now. And he said, "Ok, I will contact you soon." They trust—from one to one to another. I insist on explaining how I am distributing the money, because if they do not know, it is wrong (*harām*). So, I tell them when I receive money or anything, food, "Please, I will distribute this according to my information. Because I know this family needs more, and another person needs a little bit. I will divide it." And they say, "Ok, as you like." This is good (*halāl*). Some people [donors], they wanted each person or each family to receive the same amount. This was before, but now they let me do it. They just call and say, "Hi Bassam, where are you? Can you come today or tomorrow, we have 300$, 400$, 500$ to distribute to two or three families." Today, I received 400$. I will give 100$ to this family next door, and 100$ to another woman who is alone and sick and old, and another two [families] 200$.

We were having this conversation on a scorching afternoon in July, with Bassam's aunt, two nephews, and a niece sprawled over three couches crammed into his small living room, wilting from the heat. Bassam suggested that I accompany him to visit one of the families to whom he wanted to give 200 USD. As we walked down the stairwell, he explained that the family was a female-headed household with six children. In addition to giving the mother money, he also needed to help her check the status of her resettlement file to Canada. We walked down the street from the little alleyway that led to Bassam's house, out to the main thoroughfare, and turned down a narrow road

littered with buildings in varying phases of construction. We approached one of them. As we peered past a high concrete wall into what seemed to be the front rooms of two different apartments, we found broken concrete blocks, sand, and haphazardly abandoned construction materials. All of it was covered in thick layers of dust. On the right was a small door that led to the family's apartment. The open front room had been organised as a laundry area, with taut strings strung from one side to the other covered in towels and clothes, all hanging precariously over the construction materials and puddles of dirty water. A teenage boy walked out, enticed by Bassam's loud greeting, and the two enthusiastically shook hands, exchanging a long litany of courtesies.

Upon entering the sparsely furnished apartment—two couches, a fan, a television—we were welcomed in by a number of kittens of different hues, from orange to grey to white. Three smiling children, two boys and a girl, and their mother, wearing a dark brown abaya and hijab, quickly followed the kittens. The mother shook hands warmly with Bassam and then turned to me to introduce herself as Imm Mounir. Seated in the living room, the conversation turned to a variety of topics, from the increased price of bread in Amman to the situation in Baghdad. Bassam then asked the young children about their school year and if they had all passed their classes, which they had. Imm Mounir smiled. Once the children were settled back in front of the television, Imm Mounir demurely asked Bassam if he could have a look at her resettlement file. He nodded and promptly took a laptop out of his bag, signed into the internet, and began exploring the Canadian government link the woman provided. Even after considerable effort, we were unable to decipher how it worked. Imm Mounir was visibly distraught, but Bassam managed to comfort her by telling her to call her contact at the Canadian embassy the following day and then to let him know what the embassy personnel said,

so that he could see how he could help. Before leaving, Bassam asked if he could take a few pictures of the family for the donors, to which they all enthusiastically agreed; the children fell over each other with excitement as they jostled for spots on the sofa. We left shortly after, but not before I noticed Bassam discretely handing Imm Mounir the 200 USD, while her children were distracted by my interest in their kittens.

As we slowly sauntered back to his apartment, I asked Bassam why he had taken up the businessman's offer to help. He took a few strides in silence before responding,

> Because I know the families. They are all unique, they have their special situations. I do not consider their [ethno-religious] backgrounds or, you know, [favour them only because of] if they are a woman, this, or that. I look at the whole situation. Sometimes, a young man needs some help and a mother with children does not. It depends. It is good. Good work. It gives me something to do; I want to use my time.

While I often heard Bassam complain about how tired he was after days spent collecting or distributing donations, his was a contented fatigue, one that was welcome since it signalled the end of a meaningful day. He understood his role as critical to supporting the well-being of many families, explaining that sometimes, rather than waiting for donors to contact him, he reached out to them if he knew of someone in particular need. Bassam thus imagined his work as that of a vital conduit channelling resources from wealthy Iraqis to those who required assistance. Through this role, his time in Amman was enlivened. He was connected to dozens of Iraqis throughout the city; he was required to move around consistently; he was constantly making appointments and organising visits. His life, in other words, was busy once again.

The need for someone like Bassam in Amman stemmed from the fact that, though Iraqis had not been segregated from Jordanians by the Jordanian state, they were effectively segregated from each other along class lines, following the deep divisions characterising Amman.[147] Like Layal, Bassam's ability to perform the function of trusted conduit began with but outgrew his work with NGOs. As one of the few links between those with money and those without it, Bassam held a powerful position, one in which he was called upon to evaluate people's needs and then single-handedly decide who would receive assistance and who would not. That people trusted him with their money purely based on reputation, without requiring proof of his honesty, was clearly a source of pride for Bassam. However, like Layal, Nada, and Bilal, he often worried about the limitations of his work. Though his role did give him a sense of control over his time and his life in Amman, his work was fundamentally at the mercy of donors' generosity, which was, he admitted, "sometimes random." By this, Bassam meant both that people gave episodically rather than consistently, and that they sometimes gave ineffectively.

> Many give money, and that is good. But many also give me things, like blankets or clothes. And that is also good, but sometimes, it is also a bit weird. One time, for instance, this woman called me to pick up clothes, and among them were these fancy shoes. What am I going to do with those? So sometimes, it feels like they are just cleaning out their closets.

He paused for a long time before adding, with a smile, "And their consciences."

[147] At the time, the Iraqi Business Council (IBC) also provided ad hoc monetary and in-kind donations, though these tended to be tied to specific events, such as distributing meals during Ramadan. See: http://ibcjordan.org/ar/. More recently, an Iraqi businessman established a charitable organization to support more than 500 needy families of all nationalities (many of them Iraqi and Syrian) in Hashmi al-Shemali; the organization's work is supported solely by private donations. See: https://www.facebook.com/bhcharity/?_rdc=1&_rdr.

Conclusion

In writing about the lives of homeless persons in post-communist Bucharest, Bruce O'Neill (2014) suggests that boredom used to be the disenchantment felt by the upwardly mobile upon achieving middle class status, an ennui of privilege. At the beginning of the 21st century, however, he argues that boredom has become associated with downward mobility—"a traumatizing social relationship borne out of having been cast aside" from "the consumer-based activities and spaces that are now central to contemporary city life" (O'Neill 2014, 24). While scholars have noted the centrality of consumption to subjectivity in the Middle East, and in Jordan in particular (see Schwedler 2010; Tobin 2012), for most Iraqis the inability to work had little to do with the consequent inability to consume. Many Iraqis, of course, experienced a sort of downward socio-economic mobility while in Jordan. They had to be careful about how they spent money, aware both of their limited savings and that their relatives were often sacrificing to send them financial support. This is why many chose to live in modest areas of the city, even when they could have afforded to live elsewhere. However, remittances from Iraq, combined with savings and the money they cobbled together from ad hoc jobs, meant that many Iraqis could consume, however modestly: they went to restaurants; visited malls; hung out in coffee shops; even travelled around Jordan and elsewhere in the region.

Therefore, it was not the inability to consume, but the inability to work itself that distorted their relation to time and resulted in boredom. Consumption in the absence of work, in fact, served only to exacerbate boredom. Waʾel and Bassam, for instance, as single young men, frequently went out: they played soccer; they travelled to the Dead

Sea and Petra; they went hiking; they met with friends in coffee shops and at restaurants. In short, they were constantly consuming. Yet this did not make them feel any less bored. They still described their situation in Jordan as one of endless "sitting." Consumption here was no longer meaningful because, unlike work, it did not structure daily life: nothing was expected of Waʾel and Bassam, they did not actually *have* to do anything. Their consumption was simply a way to "kill" time rather than a way to render time meaningful. In fact, much like housework among Iraqi women, consumption among Iraqis generally exacerbated boredom by making it painfully obvious that they had nothing to do. Who, Bassam would often complain to me, can actually do anything they want at any time of day? "Someone with nothing to do," he would answer bitterly.

Caught between a certain nostalgia for former lives and the weight of thwarted aspirations, and trapped in the role of guests, Iraqis in Jordan nevertheless worked to create a life of meaning in the present. Throwing themselves passionately into humanitarian work was one way of reintroducing expectation into their lives. They were responsible for others, depended upon, and engaged in countless everyday tasks—answering phone calls; visiting refugees; moving around the city; attending meetings; etc.—that gave structure and forward dimension to their days. The ability to help others was central to a reconstituted sense of productive value far Iraqis.

In this chapter, I have described how this opportunity to be responsible for others, to be sovereign, was grounded in Iraqis' ability to contingently occupy the role of host at the level of the everyday. I have termed this experience that of being guest-hosts, a status that was at once empowering and disabling. That Iraqis I met persevered in this work despite the anxieties it provoked was not only because in its best moments it allayed their sense of boredom and restored a sense of self, hope, and value. Their

perseverance also had to do with the fact that through such efforts Iraqis created for themselves a certain infrastructure for solidarity and, by extension, community. Through practices such as working together, meeting each other and others, and presenting themselves as Iraqi, they were generating a sense of togetherness that was foundational to feeling comfortable in Amman. It is to the work of forging this solidarity and togetherness that the next chapter turns.

4— FORGING TOGETHERNESS

I left Wisam and Rana's home hurriedly, already late for tea at Mariam's. I was always in a hurry during my fieldwork, yet no matter how long I stayed with someone, my departure was inevitably met with a volley of "*bakīr*! (It's early!)." I therefore arrived at Mariam's door out of breath, juggling on my left shoulder a bag filled with papers, a computer, protein bar wrappers, and a few bottles of water in varying states of consumption. In my hands were two large bags filled with sweets. I knocked awkwardly. A few seconds passed before I heard Mariam open the door. She wrapped me in her arms and hugged me warmly as I stumbled into her apartment. "You're right on time!" she exclaimed kindly. She had just returned from a trip to Baghdad for the one-year anniversary of her mother's death. Ignoring many warnings from family and friends, she had insisted on going to Iraq despite the problems this might cause regarding her family's resettlement case to the United States. She ushered me into the apartment and then promptly out onto the patio where her mother-in-law, Imm Fayez, was sitting in the shade cleaning and chopping vegetables for dinner. Reema, Jamil, and May—Mariam's three middle children—were in their usual buzz of boisterous activity, exploding in a frenzy of jumps, squeals, and hugs when they saw me. The novelty of my visit soon passed, however, and they quickly left us for their favourite cartoons. Mariam sat down next to her mother-in-law. Her hands deftly picked up the pruning knife as she set to cleaning vegetables again.

Just as I began to ask Mariam about her trip to Baghdad, the doorbell rang, bringing with it the arrival of a tall, thin woman bent to one side by the weight of a large

bag of rice. Mariam introduced her as her friend, Imm Mustafa. She saw me staring at the bag of rice and stated, by way of explaining her friend's gift, "My family is big and we consume almost 50 kilograms of rice every month!" Imm Mustafa smiled, sat, and remained silent. Also Iraqi, Imm Mustafa had only just arrived in Jordan a few months prior to our meeting on Mariam's patio in July 2012. She had come from Syria, where she had previously been living for several years.[148] After the required courtesies, Imm Mustafa turned toward Mariam and shuffled closer to her. Despite the fact that the two women were right next to me, Imm Mustafa's movements created the feeling of an intimate space between her and Mariam, and she started talking in hushed tones and animated gestures about a dispute between her son and some other neighbourhood youths over the use of a local playground. Mariam listened intently, providing all the scripted indignation and affected shock that such a story demanded. As though to give added credence to Imm Mustafa's story, she turned to me and clarified, "They [the Jordanian children] taunt the Iraqi children. They tell them, 'You are a refugee, you are homeless (*lajiʾ, musharadīn*).' What can we do? We are guests here (*nehna ḍuyūf hon*)." Mariam's mood momentarily darkened as she added, "This is how the world has become (*hechi ṣārat al-ʿālam*)." As quickly as it had darkened, Mariam's mood lightened, and she looked at me again, this time with a beaming, somewhat conspiratorial smile, and asked, "You see how close Imm Mustafa and I are?" I nodded, which for some reason provoked both women to burst into a fit of giggles. Mariam then reached out and took

[148] To clarify, Iraqis in Syria were not allowed to cross the Syria-Jordan border directly to enter the country. People like Imm Mustafa therefore had to transit through Iraq and cross into Jordan along the Iraq-Jordan border.

Imm Mustafa's hand in her own, before bringing her two index fingers together side-by-side and saying, "I am Shiʿi and Imm Mustafa is Sunni, but we are like this."

Mariam left us for a few moments only to return with slices of watermelon, a plate of grapes, and a handful of Iraqi dates. She laboriously sat back down, pulling her abaya from underneath and behind her to be more comfortable. Just as it seemed that she had found the ideal position, the doorbell rang once more. Her son, Jamil, rushed in shouting that it was another visitor, as an Iraqi woman tentatively made her way forward. Her hands were clasped together, a posture that radiated a mixture of humility and shyness. Mariam lassoed her toward us with effusive welcome, and the woman began to explain that she had some questions about visas, and that she had been told by an Iraqi woman she was acquainted with to ask Mariam. Mariam provided the woman with the necessary information and then, as the woman was preparing to leave, Mariam abruptly asked her, "Do you need some meat?" The woman was taken aback by this offer, declined profusely, only to finally relent in the face of Mariam's persistence. As Mariam rose to accompany the woman to the door, I noticed that she discreetly gave her a 50 JD note.[149] "She came to ask for money," Mariam explained when she returned to the patio; the pretext of asking about visas had been a polite way to seek out more urgent assistance, while maintaining a semblance of dignity. While Mariam colluded with the woman's pretence, she still saw through it, adding bitterly, "Exile … exile degrades the person." She sighed, looked up suddenly, and, with rising anger in her voice, began telling us about another Iraqi woman. "I met her randomly on the way to the baker," Mariam told us. "I heard her ask a shop owner for something and could tell

[149] Approximately 70 USD.

from her accent that she was Iraqi. I introduced myself, and she desperately told me that she was in dire need of housing. Can you believe it? Iraqis living in the street! (*Iraqīīn baqīn b-il shār ʿa*)." Imm Fayez, Imm Mustafa and I all expressed varying degrees of shock. When Mariam understood that this particular woman would actually be sleeping in the street, she immediately activated her extensive network, built over six years in Amman. After reaching out to several acquaintances and friends, Mariam finally contacted an Iraqi man who often found housing for newly arrived Iraqis, and told him the woman's story. "He agreed with me that, of course, this is not possible, to leave an Iraqi like this in the street. And he managed to find her an apartment that same day."

Mariam's claim that an Iraqi living on the street was not only a misfortune but actually "not possible"—something that could not come to pass—gestures to the theme of this chapter, namely, how Iraqis worked to forge a sense of togetherness in Amman. Iraqis in Jordan carried with them profound wounds, suspicions, and animosities from their lives in Iraq. Despite popular and academic claims that Iraqis were deeply divided into more restrictive identities post-2003, I found that most remained passionately, if ambivalently, attached to both 'Iraq' and to themselves as 'Iraqis' (Fattah 2007).

Crucial to Iraqi efforts to feel comfortable in Jordan, then, were the ways in which they worked to renew solidarity, and with it a sense of community, amongst themselves (Douglas 1991). Iraqis engaged in such efforts despite generally framing their presence in Jordan as provisional, given that most were hopeful about being resettled elsewhere. The connections Iraqis forged with each other ranged from strong friendships to more diffuse forms of solidarity, such as helping someone find an apartment, sharing money, or gifting someone a bit of meat. Across this range of efforts, Iraqis were explicitly and implicitly working to secure a sense of shared comfort for themselves while in Amman.

However, what exactly did it mean to speak of togetherness? What did a 'we' index? And how did Iraqis recognise themselves and others as part of a 'we'?

This chapter tackles these questions by exploring how the affective reality of togetherness—of a 'we'—emerged for Iraqis, and disentangling the affective, infrastructural, and conceptual work undertaken for its production. The chapter begins by situating the debates around 'community,' and then clarifying how a sense of togetherness can emerge from provisional encounters. It then explores how Iraqis moved beyond the many divisions that existed between them, not by resolving or confronting, but rather by bracketing them off temporarily. This implicit agreement to live together without resolving tensions is a relational mode I understand through the concept of the "truce," which materialised through implicit understandings of appropriate behaviours. The chapter then demonstrates the centrality of the truce to Iraqis' sense of comfort and togetherness in Amman by discussing moments when this truce was undermined and with what consequence. Despite its provisionality, the community and solidarity that Iraqis created in Jordan was real, in the sense that it had lasting, concrete effects on individuals' material and affective lives. They keenly felt the loss of friends who left, and friendships forged in Jordan informed subsequent resettlement patterns and solidarities in America.

Thinking Togetherness

After we finished our lunchtime meal at one of the many Iraqi restaurants along the main thoroughfare of Gardens, a well-off neighbourhood of Amman where a significant number of Iraqis lived, Hani insisted that I return with him to his apartment, where his sister was waiting to have coffee with us. Hani and his sister, Rana, had been living in

Amman for just over a year when I met them in early 2012. Hani had been studying business management in Iraq and was one year shy of obtaining his degree when the family left. The family's resettlement file had been split. Given that Hani and Rana were each unmarried and over eighteen years of age, they had been given individual resettlement files. By contrast, their mother, father, and younger brother were kept together as one unit. While the rest of their family had already been resettled in Chicago, Hani and Rana were both still waiting to hear the outcome of their respective applications.

When Hani and I arrived at the apartment, an extremely surprised Rana opened the door; in shorts and a tank top, with her hair messily put up in a bun, her expression betrayed the fact that her brother had not alerted her to our visit. She bustled around, popping into and out of a bedroom to put on clothes, apologising for the non-existent mess, while Hani and I sat in the living room where the television provided a background murmur of Iraqi pop music. Rana emerged from the kitchen with three cups of black tea and plates of cake and cookies. As she finally settled down on the couch next to me, she reminded Hani that they needed to visit their neighbours later in the day for Eid al-Fitr.[150] "We kept these traditions," she explained to me, "even here." Rana nervously looked down as a piece of cookie crumbled between her fingers. "They are a Muslim family, an Iraqi family that we found here in Amman by luck, living just next door. And we were neighbours in Baghdad! Can you believe it?" Rana stopped again and looked at me with what seemed like embarrassment. "They are a Muslim family, but we can count on them, and they are very good people." Since Rana and Hani's mother and

[150] Eid al-Fitr is the feast marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

younger siblings had already resettled to the US, and since they were in Amman alone, this neighbouring family looked in on them regularly. “So we must go and visit them, though I’m going to have to figure out what to wear,” Rana concluded with a mixture of frustration and excitement. I smiled. Rana straightened her back all of a sudden and sat, stiff and still, eyes locked on the ground. “Sometimes I sit and think that we are good, we have good habits. We have something, it’s good inside us.” She looked up at me, shook her head and lifted her left hand in the air, as though reaching for something. “I don’t know why we became like this. Killing and everything. I do not know how it is possible, in one year, to change like this. Upside down.” She laughed nervously, her right hand moving an escaped strand of hair from her eyes. “Up until our very last day in Iraq, our friends and neighbours couldn’t believe we were leaving. They asked us to stay and not to go. When I was at Baghdad airport, I received a text [from a friend] that said, ‘Iraq is losing something [with your departure]. I am sorry’ [*Al-ʿIrāq raḥ yekhsar … bitāsaf*].” On the television screen, another forgettable and already forgotten song about love and longing ended.

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In exploring togetherness, my aim in this chapter is not to delineate the boundaries and characteristics of *an* Iraqi community in Amman. In fact, the heterogeneous nature of the Iraqis in Jordan, in terms of when they arrived, from where they came, their educational, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, their reasons for being in Jordan, where they saw themselves going, and the legacy of their experiences in Iraq meant that thinking of them through the lens of ‘community’ was a challenge. Their heterogeneity was in part a consequence of the many Iraqi movements into Jordan, continuous since the 1950s, which consisted of various population groups coming from

all parts of Iraq at different historical junctures. In the late 1950s, elites loyal to the overthrown Iraqi Hashemite regime arrived and were generally welcomed, sharing with the Jordanian Hashemites a common ideology and political orientation. Throughout the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, most Iraqis were barred from leaving the country, particularly young men of fighting age and needed professionals; nevertheless, among those who did manage to secure the necessary exit papers, Jordan was a popular destination, given that it was, together with Yemen, the only regional country that allowed unrestricted entry to Iraqis. During this period, most of the Iraqis who arrived in Jordan were from the middle classes, professionals, and often (but not exclusively) of Shiʿi background. During the sanction years of the 1990s, a more generalised exodus occurred, which included Iraqis of a variety of backgrounds escaping the combined pressures of economic hardship and growing political repression. This period also saw a large exodus of Shiʿa from southern Iraq due to Saddam Hussein's violent suppression of the anti-government uprising following the first Gulf War (Chatelard 2005; Fattah 2007; Silva 2003). From 2003 until 2014, the influx of Iraqis into Jordan consisted mainly of people from Baghdad and its surrounding regions, who were middle-class professionals and often of mixed ethno-religious affiliations.[151] It included not only individuals seeking refuge in Jordan, but also businesspersons, temporary workers, and medical and regular tourists. Within each of these groups, some Iraqis decided to try their luck at resettlement outside of the Middle East, while others opted to stay in

[151] From 2014 onward, of course, there has been a new influx of Iraqis due to the violence provoked by the rise of ISIS and the central government's military offensives against the group. This latest influx is beyond the chronological scope of this thesis.

Jordan in a variety of il/legal statuses, or to engage in cross-border mobilities and livelihoods in the region.

Beyond the Communal versus Associative Dichotomy

Among both NGO personnel and Iraqis, I often heard a great deal of ambivalence about whether Iraqis in Amman could be conceived of as a community rather than simply as an aggregate of individuals. They wrestled with what Anna Tsing (2015, 27) poses as the question of how "a gathering becomes a 'happening,' that is, greater than the sum of its parts?" Kevin, for instance, had been in Amman as country director for an international NGO, Refugee Solidarity International (RSI),[152] for several years before we met in 2012. We were sitting on an empty and expansive veranda on the top floor of the RSI office in Jabal Hussein, taking in the view and keeping a tight grip on our small paper cups of coffee that trembled precariously with every gust of wind coming off Amman's hills. The growing number of Syrians in Jordan, and their impacts on the organization's programs, prompted a conversation about different refugee groups, which in turn led to a discussion about Iraqis in the city and their sense of community. Kevin hesitated to formulate his thoughts, choosing his words slowly and deliberately. He was particularly unsure of how to think about what he termed the many "logistical relations" among Iraqis, or relations that were primarily about meeting the necessities of daily life in Jordan. He explained:

> I guess a community of people that has a logistical relationship, that is still a community. But when I think of community … it's funny, the image that comes to

[152] The name of the NGO is a pseudonym.

> my mind is a church in Latin America, where people come to that place to share faith, but more than anything because they have a sense of belonging to one another.

Kevin's distinction between a community grounded in logistics and convenience versus one grounded in "a sense of belonging to one another" was brought up by many others, Iraqis included, who posited a dichotomy between self-interest and belonging in terms of generating an 'authentic' community.

The tendency to understand 'authentic' community in wholly positive terms among my friends in the field has also dominated scholarly understandings of community. Raymond Williams (1976, 76) argued that community, "unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.) [...] seems never to be used unfavourably." More recently, scholars have criticized the (over)use of the term, suggesting that it needs to be recuperated and redeployed in ways that give it greater analytical weight and that hold its positive attributes in productive tension with issues of heterogeneity, hierarchy, and even conflict (Agrawal 1999; 2005; Amit and Rappaport 2001; Watts 2000). It is useful here to return to Max Weber's (1978 [1921]) classic distinction between social relations based on the subjective feeling of a shared set of ideas, values, and orientations (*Gemeinschaft*), and those based on rational motivation (*Gesellschaft*). A social relationship, Weber (1978 [1921], 40) wrote,

> will be called "communal" (*Vergemeinschaftung*) if and so far as the orientation of social action—whether in the individual case, on the average, or in the pure type—is based on a subjective feeling of the parties, whether affectual or traditional, that they belong together. A social relationship will be called "associative"

> (*Vergesellschaftung*) if and insofar as the orientation of social action within it rests on a rationally motivated adjustment of interests or a similarly motivated agreement, whether the basis of rational judgment be absolute values or reasons of expediency.

Despite drawing the same distinction as Kevin between social relations motivated by communal feelings and those motivated by a rational calculation of interest, Weber (1990 [1962]) was nevertheless careful to clarify that in everyday life, communal and associative relationships are rarely found as "pure types." Rather, each generally displays characteristics of the other. Over time, associative relationships come to involve "relatively permanent social relationships between the same persons, and these cannot be exclusively confined to the technically necessary activities" (Weber 1990 [1962]). Similarly, communal relationships are very often suffused with coercion and competition, and can be guided more by self-interest than a feeling of group belonging. In this sense, then, there is no community that, according to Weber, is ever characterised entirely by feelings of belonging or rational self-interest and expediency; rather, the communal or associative aspects of a relationship amplify or dissipate depending on circumstances. Community, as the everyday and formal term that indexes 'we' or 'togetherness,' is therefore best thought of as a social organisation built upon a "sense of belonging together" that is at once affective and cognitive (Brow 1990, 1), and a set of practical networks (Hage 1997; Weber 1978).

Among Iraqis, concern for how associative or communal their relations were was largely motivated by the fact that the overwhelming majority of their interactions in Jordan—with government officials, journalists, UN and NGO workers, researchers, and ordinary Jordanians—were defined by mutual convenience and self-interest. That is,

very often, they approached others and others approached them with a particular objective in mind. The distortions of self-interest resulted in their sense of connection with others being atrophied. Their labour to build a 'community' for themselves, then, had less to do with an idealised sense of belonging than with the refusal to be recognised as and recognise others simply as a means to an end.

What is a "We"?

In trying to understand the emergence of a sense of togetherness among Iraqis in Amman, I have found Heidegger's thoughts on different forms of otherness particularly inspiring. Writing about how we recognise others generally, Heidegger (1962, 163) states, "In that with which we concern ourselves environmentally, the Others are encountered as what they are; they are what they do." By centring people's actions as constitutive of how they are encountered in the world, Heidegger contends that recognition is a response to these actions.[153] That is, recognition is not a matter of reflecting on the other, but rather a matter of our responsiveness to the actions of others

[153] Heidegger's ideas on Others stem from his broader discussion of *Dasein*. Heidegger conceived of *Dasein* as a "being there," such that a being can never be separated from its mode of being. This means that a person can never be understood without the world and that the world is always someone's world. In this way, *Dasein* is neither subject nor object, but a synthesis—a "being-in-the-world" (Heidegger 1971b; Schurmann 2008, 57). For Heidegger, then, we are firstly, always, and necessarily participants and not spectators in the world and in our lives. Heidegger termed this being-in-the-world from which the self cannot be removed and to which the self is not prior as "thrownness." Critically, since *Dasein* is a way of existing, not a subject that is already objectively present, this radically shifts understandings of the subject: the subject is not a given, a thing, but is always a process, a task, a potentiality (Schurmann 2008, 87, 94). One consequence of this is that temporality becomes immanent in being. Crucially, *Dasein* always unfolds as a temporal being through doing things in everyday life rather than simply reflecting upon them. Since humans exist through concretely acting in the world—by reaching for things, going to places, touching others—spatiality is also immanent in being. This thrownness, or the fact that we are always in some way at the disposal of events in the context of which we act, is inseparable in Heidegger's thought from the idea of "fallenness." Fallenness suggests that *Dasein* is always also a being-dispersed-among-beings, i.e. a being with others (Schurmann 2008, 94–95). Sociality, along with temporality and spatiality, is thus also immanent in being because in the process of our own being we necessarily interact with others. *Dasein* is thus both a being-in and a being-with. We are thus thrust into a world that is already there (being-in) and in which we are in relation with myriad others (being-with) through concrete actions.

(Brandom 2005, 222; Schurmann 2008, 95). Importantly, however, for Heidegger (1962, 117, emphasis added), the 'Other' is not a singular category against which the "I" or the "we" stand: "By 'Others' we do not mean everyone else but me—those against whom the 'I' stands out. They are rather those from whom for the most part one *does not distinguish oneself*—those among whom one is too." These people that one recognises because one is indistinct from them constitute what Robert Brandom (2005, 222) terms the "communal Other." How does this paradoxical recognition, whereby we recognise communal Others by not distinguishing them from us, come about? Heidegger argues that others "among whom one is too" are individuals whose actions, dispositions, and responses we deem appropriate in the sense that these are the same actions, dispositions, and responses that we ourselves would enact. Importantly, relations with communal Others are based on mutual recognition; that is, one must both be recognised by and recognise others.

Creating community, then, is implicitly an ethical endeavour, in the sense that it coalesces around patterned ways of being—dispositions, habits, actions—that are appropriate, or the way one *ought* to live. I understand the situation in which we feel no distinction from (communal) others, whose dispositions are our own, as a materialisation of comfort, defined as a space in which no particular effort is required to establish, explain, or justify who one is. One simply is with others. Crucially, this means that no form of narration—of telling one's story—is required, since you and the other are the same and can recognise this sameness through enacted dispositions.

Encounter: Togetherness on the Road

For the Iraqis I came to know in Jordan, questions of community and recognition were complicated not only because of their experiences in Iraq, but also due to the provisional quality of many of their lives in Amman. Provisionality signals at once a presence in the present and the likelihood of future instability; that is, it captures both a sense of lived experience in the present and a challenge of duration with which it is confronted, threatened as it is by the constant possibility of disappearance. This provisionality characterised life in Amman for Iraqis because of the many mobilities that characterised the Iraqi population as a whole in the city. Iraqis who had come to Jordan for refuge or resettlement arrived and left constantly. Some Iraqis remained in Jordan—voluntarily and not—while others also returned to Iraq to see family and friends. Yet others had businesses or family in Jordan but lived outside of the Middle East. This perpetual movement produced inherent instability in the configurations of who was present in Amman at any one time and, by extension, those with whom togetherness could be forged. Amina was one among many Iraqis I came to know who highlighted this quality of life, explaining that most Iraqis were on the move elsewhere, "only passing by, just a friend on the road."

For Amina, this provisionality initially made her feel that seeking relationships with other Iraqis in Amman was "a waste of time because everyone is eventually going to leave." Lana echoed this feeling when I visited her one day. Though she participated in many NGO-run activities, she had missed a recent NGO party celebrating the end of an English course that she had attended. I mentioned to her that another student at the party, Tareq, had noticed her absence. Lana stared at me after I offered this information, stirred the food on the stove, and then curtly said that she had no idea who he was.

"Maybe it's from the [NGO] bus that goes from Marka to the school [where the courses were held] that he knows me." Tareq had spoken of Lana as though he knew her, even explaining that her daughters—less than two years apart—looked like twins, and that he found their Assyrian names lovely. His warm enthusiasm contrasted sharply with Lana's curtness. Perhaps sensing this, Lana added in a dismissive but not unkind tone, "Honestly, I don't speak a lot. I know enough people. I am tired of knowing them. We are only here for a short time." Despite these hesitations, however, both Amina and Lana eventually became entangled in a web of relations that generated a sense of togetherness and, with that, of community and comfort in Amman.

The issue of temporality and transience highlighted by Lana and Amina was different than the one normally ascribed to refugees; it was not a matter of being stuck in a constant temporariness, but rather one of sensing that a specific 'moment' was just that, a moment. In this context, Iraqis inhabited what Corsín Jiménez and Estalella (2013, 120–21) describe, in discussing the mobilisation of the figure of the neighbour in popular assemblies in Spain following the 2011 Occupy movements, as "a proximal space of disappearance." This space is one in which the "condition of possible disappearance defines the terms of [...] relational engagement" (Corsín Jiménez and Estalella 2013, 120–21). How, then, can a person build relations in a moment overshadowed by its own dissolution? How can an encounter, as a moment of meeting or of mutual presence on the road, become the grounds for a sense of togetherness?

In trying to theorise justice and our obligations to others, Amartya Sen (2009, 170–73) pushes against the idea that neighbours exist in fixed communities by referencing the biblical parable of the Good Samaritan. Rather than interpreting the story as one that promotes a sense of universal responsibility towards others, Sen

instead reads it as a rejection of the very idea of a fixed neighbourhood or community. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus narrates the story by way of answering a lawyer's question about how to secure eternal life. When asked what the law states on the matter, the lawyer correctly replies that eternal life is inherited through loving God as one's neighbour. The lawyer then challenges Jesus by asking him who exactly this neighbour is that one is supposed to love. Jesus offers the story of the Good Samaritan as the answer. In this parable, an Israelite, wounded by robbers, lies dying on the road. Both a priest and a Levite cross the road to avoid him. In contrast, a Samaritan stops to help the man, bandaging his wounds and carrying him to an inn where he takes care of him—despite a long history of hostility between Samaritans and Israelites. Jesus then confronts the lawyer with the very same question: "Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" The lawyer is compelled to answer, "The one who had mercy on him." For Sen (2009), the story of the Samaritan conveys the idea that a neighbourhood is not a fixed geographical or temporal object that one enters and exits so much as a set of relations that crystallise through the appearance of another—here, a wounded man in the road—whose presence precipitates the possibility of an encounter.

The story of the Good Samaritan exemplifies the original meaning of the term "encounter," derived from the Old French, *encontre*, meaning a "meeting, fight, opportunity" (OED 2018). Historically, encounter was a face-to-face meeting of adversaries, one in which unexpectedness and ambiguity generated the opportunity of moving beyond predefined categories and their attendant actions, what Michael Jackson

(2013, 215) terms "the 'big things' of life, namely our religious or social identity."[154] Encounter, then, is characterised by the possibility of a specific practice of care, one that I understand in terms of what Gabriel Marcel (1995 [1961]) termed "*disponibilité*," or availability.[155] Availability, for Marcel, indexes at once a person's attentiveness, sensitivity, and openness to another's presence, as well as the offering of one's resources—material, psychological, spiritual—to others. For Marcel, a person who is unavailable reduces others to "cases" rather than encountering them as unique individuals. When treated as a generic case, a person can only ever be understood as a set of disparate, fragmented elements rather than as a whole. Importantly, such elements—for instance, a person's age, gender, or ethnicity—can be acknowledged without recognizing the person herself.[156] This is what the Levite and priest do when they see the Israelite without recognizing the man. In contrast, "the characteristic of the soul which is present and at the disposal of others is that it cannot think in terms of

[154] The importance of encounter to the ethnographic endeavour and to current theorisations in anthropology should be noted. John Borneman (2007) argues that anthropology is the only discipline rooted in the encounter as the primary source, and not just confirmation, of knowledge. The idea is that the encounter, in its unstructured unexpectedness, opens up creative, surprising, and often frightening possibilities to make and unmake reality multiple times over and to transform oneself along with it (see also: Borneman and Hammoudi 2009; Giordano 2014; Tsing 2015).

[155] *Disponibilité* is also sometimes translated as "disposability" or "being at someone's disposal."

[156] Interestingly, for Marcel, because both availability and unavailability are intersubjective modes, the person who is unavailable becomes generic in the sense that they are no longer acting as themselves but as a specific role or set of characteristics. For instance, a researcher filling in a questionnaire is not a particular person, but rather a role, one that could theoretically be filled by anyone, rendering the "I" of the researcher impersonal and interchangeable in such a scenario. This echoes one interpretation of Hegel's master-slave dialectic whereby self-consciousness can only be achieved through an encounter with another self-consciousness; in this encounter, the dialectic concerns the way in which each self-consciousness is constituted through mutual recognition. While mutual recognition would allow a total understanding of each's self-consciousness, this is not always achieved. The encounter with another can be ignored, meaning that the other can be grasped merely as an object—a "case" in Marcel's terminology—rather than another subject. Another outcome is the attempt by one to assert their will on the other, thereby generating a master and a slave. Because the slave's recognition of the master is coerced, the master's self-consciousness is incomplete; similarly, because the master recognises the slave as an object rather than an equivalent subject, the slave's self-consciousness is also incomplete. Mutual recognition—and with it true self-consciousness—can only be achieved through the acknowledgement of the freedom and autonomy of one another, or by seeing the other as a "unique individual."

cases; in its eyes there are *no cases at all*" (Marcel 1995 [1961], 41, emphasis in original).[157] The encounter, then, despite its randomness and temporariness, has the potential to instantiate a community. This is true irrespective of what may have motivated the Samaritan's action; in establishing the relationship between himself and the Israelite, it is not what the Samaritan felt that was important, but rather the fact that he was both present to and for the man in need.

In a traditional sense, a 'we' is often derived from ideas of a shared primordial essence, based on a shared past, blood, territory, or experience. There was certainly some element of this among the Iraqis I knew. One day, for instance, Reem and I were enjoying a cup of coffee together during a break from NGO activities in which she was a participant. As she surveyed the people gathered in the building's outdoor courtyard, some chatting, others playing an improvised game of football, she said, "This is why I come here. All the people are like me, the same type. We have the same memories." However, more often than not, togetherness seemed to be about a shared understanding of the necessity to 'be available' in Marcel's sense of encountering others as wholes rather than disparate parts. In being available, what is of central importance is not a shared past, but rather—as in the story of the good Samaritan—a specific set of dispositions towards others, especially others with whom one might, and often did, have a troubled past. I therefore think of the circumstances of Iraqis in Jordan, and the provisionality that characterised their lives, through this idea of the community as a potentiality. As potentiality, community emerges from temporary and unpredictable

[157] This understanding of availability is echoed in Giorgio Agamben's (1993) vision for a new idea of community in which no one can be reduced to an example and, consequently, cannot be subject to exclusion. For Agamben, community would therefore be grounded in a sense of belonging that could never be fully articulated.

encounters grounded in an 'availability' instantiated through concrete actions—or specific practices of care—rather than a predefined sense of belonging. This evokes what Lila Abu Lughod (1986, 63), in her study of Bedouin society, describes as *ʿishra*, or "the bond of living together or sharing a life." *ʿIshra* suggests "kinlike bonds of enduring sentiments of closeness, as well as a more or less temporary identification and the concomitant obligations of support and unity" (Abu Lughod 1986, 63).[158] Abu Lughod proposes that *ʿishra* is a special type of sociality that, though historically embedded in other forms of identification that facilitate its formation, is nevertheless grounded in the embodied reality of physical proximity. It has the capacity to produce a specific sociality because physical proximity generates both a potentiality and often a requirement for the investment of energy, attention, and care in the lives of those who live next to us, most often through ordinary actions such as sharing food or caring for one another's children. Michelle Obeid (2010), in her study of *ʿishra* in the Arsal region of northern Lebanon took Abu Lughod's ideas further, arguing that bonds of *ʿishra*, though always potentially impermanent, nevertheless over time acquired a sedimented nature that made them hard to break.

A Place to "Belong to One Another" Again

The taxi dropped me off at the street corner, not wanting to turn off the main thoroughfare in Ashrafiyeh. I continued on foot, a few hundred meters down the road,

[158] *ʿIshra* is most often translated as companionship, fellowship or association. It has a positive connotation, though it does not exclude the possibility of tension and failure. Importantly, it is conceived as a form of sociality that can occur both among kin and between non-kin, and thus concerns itself both with relations among those who are familiar and with those who have yet to become familiar. In this manner, it holds open the potential for the inclusion of newcomers in a generalised form of sociality that binds kin and non-kin alike.

and stood in front of a large black gate. Behind it stood a Jordanian public school, empty now that it was mid-afternoon and its regular students had gone home. The classes for refugees would not start for another hour. The modest building was thus eerily quiet. I crossed the sunburnt courtyard and slid through the school's main door into its cool and dimly lit interior. A low din of voices reached me. I followed them up the stairs, turned right on the second-floor landing, and headed toward the last door at the end of the corridor. I opened the door to find Abu Farid and Rola sitting in the small administrative area that had been set up in what was essentially a passageway linking three other rooms to a bathroom, a small kitchenette, and a massive patio. Firas was in one of the side rooms, watching a World Cup qualifying football game between Iraq and Japan. The three of them were surprised to see me so early, and after saying hello, quickly returned to their own thoughts and tasks. I sat down at one of the empty desks and began compiling some field notes from my day.

I stopped suddenly and, wanting to take advantage of this rare moment of quiet, asked Abu Farid how long he had been director of the RSI school. He explained that it had been nearly four years since he first started working with RSI on the school. Abu Farid explained that the teachers only received a small honorarium for their work. "We are not employees," he clarified. "We love people. Money is not the main aim." Abu Farid was abruptly cut off by the sputtering growl of the RSI buses that had just arrived. In a matter of seconds, a chorus of shouting, laughter, and chattering reached us as the teachers and students filled the school's courtyard. As they slowly started trickling in, most of the teachers headed out to the patio where there were couches and a table set up with coffee and tea.

Out on the patio, the teachers were buzzing around Marwa, who was to be resettled to the United States soon. Everyone was wishing her well, and in the middle of the commotion, Kevin raised his head and asked what was going on. Once he found out, he congratulated Marwa. She was going to San Diego. As she sat down to light her cigarette, her fingers fumbling with the plastic lighter, she said, "Seriously, I will miss you all!" Her eyes momentarily took on a shiny hue in the late afternoon sun, but she promptly stiffened her back, cleared her throat, and took a long drag on her cigarette. "Are you happy?" asked Kevin. Marwa lifted her arm, palm down, and moved her outstretched hand from side to side, signalling so-so. "I am really going to miss people here, even the students. You know, I have been here two and half years."

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This alternative or informal "school" was the culmination of RSI efforts to support Iraqi refugees that began in 2008, when the RSI administration asked Nadeem, an Iraqi graphic designer working for them, to help with setting up various social and educational programs for Iraqis. The issue at the time was how to find Iraqis dispersed throughout Amman, who arrived in a staggered manner over time and lived in different areas. Nadeem had lived in Amman since 2005 and, given his personal connections to a number of Iraqi families, agreed to help. As we sat together in a large meeting room at the RSI office in Jabal Hussein, Nadeem explained that when RSI asked him to help, he began by visiting Iraqis in order to establish a network of families in various Amman neighbourhoods. Initially, these visits were mainly to Christian families linked to Nadeem's personal family network among Chaldeans.[159] He explained that he could not

[159] Chaldeans are a Catholic denomination of Assyrians indigenous to the area of northern Iraq, southeast Turkey, and northeast Syria. For more information on Chaldeans and other minorities in the Middle East,

visit families alone, since this might provoke suspicion that he was working for the Jordanian intelligence services (*al-mukhābarat*). Consequently, when he began his outreach efforts, a nun, whom the families implicitly trusted, accompanied him. Eventually, however, RSI built trust among a growing network of families and, as it came to be better known, was able to expand visits to include Iraqis of all faiths and backgrounds. "It was a hard time," Nadeem explained, reflecting on the early months, "we did five visits per day, sometimes seven, but at least five. Then, after a while, I realised that you cannot just visit people, you need to have something to tell them, something concrete to offer. That is how the idea of establishing a school came up."

The school began as a small project, with classes held in a church in Jabal Hussein for an initial cohort of twenty-seven students. Eventually, Nadeem reached out to approximately twenty-five Iraqi acquaintances, who he thought had the necessary educational qualifications to teach at the school. Together, they negotiated with two Jordanian public schools in the Ashrafiyeh and Hashmi al-Shemali neighbourhoods to use their premises in the afternoons, after regular classes had ended. When I began volunteering at the Ashrafiyeh school in 2012, it was open four days a week in the afternoons. Close to 400 students, from adults to young children, attended—Iraqis overwhelmingly, but also some Jordanians and, by early 2013, an increasing number of Syrians. The Iraqis who frequented the school were, like most of the Iraqis I met in Jordan during my fieldwork, mainly from Baghdad, middle-class, and educated. Despite these similarities, however, their financial and legal status in Jordan varied, depending on individual circumstances, such as their savings, the support they received from

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see: Robson, Laura. 2016. *Minorities and the Modern Arab World*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

relatives in Iraq, and their opportunities to secure ad hoc work. The school had an established management team—director, secretarial, and administrative staff—as well as English teachers, who were former Iraqi professors of English language and literature, along with a rotating set of expatriate volunteers, including researchers such as myself. In addition to the English classes for adults and youths, there were also computer classes, structured playtime, and arts and crafts for younger children. While these classes were informal, RSI also provided an accredited liberal arts diploma program supported by several American universities. Since the vast majority of Iraqis at the school were attempting to be resettled outside the Middle East, the school aimed to support and augment basic language and computer skills that refugees might need in resettlement countries. Finally, since many students lived quite far from the school, RSI provided bus transportation from several hubs throughout the city.

Tamer had been working with the school for four years when I first met him in 2012. Tall and heavy-set, invariably smiling, I never saw him in anything other than an all-black T-shirt and jeans outfit. He had been in Jordan with his family on and off since 1991, when his grandfather, a psychiatrist and professor, came to teach at the University of Jordan. Since that time, the family had moved between Jordan, Iraq, and England, until permanently leaving Iraq for Jordan in 2005. After university, Tamer joined RSI, moving up the ranks until he became a key member of the administrative team, appreciated by all of the students I met as a gifted computer teacher and program administrator. When I asked him about the purpose of the school, he offered the following reflections:

> The school is the main element of our [RSI's] psychosocial work. The school is very vital; it is a space for education, education with your friends. You have education,

> and you can meet new people, plus nice teachers, plus the administration. So we are trying to be a normal school. I remember, I gave an exam—I used to give exams to my students—and they were taking it pretty seriously! One of the students, I think you taught her, her name is Noha, she is a small, older woman. She almost fainted. She became yellow, she felt nauseous. I asked her "What's wrong?" and she said, "I'm so scared, I didn't study." I told her "It's ok, calm down," and took her out [of the class] and she sat with Sawsan. I kept telling her, "It's ok, it's only an exam." "And if I don't pass?" "Don't worry; I'll make you pass the course!"

Tamer's emphasis here and in subsequent conversations on creating a "normal" school where Iraqis could meet new people and thus forge connections, was central to his understanding of the work the school was doing for Iraqis. While the school certainly had a set of specific educational objectives, for Tamer it was doing something more while achieving these objectives. This 'more' was what Tamer, in another exchange, termed the "work of building community." His attitude toward Noha is exemplary of this dual understanding of what the school was actually doing for Iraqis; while he cared that students learned he also did not want them to take the educational component too seriously. "Don't worry," he told her, "I'll make you pass the course!"—because exams and classes were not all that mattered. As Tamer engaged with Noha, he did so in terms of what he felt mattered: the "person." This focus led to a practice of care characterised by efforts to reframe the situation from a technical one of studying to one of making another person feel comfortable.[160] This "going out of one's way," or the constant

[160] This sense of care as "the state in which something does matter," (May 1969, 292) makes no clear claim regarding care's valence; that is, its intentions and consequences can be either positive or negative (Stevenson 2014). Warren T. Reich (1995) argues that "care" can be grouped into four general semantic clusters. First, both in ancient Roman *Cura* tradition and in its etymological derivation from the Middle

attempt to be expansive in one's relations to others, was central to the spirit of the school.

Kevin, the RSI country director, voiced a similar view when he explained that, "As much as what we are trying to do is education, it is also psychosocial, and I think psychosocial is the NGO word for 'building community.' To create a space where people can realise once again that they belong to one another." Though RSI had provided the initial impetus for the school, and continued to fund its work, Kevin was clear that the school had become a truly Iraqi space. He explained:

> They [Iraqis] own that place [the school]. If I die tomorrow, the only thing that disappears is the person who is watching out to make sure we get funds and someone asking them [the school administration team] good questions about why we are teaching what we are teaching and whom we are teaching it to. All the teachers are Iraqi. Abu Farid worked in a school for 20 plus years in Mosul, and the teachers, some of them have 14—15 years of experience teaching English. My sense is that they feel they are displaced, and can no longer access their lives back in Iraq, but they can recreate it somehow. I have heard it many times, that the school reminds them of how it used to be in Iraq, where you have Sunni, Shi'i, Christians, everyone in the same place.

High German word *kar*, care indexes a sense of grief, anxiety, or mental suffering. Second, care can relate to the idea, discussed here, of whether something matters. Third, care can be understood as a "taking care of" other people's practical needs; this sense of care relates to notions of responsibility and duty. Finally, there is care that is a caring about or "caring for" another person; caring for indexes less a sense of practical duty, and more an attentive care focused on nurturing another's potentiality. Reich is careful not to argue that care is a wholly positive concept. Instead, he explains that not only can one be deficient in one's care, but also that different forms of care can conflict, and even that while "caring for"—or solicitous care—is generally understood as positive, it can lead to over-caring or "the effort to care that robs a person of self-care."

The school therefore was not only a point of gravitational force, pulling Iraqis together; it transformed this gathering into what Julien Bret (2012, 186) calls a "*localité de sociabilité,*" or a place that, while characterised by a temporal uncertainty, also enables solidarity and some sort of autonomous control over space and action. The school thus became greater than the sum of its parts.

During one of my many weekend visits to see Dana and her brother Jad, we found ourselves discussing friendship. Since they had been living in Jordan for seven years when I met them in 2012, I was curious as to how their lives had intersected with those of their Jordanian neighbours. It was in this context that they stated that they only had relations with people at the RSI school. When I asked why, Dana explained that relations with Jordanians were characterised by a self-interested attitude; she felt that they always had a specific aim in mind when they interacted with her—a feeling that perhaps stemmed from Iraqis' ambivalent status as guests in Jordan. Importantly, Jad added that, given the many difficulties Iraqis faced in Jordan, this attitude had also started affecting Iraqi relations with each other. "What is terrible now," he said, "is that Iraqis are also taking advantage of other Iraqis; they have changed their attitudes. Exploitation is present. Iraqis have become prey." He paused before adding the following reflection on their early years in Jordan:

> Our first four years here, before we found the RSI school, we rarely went out, just to buy food and things like that. We did not know any Jordanians and not even any other Iraqis other than our sister's family [another sister was married to a Jordanian and had been living in Jordan since the mid-1990s]. We were always at home, just eating and cleaning and watching television."

As Jad spoke, Dana, her left hand cupped gently in her right, kept averting her eyes, her glance bouncing from the walls to the window to the television, clearly disturbed by the memories evoked by her brother. Finally, she looked directly at me and said, "I was like a bird in a cage (*kunt mithl asfūr bi-qafis*)." Dana explicitly positioned the RSI school as a space where self-interest was not the defining characteristic of relations; it was not a space where people merely received logistical or informational assistance, or where clear quid pro quo arrangements defined interactions. Rather, it was a place that freed her so that she no longer felt like "a bird in a cage," as she had before.

Truce

A few months after I started teaching at the RSI school, I turned right off a main junction in the Ammani neighbourhood of Hayy Nazzal into a narrow street and soon arrived at a building with a huge fig tree towering over the entrance. It was lush with leaves rustling gently in the spring breeze. I went up two flights of stairs and heard animated discussion as I knocked on the door. Jad opened it, his face flush with colour and visibly upset. He ushered me in and, as Dana sat down with me on the couch in their kitchen, set to making us all coffee. As he carefully measured out coffee spoons and plunged them into the simmering water, he sighed and began telling me the story that he and his sister had been discussing. Jad explained that the previous day, during their English class at the school, a researcher had distributed a questionnaire that included queries about religious beliefs, views on different religious groups, and cross-sectarian friendships pre- and post-2003. "We felt defeated in Iraq because of this issue!" he said furiously. He meant not only the consequences of sectarianism in terms of violence, but also equally the constant demand to be identified and have one's life—relationships,

preferences, decisions—framed through a sectarian lens. "We were shocked really! You know what I wrote? I wrote only, 'I am an Iraqi person' (*Ana insān ʿIrāqi*)."

Two days later, I was invited to sit in on a general information session run by RSI staff members for a group of lawyers working with the US-based International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), an organisation that both provides direct legal aid to refugees seeking resettlement in the US and is involved in advocacy.[161] After the presentations, a young male lawyer, stiff in his pressed suit and tie, raised his hand and asked Tamer, one of the presenters, about sectarian tensions among Iraqis in Amman. Tamer's usually jovial demeanour shifted immediately and perceptibly; he scuffled his feet as he explained that RSI had a "no religion or politics rule" for its staff members and beneficiaries. This meant that the school did not discriminate based on these issues, the curriculum did not address them, and staff and students were expected not to discuss them during school activities. He then recounted the story of the researcher's recent questionnaire and the controversy over the religious questions.

> When the students saw this, they were shocked. There was an uproar. I was shocked. I went into the class, and I took all the papers and went out. And the questionnaires were withdrawn. The school director went to the class and told the students that if anyone else gave them such a thing, not to do it. We did not and will not approve of it.

When I first started volunteering at the school, I conceptualised it along the lines of what Ash Amin (2002, 959), in trying to identify places where people come to terms with difference, calls "the micro-publics of everyday social contact and encounter" or

[161] For more information, see: https://refugeerights.org/.

"spaces of habitual engagement." Amin argues that these sites, such as workplaces, clubs, and hobby groups, facilitate meaningful social contact because they enable more lasting engagements than fully public spaces, such as the street. In such spaces, people with little previous contact engage in shared and purposeful activities together, which allows for the possibility of encounter, or a disruption of their understandings of the familiar. These spaces also provide the possibility for new relations and attachments to emerge, as people "break out of fixed relations and fixed notions" and "learn to become different" (Amin 2002, 970). The school, in a sense, was a site of "habitual engagement" where Iraqis who had previously not known one another came together regularly over common activities. However, the explicit rule against religious and political discourse seemed to be at odds with the idea that "micro-publics," through the constant exposure to difference they provide, could bridge distances between people. After the meeting with IRAP ended, I asked Tamer about the school's rule. He insisted that the silence the school cultivated around certain issues, far from being imposed, was rather a reflection of the students' own understandings of appropriate forms of communal engagement.

> You know, the policies and the rules made the school what it is now. This is my personal point of view, but I think this is automatic; nobody speaks about this [religion and politics]. It is not appropriate (*mu munāsib*). Automatically, I think. When that incident [with the questionnaire] happened in that class, one of the students came to us [the administration] and he told us, "I wrote, I am Iraqi." So it's an embedded thing, because 2006 was a dark era, and people just want to leave it behind, they want to go beyond that. This might be surprising for people. That is why many students were shocked and angry. We made it a rule that we explain at the beginning of each session so that everyone is clear about the school's position

on this issue, not because we think that students would disagree with us, but rather to make sure that when incidents like these happen, students know that we have an official position. Even though, as I said, I think it is automatic.

In thinking through her mother's experience of living with Alzheimer's disease, Janelle Taylor (2008) argues that people with dementia are often no longer recognised as full persons because of their inability to narrate their life stories coherently. She pushes back against this view, showing how her mother's inability to remember and narrate does not hinder her ability to maintain the appropriate *forms* of social interaction (e.g., smiling at a joke, reaching out to her daughter, etc.) in particular contexts. This attention to forms of social interaction is, for Taylor, a practice of caring in which her mother attends to her daughter's presence and those of others in spite of her dementia. Similarly, the cultivation of silence among Iraqis is best understood as a form of care grounded not in narration but rather the maintenance of appropriate forms of social interaction.

Specifically, I conceive of this silence through the idea of "truce." In this context, I use the term truce to denote a relational mode intended neither to bridge differences by exposing people to them (as per Amin's understanding of "micro-publics") nor to resolve conflict or address past grievances. Truce also did not force Iraqis to confront Rana's question about *why* everything had become "upside down" in Iraq. Rather, it held this question at bay—transcending it momentarily without cancelling it out—and, in so doing, made the possibility of encounter, in spite of difference and not to overcome it or be transformed by it, possible. That is, while encounter has interested anthropologists primarily for its transformative potential for the participants involved, not all encounters have to be transformative to be meaningful. For Iraqis in Jordan, the

importance of encounters laid in their potential to generate a space for the enactment of appropriate communal dispositions through which people felt they could not be reduced to a label and, therefore, could come to belong to one another again, however contingently.

The root of the Arabic word for truce (*hudna*) is *ha-da-na*, which can mean both "to grow quiet" and "to make peace" (Wehr 1976: 1023).[162] The English word, by contrast, derives from the Old English *treow*, meaning "faith." Both senses of the term—quietness and faith—are central to my application of truce as a concept to capture how the RSI school was structured in its attempt to open up possibilities for togetherness. Truce functioned by requiring a quietness on disquieting topics, and a faith that others would abide by a tacit agreement to avoid the violent interpellations that came to define life in Iraq. While community often requires that "the concrete existence of difference, hierarchy, and conflict must be painfully and tediously negotiated" (Agrawal 1999, 104), truce instead suspended fractious issues of politics and religion in order to generate a potentiality in which a shared sense of comfort could emerge in spite of nonresolution and, perhaps, even some sort of incommensurability between different individuals and groups. Central to the community that the truce inaugurated, then, was not a specific history, but rather a specific set of dispositions.

The active fostering of silence regarding certain differences, then, rather than being understood as sweeping those differences under the proverbial rug, should instead

[162] When used to mean a ceasefire between two opposing sides, *hudna* is generally understood to have an Islamic connotation because of the Prophet Mohammad's historic treaty with non-Muslim Meccans in 628. In contemporary times, it has mainly been used in the Israeli-Palestinian context due to Hamas' use of the term to describe offers and actual implementations of ceasefires with Israel. In other contexts, however, a ceasefire is denoted by the neutral term *waqf iṭlāq an-nār*—literally "the time in which fire is ceased."

be seen as evidence of "the extent to which human beings are able to work out ways of communicating and coexisting with one another in the face of seemingly insurmountable differences" (Jackson 2013, 86). It was through the enactment of communally appropriate dispositions that Iraqis were able to communicate and connect with each other to evoke the imaginary of a shared home. This imaginary was rooted in an abiding attachment to Iraq as a unified nation and, most importantly, the *appropriate* disposition of interacting with one another according to what Mariam termed a specific "religious culture" (*al-thaqāfa al-dīnīa*), one in which religious difference was not highlighted.[163] Of course, for many of the Iraqis I knew, this particular understanding of Iraq had been profoundly wounded by their experiences in Iraq after 2003, so they were acutely aware that a return to relations before the invasion was not actually possible.[164] Still, it was perhaps because of this very impossibility that they strove so passionately to hold onto the idea that a certain unified sense of Iraqi community and of self was not only imaginable, but also possible.

As a zone of the unsaid (rather than the unsayable), truce was experienced as life affirming. Amina constantly described finding the school as "the turning point" of her life in Amman. A few months after arriving in Amman, she had enrolled her youngest daughter, Nayla, who had Down's syndrome, in a program at the Zein al-Sharaf Institute for Development.[165] Once she did this, she found she had a lot of time on her hands. Her

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[163] In her work with Iraqis exiled after 1958, Hala Fattah (2007) also notes that the one issue that all her interlocutors agreed upon, and was never questioned, was the sense of belonging to a unified Iraqi nation, with everyone stating that they were "Iraqi" when asked about their primary identity.
[164] In saying this, I am not suggesting that the experience of a unified Iraq was shared by all Iraqis in Iraq. Rather, it was a dominant experience among Iraqis who hailed from Baghdad, as discussed in chapter 1, and therefore among my Iraqi friends in Jordan—almost all of whom came from the capital city.
[165] Zein al-Sharaf is a royal NGO that is part of the much larger Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (http://www.johud.org.jo/). See footnote 124 for more information on royal NGOs.

elder daughter, Nadia, who had already departed for the US, alerted her to an online discussion forum—Ankawa—for Iraqis living in the Middle East and those attempting to resettle outside the region.[166] Amina became an active user of Ankawa and found out about the RSI school via various posts. She contacted the school, and eventually registered herself and Nayla. Amina explained her feelings about the school by saying:

> When I found them, there was another kind of life. Now I have relations with Iraqis; before then, I did not connect with anybody. I found Iraqis and Jordanians. This is another life. All my friends are there. Only in the school. It is a community. So I put all my time in it. When I return to the house, I study and I do not need any other contact. I do not know what I would have done without it.

While Amina found out about the school through the Ankawa forum, which can be seen as a more logistical, and thus associative, tool, it led her to a space where she literally found "another kind of life." Amina's suggestion that there are different "kinds" of life echoes Bhrigupati Singh's (2015, 282) idea that there is "a thermodynamics of existence," or "intensities" to life that ebb and flow, and which are central to people's well-being at any given moment. Jobs, institutions, places, and situations can gain and lose intensity, and thus be experienced as more or less lifeless. For Amina, the school was so life-filled that she spoke of wanting to join it as a volunteer— to give it her time and, in this sense, her own life intensity, much like Bilal, Nada, and the other Iraqis I discussed previously sought ways to make their time in Jordan meaningful by not only

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166 http://www.ankawa.com/forum/index.php?PHPSESSID=uihmi63mvhu2t54qpvkam3j880&board=53.0

working, but working for others. Importantly, Amina linked the vivifying nature of the school to the silence it fostered:

> We all have our histories and we all are going to leave. There is no need to engage in deep communication where other negative things will show up. It is better to have some distance. So, we have our classes, we see each other, ask about each other, take care of each other, but without forcing ourselves into each other's lives. I would like it to always be like that.

For Amina, community's materialisation required a commitment to distance, which the school enabled. Though the emergence of togetherness from silence might at first seem counterintuitive, a "deep communication"—far from allowing people to bridge their differences by bringing them out into the open—was for Amina the harbinger of further acrimony. Hers was a desire for an uncomplicated community, echoing Lauren Berlant's (1998, 287) description of intimacy as "a relation associated with tacit fantasies, tacit rules and tacit obligations to remain unproblematic."

Violations of Truce

The truce did not define all relations among Iraqis, of course. However, it was also not limited to the RSI school, but extended into other aspects of life in Amman. Wherever it materialised, its boundaries were strictly patrolled, guarded—as in the case of Tamer—by Iraqis who passionately felt that preserving a space that fostered a broader sense of togetherness was important. This patrolling led to the effective censure of Iraqis (and others) who sought to explicitly delineate people according to sect and generate a more exclusive communal domain. For instance, Bassam had been working with a number of

local NGOs when we first met; by the end of my fieldwork, however, he had left these organisations but was still involved in the distribution of in-kind support.[167] When I was visiting him one afternoon, I mentioned in passing that I was going to be seeing an Iraqi family later in the day. He asked me some biographical information about them, explaining that he wanted to see if he knew them, so that he could determine whether he should pay them a visit to ask if they needed anything. I mentioned a few details, including that they were Christian. To this, Bassam waved his hands dismissively and said, "This is not my work. I do not care if they are Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Sabean. Just Iraqi. I do not ask people too many questions that are not about their needs here in Jordan. Just what they need." Bassam continued, venting his frustrations with some Iraqis who, according to him, favoured certain communities over others.

> Some people actually hate! They hate to make contact. Some Sunnis, for instance, do not even like to say hello to the Shiʿa. They do not like it. There were three Shiʿi young men living in Hashmi not long ago and they had to go into hiding in Zarqa [another city on the outskirts of Amman]. Some Iraqis told the Jordanian security services that they had Shiite posters in their homes. They ended up being resettled to the US, but they still had to hide here in Jordan. The people who informed on them, they were former Baʿath party members. I know this, because I knew them, and one of the guys actually came and boasted about this to me! This led to an argument between us, and eventually he called me dirty because I am Shiʿi too. I had friends, even Shiʿa, who were like this. They hated Sunnis, they hated Christians. I left them. I do not want to contact them even in the future.

[167] See the discussion of Bassam's work in Chapter 3.

The acquaintances and friends that Bassam was describing were unavailable, in the sense that they were not attentive to the presence of others. Instead, they fixated on others' generalness, that is, on their status as exemplars of particular sectarian communities. For Bassam, it was important to help Iraqis. However, what "Iraqi" meant to him, as Heidegger's "communal Other," was not simply a person with whom he might share a legal, territorial, or historical bond. His abandonment and rejection of friends and acquaintances who deployed sectarian discourse, as well as his own silence on the matter in his humanitarian work, indicated that his enacted sense of being Iraqi was grounded in truce as a relational mode.

Similarly, I was visiting with Layal and her family during Eid al-Aḍḥa[168] when she received a call from an Iraqi acquaintance.[169] The woman told Layal that a wealthy Iraqi wanted to distribute some meat to poorer families for Eid and, since Layal knew many families, the woman asked if she might help. Though Layal was initially enthusiastic to help distribute the meat, she abruptly ended the conversation when the woman told her that there was one caveat: the man wanted the meat to be distributed only among Sunni families. As Layal hung up and vented about this "shocking request," I was seated on the living room floor with a large circular metal platter in front of me on which I was dicing cucumbers and tomatoes under her watchful eye. Responsible for feeding four children, Layal was careful not to waste a scrap of food. She was seated across from me carefully cleaning pieces of meat. Her husband, Youssef, was keeping us company, intermittently shifting his focus to the television. Their four children were observing us, giggling, and

[168] Eid al-Adha is one of the two main Muslim holidays; it commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac as an act of submission to God, and marks the end of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.
[169] See the discussion of Layal's living situation in Jordan in Chapter 3.

sucking on a variety of candies they had purchased with the money that their parents, a neighbour, and I had given them. They could not sit still, excited about their new clothes, with Reema in particular constantly stopping beside me and fanning out her new black-and-white patchwork dress and black shoes.[170]

I watched as Layal carefully placed two generous handfuls of meat into a clear plastic bag that she tied with a tight knot. She grabbed Randa by the arm and, voice slightly raised, told her to pay attention. Randa quieted down and watched her mother explain how she was to hold the bag—from the top, with another hand cradling the heavy meat from below—and where she was to bring it—Wafaʾ's house, a few buildings down across the road. Once she was confident that Randa had understood the instructions, Layal called for her youngest son, Jad, to go with his sister. As the children rushed out, there was a knock at the open door, and a Jordanian neighbour poked his head in to wish the family a happy Eid. He was holding a large black bag filled with what I supposed was fresh meat. Youssef went to the door to take the bag and thank the man before settling back down on one of the couches. He explained that they received a lot of meat during Eid, from local charities, mosques, neighbours in the building, and friends further away in the city. "But," he added, "during Eid, the Christians get no meat from charities or even neighbours. Wafaʾ and her husband are doing well here, but still, it's a pity (*haram*)." "I am very close with Wafaʾ," Layal chimed in, "She is a very good person. Why shouldn't she get some meat?"

In her study of elite Damascenes, Christa Salamandra (2004) argues that cultural practices related to Ramadan, while ostensibly framed within the idea of Islamic

[170] It is customary during Eid for children to receive small amounts of money from a variety of adults—family members, neighbours, family friends, etc.—as well as to receive new clothes.

egalitarianism, actually perpetuate socio-economic hierarchies. Here, however, Layal was doing something altogether different. She gave meat to Wafaʾ not to consolidate Muslim social superiority (as exists in a Muslim-majority country like Jordan) vis-à-vis her friend, but rather to draw her into a network of religious and cultural reciprocity that typically excluded her. Stated differently, Layal expanded the boundaries of this network beyond its original intentions: she went out of her way to include Wafaʾ, in stark contrast to the Iraqi benefactor who wanted to limit this network of giving not only to Muslims, but to Sunnis specifically. A few days later, I ran into Wafaʾ on the street as she was walking her daughters back home from school. She asked me if I had visited Layal for Eid, and I replied in the affirmative. "They sent us meat. Layal is a good friend. I will miss them when we go to America."

While instances where truce was violated among Iraqis called forth a strong rejection and censure from many of those involved, they paradoxically acted to consolidate the truce's importance and thus strengthen the sense of commitment to a wider Iraqi community. In their interactions with Jordanians, however, the truce that Iraqis worked so hard to maintain was powerfully undermined in ways that often permanently destabilised their sense of comfort and any sense of having a future in Jordan. A scene to clarify this point. I arrived at Mariam's house to find her on the doorstep, heading out to have a pile of dresses fitted to her burgeoning size. She grabbed my elbow and guided me out of her building into the overflowing streets of Marka Shemaliyeh. She chattered constantly as our taxi wound its way through densely packed streets that were characteristic of the area: street vendors shouting out to each other, vegetables piled precariously on carts, children just let out from school buying candy. Mariam told the driver to let us off by an enormous sign with the seamstress' name—

Dounya. I imagined the shop was right on the street, but Mariam walked straight into the building entrance only to walk out the back, where she took a steep flight of stairs down into a cavernous basement area devoid of natural light. Though it felt like a bunker it was festooned with colour, filled with piles of fabrics, string, dresses half made, and sewing machines. A woman was seated on a small sofa, while two others were hunched over diligently working at the sewing machines. The youngest, whom I later learned was Dounya, had a cigarette casually hanging from her lips and a bandana wrapped around her head to hold up her long black hair. She saw Mariam and immediately stood up to greet her with a cascade of welcoming words. We were ushered in, offered coffee, and presented with a series of dresses on which we were required to provide detailed commentary and, of course, approval. Mariam was at ease here, slipping out of her abaya, joking with the women about how to be sexy while wearing a hijab, and lamenting the constant battle against her rotundness. The chatter continued, as the women took up their sewing again.

More coffee was brought out as Mariam sat down on a rickety chair that trembled beneath her weight, creaking, almost as if apologising for its limited capacity to hold her. Dounya then asked Mariam about the situation in Iraq. Mariam provided a vague reply about how politicians were stoking violence and how people themselves were not supportive of the current chaos. The women nodded in agreement, and launched into a discussion about the civil strife in Iraq. Dounya's hands stopped working, as she paused to light a new cigarette. She took a deep drag and said, the words carried out on a dense cloud of smoke, "Mariam, are you Sunni or are you Shiʿi?" Mariam's eyes shot down as she mumbled out a reply to the effect that her family's roots were mixed, though she was Sunni. "Seriously?" asked Dounya. "Yes," Mariam replied quietly. Silence. Dounya

started up her sewing again and the room echoed with the low mechanical noise of the stitches being placed.

Laughing, Dounya cut into the silence by saying, "You know, before the war in Iraq, I had no idea what Shiʿa even was; I only knew if someone was Jordanian or Palestinian or Iraqi!" Mariam shifted her weight, arranged a loose strand of hair, and cleared her throat. She quickly dispelled the unease of this conversation by explaining what she wanted done to her dresses. Even in this working-class part of Amman, the price of such work was considerable. Dounya mentioned the usual price of 20JD per dress, only to lower it immediately to 10 JD when she saw Mariam's disappointment. The conversation soon moved to a passionate discussion of make-up and hijab styling. I was offered a bundle of creams and lotions, kohl and lipsticks, as Mariam and I finally made our way up and out, almost three hours after arriving.

Back in Mariam's kitchen, she offered me tea and asked me what I thought of Dounya. I told her I liked her. She nodded, adding that Dounya was extremely kind to charge her only 10JD for the dresses, even though she was not particularly well off and work these days was hard to come by. We barely began this conversation before Reema and May, Mariam's two daughters, crashed down beside us, grabbing cookies and asking for a few pennies to go out and buy candy. Jamil, their brother, came in after them, asking for help with his Arabic homework. As Mariam looked at his book, she casually asked me, "Giulia, did you notice the question that Dounya asked me?" "Yes," I replied. She proceeded,

> I really do not understand why they ask that. One time, the landlady came to see me pretending to be concerned with how we were doing. Instead, she asked, "So you are Iraqi?" When I told her that we were, she immediately asked, "Are you

> Shiʿi or Sunni?" I told her that I was Muslim. Then she pointed out that I wore my hijab differently, covering the chin, as is customary among Shiʿa. I did not say anything, but after that, I started wearing my hijab differently. People here [Jordanians], they like to always talk about religion and about politics, about how much they like Saddam. Honestly, from these experiences, the atmosphere was broken (*kassarat al-jaū*).

Instances such as this—where an initially comfortable interaction was suddenly jolted by a question about or reference to sectarian identity—were experienced frequently by Iraqis in Jordan. I witnessed and heard about them regularly. Like Mariam, Iraqis always found them shocking, and told me repeatedly that they had not expected to meet such discourse in Jordan. Yet this concern with sectarianism had been steadily growing in Jordan, framed officially as a question of national and regional security. Late in 2004, as Iraq was preparing to hold its first elections of the post-Saddam Hussein period, King Abdullah II coined a controversial and still deeply resonant phrase; there was the danger, he explained, of a "new [Shiʿa] crescent" that could destabilise Jordan and the entire region (Black 2007). That Jordan might be engulfed in this crescent stretching from Iran through Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, became a growing source of anxiety for the state and citizens alike, with many speaking of it as an empirical reality. This successful securitization of Shiʿism, however, took place in parallel to the state-sanctioned discourse of hospitality vis-à-vis Iraqis, generating a tension between the potential threat they posed and the duty to welcome them as guests. This tension translated into an anxious attitude among many Jordanians, who felt it

necessary to clarify exactly what sect Iraqis belonged to when they encountered them in daily life.[171]

Such experiences predominated in public schools, with not only Shiʿa but also Christian Iraqis speaking frequently of teachers asking about religion, insulting their faiths in class, and even trying to convert them. Many Iraqis students were taken out of school by their parents or chose to drop out to avoid such pressures. ʿAdel, on one of his last nights in Amman before leaving for resettlement to the United States, spoke for many when he told me, after an angry interaction with a Jordanian taxi driver,

> I hate it when they ask, "Are you Iraqi?" and then directly they ask you about your religion. "You are Muslim?' Then they ask you from which, "You are Shiʿi or Sunni?" I hate this question. Jordan is good, except for this point. Because they all think that they have the right to ask you, and when you get angry, they ask, "Why are you angry?"

Such eruptions of sectarian discourse, as they multiplied in the everyday lives of Iraqis, coalesced and provoked a sense of surprise, disappointment, and anger. This in turn amplified an abiding sense of dislocation and discomfort in Jordan.

Conclusion

It was October 2014, and over a year had passed since my long-term fieldwork in Jordan. I was living in Doha when Mariam called me from Amman to discuss the possibility of her family relocating to Canada through group sponsorship. "You know

[171] For more on securitization and how it can be understood as a "speech act" that functions only if accepted by its target audience, see: Buzan, Barry, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde. 1998. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

who left?!" she asked me all of a sudden, interrupting our discussion. "Lana!" I told her that I had noticed from Facebook that Lana and her family had moved to San Diego. Mariam provided me with the exact date of their departure. "How do you know exactly when they left?" I asked, recalling that though she had known of Lana, the two had only met briefly when Mariam had stopped by Lana's house to register her at the local health clinic. In fact, the only time Lana and I spoke of Mariam, she said that she had only agreed to register for the health clinic to help Mariam out, since Mariam needed to fill a certain quota. "We became really close friends!" Mariam exclaimed. "How did that happen?" I asked. "She needed money from the UN," Mariam explained, adding:

> I told her that I had a Jordanian friend who could help. I explained to my Jordanian friend that she was a good person. [...] I went with Lana to meet with her to help, and eventually she was granted the money. I knew before her! From then, we became good friends, and our kids played together. I was very sad when she left (*hizint ktīr*).

Mariam stumbled over her words anfd I heard her voice tremble. She breathed in sharply.

> It is so hard to have people leave. I do not mean that it is hard because I am jealous of them, but because I lose close friends. We did not have these sorts of strong relations in Iraq, with people from outside the family. We knew people, of course, but we did not become close friends like here. We meet together, the women, and if one person does not have rice, she can borrow it. If someone else needs some money this week, then she can find help. We help each other if we are sick and we

> chitchat together. These relations have been extremely important for me here. They are sisterly bonds (*ʿalāqat ukhwa*).

For many Iraqis, the depth of attachments they felt to each other—the sisterly bonds—often came as a painful surprise, one that overwhelmed them suddenly when someone left or when it was their turn to leave. When Amina finally left Jordan in late 2012, for instance, Reem told me, "It's so hard. She [Amina] called me from the airport and said that she is sad and will miss us and the school. I told her not to let me cry. God willing, we will meet again." Even more poignantly, for Imm Yasser, the departure of friends in Jordan while she and her family remained waiting for resettlement was a key reason she was thinking of returning to Iraq.

For Iraqis, being together, or proximate, on the road entangled them in one another's lives in ways that went far beyond what many had initially intended. As people left and new individuals arrived, Iraqis' sense of togetherness ebbed and flowed. What was certain was that the community that had crystallised, however provisionally, in Amman solidified, if not in its materiality, then certainly in its affective dimensions—its sense of togetherness. When this togetherness frayed, it provoked a feeling of loss and, for many, even of nostalgia.

As the Iraqis I knew left Jordan, we stayed in touch. Invariably, emails detailing the travails and joys of their new lives elsewhere always ended with a note saying that they missed their friends in Jordan. Therefore, even though most Iraqis had faced a difficult and uncertain time in Jordan, in retrospect the community they had built infused their memories with a sense of warmth. Importantly, this sense of community also endured in different ways even as Iraqis dispersed through resettlement to various countries. For instance, when Bassam finally left for the United States in 2013, he was

resettled in Buffalo, only to quickly move to Seattle where his best friend from Jordan, Fahed, was living. Social media facilitated this communal afterlife, of course, but relations forged in Jordan also had more concrete consequences, such as informing resettlement patterns in the United States.

As they worked toward generating a togetherness for themselves, Iraqis were effectively creating a parallel system of informal networks by which life in Jordan was made possible outside of the formal hospitality framework set up to manage their presence. If many Iraqis were able not only to endure but also to find moments of thriving and comfort in Jordan, it was precisely because of the life-sustaining nature of the provisional community they shared. Places like the RSI school that enabled togetherness restored—fleetingly and partially—the 'functionality' of Jordan for many Iraqis, while also creating networks there that reached into the future elsewhere. Nevertheless, as with their sense of productivity, Iraqis' sense of togetherness was fragile, constantly destabilised by the turnover of Iraqis in Jordan, as well as the sectarian-based interactions they had with Jordanians. In this context, many—most—chose to hedge their bets, and applied for resettlement outside of the Middle East. It is to the arduous and contentious labour of resettlement, and its ambiguous consequences, that the next chapter turns.

5— LIFE IN THE "IMPASSE"

"The headline with Iraqis is IOM [International Organization for Migration]," ʿAdel said as he glanced over to Fawzi for confirmation. Fawzi nodded and chuckled before turning back to his phone. When I asked ʿAdel to clarify what he meant, he added, "It [resettlement] is the only subject, the only project." While not all Iraqis I met were intent on leaving Jordan, the vast majority were heavily invested in efforts to secure resettlement in another country. It was, as ʿAdel described, an objective that was central to the lives of many Iraqi in Jordan. Despite resettlement being a main "project," Iraqis spoke frequently and with consternation about the inability to 'know' what the resettlement process was or what they ought to be doing to be successful. The work to secure resettlement therefore provoked deep anxiety; it became a project that Iraqis were deeply invested in, while also having little control over. In the end, many settled outside of the Middle East, but many also did not. The pull of the promise of a (final) destination where a sense of comfort could perhaps be achieved was potent—like the magic of the lottery ticket—and it compelled Iraqis to remain engaged with an opaque bureaucracy that provoked for many a sense of "madness." This is what Iraqis described as a "crazy system" governed by "moods."

When I visited Bassam one day, I found him meticulously arranging a pile of papers he needed in order to register for a barbering course. He asked me if I had heard that ʿAdel was finally leaving for the United States at the end of the coming week. I nodded that I had, and took the opportunity to ask Bassam about his own resettlement file.

Bassam: Nothing is new, not even half of nothing! We held a demonstration at IOM last Sunday. We organized through Ankawa, you know, that online chat website I showed you.

Giulia: What happened?

Bassam: Nothing really. I called someone I know there and asked them to come out. We were about fifteen people. But nothing!"

Bassam threw his hands up in the air and shrugged:

> Some of the people there, they organized a second demonstration this past Thursday. I did not go but I heard that apparently IOM security [officers] threatened to call the police, even though there were less than fifty people. They told him, "Go ahead," but in the end, they did not. They stayed and they saw American staff looking out of the windows, until someone came out. He talked to them, with a translator, and tried to get them to calm down. In the end, he let about thirty people in to check on their files, but most still had a 'pending' status. There is never any new information, no one can tell you what is going on, and you never know what to do.

This chapter begins by outlining the resettlement system that was established for Iraqi refugees in the post-2003 period, focusing in particular on resettlement to the United States, where most Iraqis I knew eventually moved. It then follows Bassam's bureaucratic journey from the day he arrived in Jordan to the day he departed for the US in order to illuminate the more general Iraqi experience of being caught in the "crazy system." In so doing, I argue that the system's craziness was not the outcome of poor coordination, individual errors, or lack of funding, though these were, of course,

challenges. Rather, it was actually the outcome of the system's proper functioning; that is, the promise of resettlement was a powerful and effective legal containment strategy keeping most Iraqis in the Middle East by allowing only a few to relocate outside the region.

This chapter therefore explores the experience of life lived in the shadow cast by the discrepancy between the promise and reality of resettlement. This discrepancy created a situation akin to what Lauren Berlant (2011, 199) defines as an "impasse," or "a holding station that doesn't hold securely but opens out into anxiety." The impasse in which Iraqis found themselves, labouring for a goal only a few could achieve, animated profound sentiments of animosity, suspicion, and hostility toward their fellow Iraqis. The togetherness Iraqis worked to forge and the related sense of comfort they felt in Jordan frayed under the pressures of the resettlement process, which regularly called forth the question, "Why them and not me?" Though my Iraqi friends involved in the resettlement process often spoke of how all Iraqis deserved resettlement, over time, the grammar of judgement that characterised the resettlement system began to colour how Iraqis saw each other. Moreover, Iraqis not only complained about the bureaucratic system they were subjected to in an effort to save face when they did not get what they were seeking (Herzfeld 1993); they also developed their own moral claims about how "refugeeness" should be determined. This emergent everyday justice challenged the dominant understanding of refugee rights, and solidified a divide between what my Iraqi friends described as "the wealthy Iraqis" and "the refugees"—a divide that acted as a powerful corrosive on social relations and, consequently, on the ability of Jordan to 'work' effectively for many Iraqis.

Understanding Iraqi Resettlement

Along with voluntary repatriation and local integration in a country of first asylum, third-country resettlement is considered one of the three durable solutions to refugee crises. In the context of the Cold War from the end World War II through the mid-1980s, resettlement was seen by many states as the preferred durable solution to solve refugee situations. In large part, this had much to do with the fact that many refugees were fleeing communist countries or escaping colonial repression and were thus usefully politicised as confirming the superiority of 'the West' (El Dardiry 2016; UNHCR 2000). For instance, 200,000 Hungarian refugees were resettled following the 1956 revolution, as were over 40,000 Ugandans expelled by Idi Amin in 1972, 5,000 refugees facing forced return from Chile under Augusto Pinochet in 1973, and nearly 2 million Vietnamese 'boat people' fleeing Vietnam after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 (UNHCR 2006b, 142).

With the end of the Cold War, the strategic importance of resettlement diminished; moreover, the increasing number of people fleeing poverty—or economic migrants—led to increasing reluctance in many Western countries to continue offering resettlement as they had done before (UNHCR 2006b, 130). By the 1990s, then, voluntary repatriation had become the preferred solution to displacement on the part of states and other international actors (though not one necessarily shared by refugees themselves): in fact, between 1998 and 2008, fourteen refugees returned to their countries of origin for each refugee resettled (Bradley and McAdam 2012, 2).

Currently, resettlement is viewed by UNHCR as a targeted tool—an "'extra-ordinary' solution" (Bradley and McAdam 2012, 3)—for those refugees who are absolutely unable to go back to countries of origin and who have specific needs that

cannot be addressed in the country of first asylum. In large part, this narrowing of resettlement eligibility was the consequence of the fact that resettlement programs are ultimately dependent on quotas and priorities of receiving countries, which have consistently been low. For instance, of the 19.9 million refugees of concern to UNHCR in 2017, approximately 1.19 million were deemed in need of resettlement; of these, only 75,188 files were submitted to resettlement countries, and only 65,109 were actually resettled (UNHCR 2018).[172] In 2018, UNHCR estimated that of the 20.4 million refugees under its purview, less than one percent had been resettled (UNHCR 2019b).

In this broader context largely averse to resettlement, then, the large-scale Iraqi resettlement program that began in 2007 was the proverbial exception that proved the rule. In part this "enhanced resettlement operation" was propelled by UNHCR's assessment of the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Iraq from 2006 onward and the consequent increase in the number of Iraqi refugees in neighbouring Middle Eastern states. Arguing that a "multi-year [resettlement] operation" would have "a strategic impact" by acting as a burden sharing mechanism, and consequently improving the protection space for Iraqis in the Middle East, UNHCR tried to convince resettlement countries to increase their quotas for Iraqis (UNHCR 2007b). In tandem with this UN effort, the establishment of this Iraqi resettlement program was strongly linked to developments in US refugee policy vis-à-vis Iraq, propelled by an American and international media and NGO campaign that began in 2006, which argued that the United States had a special responsibility to Iraqis (Berman 2012; Sanders and Smith

[172] Specifically, 45,524 were resettled in the US, 10,809 in Australia, and 4,632 in Canada. It should be noted that these figures do not include all refugees resettled in 2013; individual countries also pursue resettlement independently through their embassy offices. However, the vast majority of resettlement occurs through the UN, so its figures can be used as a gauge of the global trend. See the UNHCR report for more details: http://www.unhcr.org/539809d8e.html.

2007; Thompson 2007).[173] Up until 2006, and as part of its attempt to underscore Iraq's stability, the US government focused its attention largely on returnees to Iraq who had been exiled under Saddam Hussein, with most of the State Department's refugee funding earmarked for these individuals. By 2007, however, the dramatic rise in violence throughout Iraq and the growing Iraqi populations in Syria, Jordan, and Turkey increased public focus on the issue of Iraqi refugees. Consequently, key US officials in Iraq and leading members of the newly elected Democratic Congress and Senate sought to strategically reframe US political discourse around the invasion and the particular plight of refugees.

Spearheaded by the late Senator Edward Kennedy, these efforts culminated in the 2007 *Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act*. The Act acknowledged that, "Although the United States cannot resettle all of Iraq's refugees in the United States, the United States has a fundamental obligation to help the vast number of Iraqis displaced in Iraq and throughout the region by the war and the associated chaos, especially those who have supported America's efforts in Iraq." Despite its acknowledgement of a general Iraqi refugee population, the Act specifically privileged Iraqis who worked, directly and indirectly, with the US government in Iraq, its overall aim succinctly stated in its opening sentence: "To assist certain Iraqis who have worked directly with, or are

[173] See also the widely cited episode of 60 Minutes, *Left Behind*, broadcast on CBS television, March 11, 2006: http://www.cbsnews.com/news/left-behind/. This argument for special US responsibility was echoed in Europe. Sweden, for instance, closed its doors to Iraqis in 2008, after having accepted close to 40,000 Iraqis since the beginning of the 2003 war. The mayor of the Swedish town of Sodertalje, where most of these Iraqis resided, echoed the sentiments of many when he stated that: "People are saying: 'Stop it! It's too much ... We are a small town in a small country. We didn't start the war. It was the United States and Great Britain. They must now take the responsibility for the refugees" (as quoted in Jordan 2008). Though Sweden's refugee program is generous, Europe as a whole only accepts around 5% of global resettlement cases per year (about 4,000 people).

threatened by their association with, the United States."[174] The Act built upon the smaller Iraqi and Afghan Translators/Interpreter Program of 2006, which allowed for the resettlement of 50 individuals per year in the United States. Expanding this greatly, the *Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act* authorized up to 5,000 Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) per year for Iraqis (and their families) who: had worked directly for the US government or contractors; had been employed by US-based media or NGOs, or local Iraqi organizations that had received US funding; or were members of minority groups with family in the US.[175] In addition to this targeted resettlement program for US-affiliated Iraqis, the US also accepted Iraqis referred to it by UNHCR.

All of these various programs were ultimately under the purview of the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), which defines itself as "an inter-agency effort involving a number of governmental and non-governmental partners, both overseas and domestically."[176] The US Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration was charged with managing the overall program, which essentially meant that it set admission numbers and processing priorities. However, interviewing refugee applicants and subsequently adjudicating their files fell under the mandate of the US Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Overall, between 2007 and 2013, UNHCR statistics show that of the 161,932 Iraqi resettlement files, 118,508—approximately 73 percent—were submitted to the United

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[174] Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, U.S.C. S-1651 (2007), https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/senate-bill/1651.
[175] The program was renewed for a final time in January 2014, and will end when all of the final 2,500 visas have been issued. See http://travel.state.gov/content/visa/english/immigrate/types/iraqis-work-for-us.html#. In order to be eligible, Iraqis applying for SIVs needed documentation proving their employment.
[176] See http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-asylum/refugees.

States. Of the files submitted to the United States, 69,770 were approved for resettlement—just under 60 percent.[177] From Jordan, 29,307 resettlement files were submitted to the United States on behalf of Iraqis during this time, of which 18,946 were finally approved—an approximate approval rate of 65 percent.[178] It should be noted that while approximately 60 percent of resettlement files were approved in the 2007—13 period, this did not mean that selected Iraqis travelled to the United States within this same timeframe; as will be discussed below, there could be long bureaucratic delays in issuing all the necessary paperwork for actual travel.[179]

Navigating the Resettlement 'System'

USRAP's self-definition as an inter-agency effort that includes numerous domestic and international partners articulates what many Iraqis experienced: namely, that this "effort" is best conceived of not as a monolithic, streamlined procedure, but rather as a series of concatenated bureaucracies, separate but entangled with one another. In Jordan, the agencies involved all had their own headquarters, demarcated from each other through physical space. The tortuous path through this topography traversed physical and virtual spaces, as Iraqis followed the progress of their file both in person,

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[177] See UNHCR's Resettlement Date Finder website for full statistics on resettlement: https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement-data.html#_ga=2.27248893.1342600162.1563546957-2001554905.1561918719. Accessed December 20, 2019.

[178] See UNHCR's Resettlement Date Finder website for full statistics on resettlement: https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement-data.html#_ga=2.27248893.1342600162.1563546957-2001554905.1561918719. Accessed December 20, 2019. N.B. No Jordan specific UNRAP statistics were found.

[179] This delay in departures may explain why USRAP statistics, which include not only UNHCR referrals but also referrals for Iraqis applying under the SIV program, indicate that of the 203,321 files submitted between 2007 and 2013, only 84,902 were admitted to the United States—a lower approval rate of approximately 40 percent. See: https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-asylum/refugees/iraqi-refugee-processing-fact-sheet.

online, and by telephone. To showcase what the process of resettlement, as an integrated whole, might look like, I will discuss Bassam's experience of arriving in Jordan and subsequently leaving for the US. I use Bassam's story only to elucidate the overall complexity and opacity of the bureaucratic process in which Iraqis were involved.

Bassam first arrived in Jordan in January 2010 from Baghdad. He came over land by bus, an 800 km journey, which ended in the Ammani suburb known as Duwwar As-Sabaʿ. His aunt, Nadia, was waiting to pick him up there; she had married a Jordanian fifteen years previous and was already living in Amman. He stayed with Nadia initially, and within a few days of his arrival was brought by her to the UNHCR headquarters in Deir Ghbar, an extremely posh neighbourhood about an hour's drive from where she lived. Bassam had not worked for the US government or an affiliated organization, and he had no family in the US. Therefore, he could not apply for the SIV program, which would have permitted him to apply to USRAP directly.[180] Consequently, he first had to open a file with UNHCR, in the hopes of receiving a positive refugee status determination, and then have his file transferred to the US resettlement program for further consideration. On this first day in January, he was only able to schedule an appointment for a few days later to register his file. The second time he went alone, registered, and was told that his registration interview would be scheduled a few weeks later. By the end of January, he had completed this first UNHCR interview. When asked why he had left Iraq, Bassam focused on the fact that in 2006 he had been shot in a drive-by shooting by Jeish al-Mahdi gunmen because he was working for the newly-

[180] In the language of the US refugee program, cases that go through UNHCR are called Priority 1 cases (P-1). Iraqis who are eligible for the SIV programs are called Priority 2 cases (P-2).

elected Iraqi government as a Minister's driver.[181] He explained that he has not left Iraq earlier because he had no idea that there was any assistance available for Iraqis outside of the country. The interviewer asked him to provide medical records confirming treatment for his gunshot wounds. Bassam had not thought to bring these with him, and explained that he would have to return to Iraq to get such papers. The interviewer acquiesced and told him this would not be necessary. When he left UNHCR that day, Bassam was given his registration form and told, "We will call you soon."

This first UNHCR interview was used to evaluate Iraqi claimants' stories against eleven refugee profiles deemed especially vulnerable and flagged as resettlement priorities.[182] The interviewer also assessed if a full refugee status determination (RSD) interview was required and, crucially, if an "exclusion assessment" was needed.[183] If no exclusion assessment was required, the file then moved to the UNHCR Protection Unit, where a determination was made regarding the need for resettlement. Based on resettlement country quotas and established priorities, the Protection Unit decided to which country a resettlement file would be submitted (UNHCR 2007b)—though, of

[181] Such employment was difficult to hide, as it involved going into and out of the Green Zone, a vast area of central Baghdad where all government ministries were located.
[182] These priorities were as follows. 1) Persons who have experienced severe trauma, detention, abduction, or torture. 2) Members of minority groups or individuals who have been targeted because of their religious/ethnic background. In the case of Iraqis, this included consideration of Muslims targeted as members of their religious communities, in addition to the following minorities: Assyrians, Chaldeans, Sabeans, Mandeans, other Christians, Jews, Baha'I, Kaka'I and Yazidis. 3) Women at risk. 4) Unaccompanied children. 5) Dependents of refugees already living in a resettlement country. 6) Elderly at risk. 7) People with medical conditions or disabilities that cannot be effectively treated in Iraq. 8) High profile cases (i.e. political exiles). 9) Iraqis affiliated with US forces or other multi-national forces (including, Britain, Poland, and Australia), UN agencies, international institutions and companies, or the media. 10) Stateless persons (this mainly applied to Palestinians who had been living in Iraq). 11) Iraqis at risk of immediate deportation (UNHCR 2007b).
[183] Such an assessment is used when there is suspicion that the applicant might have been a perpetrator of specific crimes, including crimes against humanity.

course, there was no obligation for potential resettlement countries to accept UNHCR files.

When I met Bassam for the first time in May 2010, during preliminary fieldwork in Amman, I was standing at the corner of the Plaza Mall in Hashmi al-Shemali, a low-income neighbourhood of East Amman, home to many Iraqis. He was precariously carrying a bundle of supplies—large rolls of cardboard paper, a bag full of pens and crayons, and what looked like some sort of writing board. I was joining him on one of his many visits to Iraqi families with an American volunteer who was teaching English with the same local NGO that Bassam was working for at the time. It had been four months since Bassam had arrived in Amman, and he had moved out of his aunt's house and was living with a fellow Iraqi, Firas, whom he had met through the NGO. He had not yet heard back from UNHCR. Recollecting that time, he laughed, saying:

> They called me after five months. That is very soon! Five months! Five months is so crazy for anybody, what if you are sick or alone or do not have money? After five months, they did call me to tell me that there was only the possibility of being resettled in America and if I agreed to this [being resettled in America]. I said yes, anywhere. She laughed, the woman on the phone, when I told her I would even go to Darfur! She was laughing and she said, ok, come the day after tomorrow to have your interview. I did a second interview and then waited.

Given that until 2013 UNHCR considered Iraqis *prima facie* refugees, the majority of cases generally did not require the full RSD interview. Rather, Iraqis had an expedited process that consisted of a short interview to confirm the information previously

supplied and to then organise it into the electronic Resettlement Registration Form. This form was then forwarded to USRAP (UNHCR 2007b).

Bassam waited a further four months after his second interview before he heard from UNCHR that his file had been approved and was being moved to USRAP. In effect, this meant that his file had been transferred to the IOM office in Amman. IOM acted as the USRAP Resettlement Support Centre in the Middle East; in this capacity, IOM was in charge of face-to-face contact with Iraqis, carried out administrative functions (such as maintaining a database of refugee information and a website for refugees to check their file status), collected and stored paperwork, and provided USRAP representatives with physical space for interviews.

An additional five months later, in March 2011, Bassam finally had his IOM pre-screening interview. By this time, he was not only volunteering with NGOs, but had also started attending a variety of NGO workshops and English-language programs offered to Iraqis. The pre-screening interview aimed to prepare Iraqis for their formal interview with USCIS Refugee Corps officers. The person who conducted this interview was a Jordanian national employed by IOM, who used the information collected during the interview to fill out US refugee application forms on behalf of Iraqis.[184] Tom, a senior IOM manager, described the varied array of forms to fill out as "Chinese tax filing:"

> I don't know how it is in Canada, but at least in the US taxes are a nightmare. [...] Now you know that if you mess up on one number or if you don't fill something out correctly, you might get audited, which is probably not going to happen, but it's a

[184] For Iraqis who were applying directly through the SIV programs, it was at this point that they would be asked for concrete proof of having been employed by a US or US-affiliated organisations. Such proof could include a work ID, contract, pay stubs, or letters of recommendation from direct supervisors.

scary thing. Now imagine doing all that in Chinese. So if all those documents are in Chinese, you make one mistake, you're *screwed*. It's the same process here. These people are very vulnerable, they know that they can't go back to Iraq, and they know that they can't stay here. They're coming to some big office here, which is like a faceless bureaucrat, and their lives and the lives of their family members are on the line. So when people come in here it's sometimes very intimidating in terms of what documents they have to fill out to get into the United States. And that's what we do, that's what we call here "case processing." We take all the biographic information and we fill out their immigration forms for them. We confirm their basic information, employment history, education history, military history, medical health. We take all that information, we put it into our database, and when it gets closer to their interview time, we just print it out and the forms are filled properly. We take all that information for every member of their family and then we take what's called their "persecution story." The persecution story basically includes where they're from, what they were doing in Iraq before the war, why they had to flee Iraq, why they can't return to Iraq, why they can't stay in Jordan, and why they want to go to the United States. So we take all that information, we give it a solid quality control, and then we present it to a US immigration officer.

While the assistance provided by UNHCR and IOM was undoubtedly crucial for many, if not most, Iraqis, they nevertheless generally recounted negative experiences and interactions with the Jordanian UNHCR and IOM employees who interviewed them to collect the necessary information. Take the case of Naʿmeh, for instance. I was sitting with him in the small outdoor theatre space of the Royal Film Commission in Amman one afternoon, waiting for a movie to start. He and his family had been living in Jordan

since the mid-1990s; his father had been involved in anti-Baʿathist activity following the 1991 Gulf War, which made staying in Iraq extremely dangerous for them. While the family had official residence permits and were relatively settled in Jordan, Naʿmeh, his mother, and his brother's family applied for resettlement in 2009 following his parents' divorce. Naʿmeh had a cheerful disposition, but on this day, he vented his frustration at the fact that he had finished all of the necessary procedures for resettlement and had now been waiting over a year for the issuance of his plane ticket. This led to a longer conversation about the resettlement process. "They are bad people," he said of the employees he had interacted with at both UNHCR and IOM. "They make decisions based on their mood, not by any law. Like the interview at UNHCR. In my opinion, they should not put Arabs to work in the UN when it is about other Arabs. They take advantage. It is all corruption."

This view that Arab, and particularly Jordanian, employees were particularly arbitrary in their work was common. While Jordanian frontline staff for UNHCR and IOM had little to no decision-making responsibility—but were rather language experts, interviewers, and information gatherers—they were the individuals that Iraqis most interacted with during the resettlement process. In this sense, Jordanians are best thought of as gatekeepers, though Iraqis often saw the role of Jordanian frontline staff as more important than it likely was. In fact, like Naʿmeh, many Iraqis attributed much of the "craziness" of the resettlement system to the whims of these Jordanian employees, who had the unforgiving task of constantly telling refugees that their files were still undecided or that no assistance could be given to them because of criteria they had no control over.

Accusations against Jordanian employees were wide-ranging, and included the contention that they were often politically motivated, for instance, harbouring animosity against certain ethno-religious groups, and the complaint that they were spiteful, for instance, delaying the processing of files for individuals simply because they did not like them. These suspicions fed off tensions that Iraqis experienced with Jordanians in everyday life. In particular, many Iraqi Shiʿa I met were adamant that they had to lie about their religion in order to get their files past Jordanian employees.[185] Though Naʿmeh was not Shiʿi, he confirmed this view, saying,

> They [Jordanian employees] just don't like certain people. I discovered this talking to many people, refugees. They are not just employees; they use their feelings to decide for people. The problem is not with IOM or any specific department; it is with specific employees who do not like someone. Often it is for religious or political reasons, but sometimes it is just personal. They get annoyed or just do not like them. I had a friend whose file was stalled for over a year until I told her to ask to talk to someone other than the woman she usually met.

The distinction Naʿmeh drew between decisions made according to "mood" versus the law reflects his implicit understanding that an employee should be a professional who makes decisions objectively, rather than based on personal attitudes or views. Many others shared his assessment, which both increased the hostility Iraqis harboured

[185] While Jordanians were not the judges of Iraqi persecution stories, many Iraqis felt that they could—and did—spin the stories in negative or positive light based on their personal views. For instance, Iraqi friends who mentioned that they were Shiʿi felt that the Jordanian interviewer had become ill at ease and disengaged after this fact had been shared. Whether or not this ended up affecting how the Jordanian employee drafted the persecution story remains unknown. However, these interactions certainly generated a pervasive sense among most Iraqis I met that Jordanian UN and IOM employees influenced the resettlement case files according to their 'feelings.'

against Jordanians and underscored the "craziness" of what should ostensibly have been a bureaucratic—and therefore organised, fair, and efficient—system.

When I contacted Bassam again in February 2012, at the beginning of my long-term fieldwork, I was surprised to hear that he was still in Jordan, as fully two years had passed since he had first submitted his file to UNHCR. He explained that seven months passed between his pre-screening and final interviews at IOM; his USCIS interview had taken place in November 2011. This long delay was common and generally attributed to the fact that USCIS officers did not reside in Jordan; rather, they went on what were called "refugee processing circuit rides," meaning that they transited through a number of countries, interviewing prospective refugees for a few days in each location. They generally passed through Jordan every two to three months.

Iraqis referred to the USCIS officials who carried out the final interview as "the jury." While this term was pervasive, none of the people I met were able to pinpoint its origin, except to say that it emerged organically from within the Iraqi community. Even when speaking in Arabic, Iraqis used the English, "the jury;" I never heard them refer to those who conducted the interview by any equivalent Arabic expression. Iraqis, in fact, experienced this phase of the resettlement process in particular as a sort of "trial." Rumours were rampant about what to say and what not to say, what small detail might arouse suspicion, and what points should be highlighted. Tom provided the following overview of the manner in which questions are asked:

> Some of the questions they ask are very detailed, sometimes they can be pretty personal, sometimes some of the questions can seem a bit crazy. For example, early in the program we had a lot of people, a lot of men, saying they were in the army, but they were all cooks, never carried a gun. Because the rumour mill started

> that if you're in the Iraqi army, which all men were, then you would never get refugee status. And it's not true, not at all. So what had happened is everyone said, "I was a cook, I never carried a gun." So some clever individual [interviewer] said, "Ok, so how do you make rice? [...] You're a cook, so how do you make rice?" Next thing you know, the person says, "Ok, maybe I wasn't a cook, maybe I was a mechanic." "Ok, so how do you clean a carburetor?" "Ok, I was an officer in Kurdistan in 1991." And you see how the officers are trained, not to trap people, but basically to listen to their testimony very carefully just so that there's no misrepresentation. Now what's the level of misrepresentation? Overall, it's fairly low.

Regardless of the intention of the interviewer, when faced with this sort of wide-ranging interrogation, Iraqis expressed feelings of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. This was largely because, under questioning about the minutiae of their lives pre- and post-2003, Iraqis realised that they could inadvertently say something that made them appear guilty. While army service did not invalidate asylum claims, as Tom explained, other actions could. For instance, USCIS officials saw ransom payments for kidnapped family members as potentially indirect support to terrorist groups, an interpretation that Iraqis found inexplicable and inexcusable. Bassam, in telling me his story, complained about this specific issue. His younger brother had been kidnapped in Baghdad, and though he was released without payment, Bassam felt keenly the suffering and terror that other Iraqis experienced when confronted with this same situation. Incredulous, he said, "Can you believe that if you paid for the release of a family member, they actually ask you why? Why did you pay this money? They think that you

are supporting terrorists! But they will kill him! How can you not pay? This is why people are scared of the interview. You can't understand the logic of the questions."

Following this interview, Iraqis had to wait to receive a formal envelope which contained the final decision on their case. The length of time to receive this envelope varied, depending on the complexity of each case. In general, however, most cases went through the following procedure, as detailed by Tom:

> So what happens now is that the "jury," they then send their review and their recommendation to the team leader who's also here on the ground. That team leader reviews everything just to make sure that the adjudication was carried out duly and properly, and then the decision is made. [...] The team leader makes sure that everything was done appropriately, that all questions were asked and that the questions were carried out in a fair manner. They have to make sure that somebody wasn't harassed, somebody wasn't entrapped. If they see that something was mentioned about Baʿath party background, was the follow-up question asked. It's a huge legal process. So one of three things will come about from that interview: the case is accepted as a refugee, but they don't get the name refugee yet, it's a legal term; the case is denied; or there's no decision. No decision means that the officer and the team leader on the ground, they do not have enough information or the authorisation to make a final decision, so they have to take that [the case file] back to Washington. Usually a lot of it has to do with possible involvement with terrorist organizations. When it goes to Washington that process does take a long time. What I mean by long time is there's one case I've been

pushing for now that has been waiting two years. So the majority of cases will either be approved or denied, and about 85% of cases are approved.[186]

Bassam was one of the unfortunate few whose case was classified as undecided after this procedure. Following his USCIS interview, he was told that his "envelope" would be ready in a few weeks. When he went to collect it, he was crushed by the result. This was not simply because he had not yet been granted resettlement, he explained, but because he did not know what exactly "no decision"—or "pending status" in IOM parlance—signaled. In exasperation one day in March 2013, he turned on his computer and logged onto his IOM status page to show me the information provided. The dearth of information stood in stark contrast to the meticulous detail and piles of paper Iraqis were required to provide.

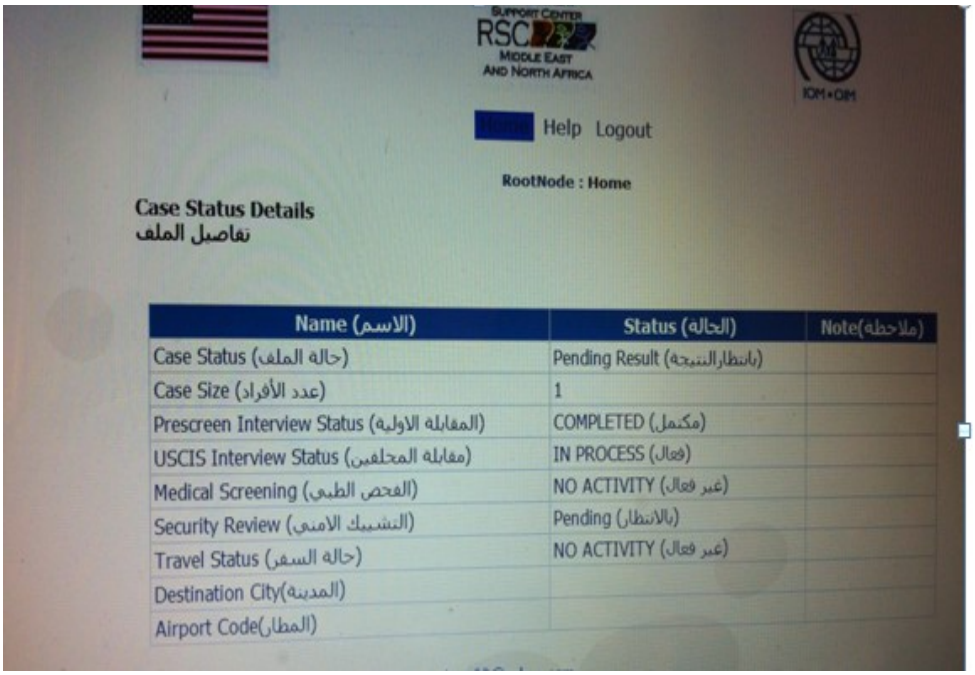

Figure 5 – Bassam's IOM webpage. March 2013. Photo by author.

[186] This subjective assessment of 85% approval is much higher than the official numbers discussed previously, which put the approval rate for Iraqis resettled to the United States at around 60%.

Bassam's case had very likely been forwarded to Washington; for a man in his thirties, this was not uncommon. Though the delay in his case—almost two and a half years—was extreme, the security check proved the longest step for all Iraqis.[187] This was probably because it was not one but a series of checks, each of which could expire while others were being completed, in which case it had to be repeated. Briefly, these checks included: 1) a biographic check against the State Department's Consular Lookout and Support System, which has watch list information; 2) Security Advisory Opinions from law enforcement and intelligence agencies for some cases; 3) a check of biometric data (fingerprints and photos) collected by IOM against both the FBI's Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System and the DHS Automated Biometric Identification System; 4) a check of biometrics against the Department of Defense Automated Biometric Identification System, which contains all fingerprints collected in Iraq from detainees and employees; 5) a biographic check from the National Counterterrorism Center; and 6) an Interagency Check. This suite of security checks must all be passed and up-to-date for a final travel date to be set. They are complemented by a final round of pre-departure checks, including a second Interagency Check, a screening by DHS officers at the US Customs and Border Protection's National Targeting Centre-Passenger, and a Secure Flight screening by the Transportation Security Administration.[188]

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[187] There is also a necessary medical check conducted in Jordan, which expires after six months and needs to be up-to-date. It is therefore often conducted more than once given the time it takes to complete the security check.

[188] This amount of detail about security checks is not readily available on any US government website. I found it by sifting through a large amount of oral and written testimony given to the House Committee on Homeland Security. At IOM, no one was able to clearly lay these out for me, with staff mentioning that there were a variety of checks, but not really knowing offhand what they were or who exactly was responsible for them. See: *"Terrorist Exploitation of Refugee Programs," hearing, House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Counterterorrism and Intelligence*, Washington, D.C., 2012 (written testimony of Barbara Strack, US Citizenship and Immigration Services, Refugee, Asylum and

From November 2011 until May 2014, when he finally received his approval, Bassam went to the IOM offices at least once a month to check on whether his status had changed. IOM staff repeatedly told him that the security check was holding up the process. One day in March 2013, Bassam asked me to go to IOM with him. He had not gone for a few months since, he explained, he knew that the answer would always be the same. Still, his friends, Abu Hadi, Samer, and Laith were going there the following day, Thursday, since that was the day that IOM had set for Iraqis to come to check their files. I agreed to accompany them and said that I would meet them near Bassam's home. "No!" he said, laughing. "No, no. It is very early. Just go directly and come later." By very early, Bassam meant 4:30 am. I headed out at around that time and managed to find a taxi driver who happened to know where "that UN building" in Tlaʿ al-Ali was located. Built into the side of one of Amman's hills, the white square box of a building with the typically small two-story houses of the city crouching all around was hard to miss. I got out and looked around, trying to find Bassam. He finally spotted me and I walked toward Abu Hadi's car. The early morning air still carried a viciously cold sting, and Bassam and the others were all huddled in the car. I had seen that some people were gathering around the entrance and told them that perhaps they ought to go get in line—wasn't that, in fact, the reason they had left so early? "There's no line," Bassam explained, "the first person who gets here always makes a list." When exactly this process started, none of them knew, but they explained that it was established because once the offices opened, there was no order to who was called first, inevitably resulting in a lot of fighting. An unknown Iraqi had decided to introduce some order, and

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International Operations Directorate, Refugee Affairs Division Chief), http://www.dhs.gov/news/2012/12/04/written-testimony-uscis-house-homeland-security-subcommittee-counterterrorism-and.

fairness, into this process by creating the list. And so it was that the first person who arrived started the list. It was five minutes to five, and Bassam told me that there were already 65 names on the list. It would rise into the hundreds by the time the doors opened at 7:30 am.

At around seven, we finally got out of the car and walked over to the building. The waiting room was closed, of course, so small groups of three to four people, mainly men, started forming on the pavement outside the building. Murmurs floated in the air, rosary beads were gently counted, legs shifted in an attempt to keep warm. Bassam said hello to a few people. Then, at 7:30 am, the doors opened and, as though drawn in by a vortex, everyone rushed in. The waiting room was inundated and I could barely make out a small dirty plastic window to the left at the far end behind which a man was standing. Immediately, before anything had seemingly happened, angry shouting erupted. A man stood on a chair and to roars of approval exclaimed, "There's a list! There's a list!" Bassam pulled me out, sensing trouble, and told me that the IOM employee was refusing to use the list and simply called forward the first person standing in front of him. "It's according to his mood," Bassam said as we stepped further back. Abu Hadi, a man of not inconsequential proportions, pushed his way to the front, but to no avail. Laith, in the meantime, lifted his smartphone in the air and started filming. Suddenly, he ran out of the waiting room and charged toward Bassam and me. He handed over his phone just as a man materialised next to him and demanded his phone. A security guard. Laith did not hesitate. He dashed down the street with the security guard's shrill cry leaping behind him. Bassam dragged me away, down another side street, eerily quiet during this moment of action. "What about Samer?" I asked. "Don't worry, come!" Bassam ordered. As we slowed, panting, at an intersection, a car stopped

abruptly; it was Samer driving Abu Hadi's car, a smile beaming on his face. "Don't worry, this is all to create chaos so that people will stop coming on Thursdays. It's an action atmosphere [*jaū al-ḥaraka*]!" he shouted, delighted. We picked up Abu Hadi back at the IOM building and then drove through the side streets for a few minutes before spotting Laith, black jeans and black shirt, nonchalantly strolling along.

Once we were all in the car, I remarked that they never got the chance to ask about their files. Abu Hadi shrugged his shoulders and looked into the rear-view mirror, saying, "It doesn't really matter. It was just to feel that we are doing something about our situation. But it's still pending, believe me." Like their compatriots who strove to ward off boredom by finding ways of being busy and thus making their time in Jordan meaningful, Bassam, Abu Hadi, Laith, and Samer sought to do something—anything—to "feel" that they were acting on their "situation." What might initially seem like a puzzling waste of time and energy, then, was actually quite the opposite. By waking up before dawn, huddling in a cold car, and witnessing the chaos at the IOM offices despite knowing it would all be for naught, Bassam and his friends gave their day structure and purpose, in the sense of having something they needed to do.[189]

In May 2014, almost two and a half years after his final interview, Bassam finally received the good news he had been waiting for. Given that there was no effective postal service in Jordan and that emails were considered insecure, all information pertaining to resettlement cases was communicated either in person or via text messages or phone calls. Like all the Iraqis I met, Bassam never went anywhere without his phone, leaving

[189] From another perspective, the regular visits to IOM could be understood as an instantiation of the anxieties provoked by a neoliberal subjectivity in which individuals are ultimately responsible for properly managing themselves and their futures, and are correspondingly responsible for any failures, irrespective of how constrained they might be (Brown 2003; Gershon 2011).

it on at all times, always nervous when he saw an unknown number on the screen. Upon receiving word that his application for resettlement to the United States was approved, Bassam launched into a month of hectic activity, which included a medical check and a final visit to UNHCR to have his overstay fees cleared with the Jordanian government.[190] On September 25, 2014, Bassam sent me a Facebook tag of a picture of him standing in Amman's Queen Alia International Airport, a Lufthansa jet outside the window behind him, with the caption, "Travelling to Buffalo, NY."

The "Impasse" of Resettlement

While the long delays Iraqis experienced could be understood simply as the outcome of logistical limitations (such as the absence of in-country USCIS officers) and the inevitable time involved in following any bureaucracy, I would like to take seriously Iraqis' description of a system governed by "moods." In so doing, I suggest that the "craziness" they experienced was the necessary outcome of an international refugee regime that has always prioritized state over human interests, given that one of its core objectives is to contain the destabilising impact of people on the move (Soguk 1999).[191]

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[190] Once these fees were paid, Iraqis had to exit Jordan within a stipulated amount of time and were required to have a valid visa to re-enter the country.

[191] By way of example, Cécile Dubernet (2001) examines the emergence of the concept of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Though ostensibly framed as an expansion of the "refugee" category to include and protect those who had been displaced but who had not been able to cross an international border, the category of IDP was ultimately a legal device to deter and contain civilians within conflict areas. Actions in the name of IDPs, such as the establishment of the no-fly zone in Iraqi Kurdistan in the 1990s, therefore had less to do with protecting civilians and more to do with preventing mass border crossings. For more detailed historical and contemporary discussions of how the international refugee regime prioritizes state interests over its humanitarian mission, see also: Agier, Michel. 2008. *Gérer les Indésirables: Des Camps de Réfugiés au Gouvernement Humanitaire (Managing the Undesirables: From Refugee Camps to Humanitarian Government)*. Paris: Flammarion; El Dardiry, Giulia. 2016. "Thinking Beyond 'Crisis': Displacement and State-Building in the Middle East. *Refugees Adrift? Responses to Crises in the MENA and Asia Essay Series*. Washington, D.C.: Middle East Institute. July 21, 2016. http://www.mei.edu/content/map/thinking-beyond-crisis

Consequently, global resettlement quotas are far below what is needed. Despite this, however, large numbers of refugees are nevertheless allowed to engage in the "game" of resettlement (Bourdieu 1997). This unresolvable tension between the system's humanitarian impulse and its geopolitical purpose created confusion, unpredictability, and a sense of arbitrariness for Iraqis. "People are trying to discern a 'system' behind what is a multiplicity of political motives and gestures," Alice, an expatriate NGO social worker told me. "And there isn't any. You can really tell what point people are at in the resettlement process based on their emotions." Alice moved her hand up and down in a wave-like gesture as she said this. "I don't like resettlement," she added emphatically. "It's a slot machine; you win one out of one hundred times."

Alice's reference to the slot machine highlights the enormity of the gap between Iraqis' expectations and their actual chances for resettlement, as well as the arbitrariness and uncertainty that defined the process. While about 60% of Iraqis who had applied for resettlement during the 2007—13 period were eventually successful, this still left a rejection rate of 40%. This rejection rate combined with the lengthy wait (most Iraqis I met had waited at least four years and some over 10 years), made resettlement a difficult prospect for many Iraqis. By offering the possibility of resettlement, however slim, Iraqis (and others) were held waiting and immobile in countries of first asylum, effectively making third-country resettlement a legal containment strategy.

The ability to make others wait submissively, explains Pierre Bourdieu (1997, 228), "of delaying without destroying hope, of adjourning without totally disappointing" is central to the workings of power and domination. This is not to say that people who are made to wait, like Iraqis, are devoid of agency; on the contrary, Iraqis held

demonstrations against IOM regularly. Similarly, in the context of Argentina, Javier Auyero (2012, 14) argues that the poor do defend their dignity even as they are made to experience undignified waits at state benefit offices; this defence of dignity, however, never negates the fact that "in their daily lives, [...] they are forced to wait for powerful others to make good on their promises." Crucial to keeping people submissively trapped in waiting is "mystification" (Auyero 2012, 34), or the imposed inability to discern clear and consistent procedures or even, simply, how long one needs to wait. Bourdieu (1997, 228, 230) termed this the denial of a "reasonable anticipation" or a "capacity to predict" through "a strategic exercise of power based on the direct manipulation of aspirations." Auyero's (2012, 113) interlocutors describe this sort of waiting for a service they desperately needed from the state as "indecisive," and as more crippling than the requirement to fill in multiple forms or visit numerous offices.

Similarly, Iraqis too cited the open-endedness of waiting as the most destabilising aspect of applying for resettlement. Tareq, who was living alone in Jordan given that his mother and sister had already migrated—via regular migration and family reunification channels—expressed the debilitating effects of waiting in these terms:

> The hardest thing here is not living here actually or communicating, since it is an Arabic-speaking country. And I think in another place where people do not speak Arabic, probably one of the hardest things is the language [barrier], since it is really difficult to learn the language. But here [the hardest thing is]: the waiting for resettlement. Every day, when the mobile rings, you are scared. Maybe there is approval for your visa, but maybe they will tell you that your visa was rejected. Oh my God! I do not want to think about this. Because I would have to reapply and it takes two to three years. So I would have spent all this time only to repeat

> everything, and wait again. It is really hard, the idea of staying and waiting for this thing [pointing to his cellphone] to ring or not. And when it rings, especially when it is an unknown number, oh my God! Maybe this is the call that will change my life! So this is the most difficult thing in my life here, the waiting without knowing.

In writing about power and time, Bourdieu (1997, 229) draws inspiration from Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, describing the power of the unknown court that the character K. faces as "absolute and unpredictable" because it is "capable of inducing extreme anxiety by condemning its victim to very strong investment combined with very great insecurity." This conjoining of investment with insecurity relates to Lauren Berlant's (2011, 199, emphasis in original) notion of "impasse" as a situation that she likens to a dead-end where "one keeps moving, but one moves paradoxically, in the *same space*." Given that an impasse is characterised by an "unbound temporality," it "demands activity" (Berlant 2011, 199) as people seek to collect information to clarify what is happening to them. Despite the constant engagement in activity that the impasse provokes, however, it remains a mystified and mystifying situation in which people cannot discern where they are going. Iraqis engaged in resettlement found themselves in precisely such an impasse: they did not know where or when they would be travelling, and they did not understand the mechanics behind the system that was to determine their fates. Consequently, they were compelled to remain frenetically engaged with the technical minutiae of resettlement. They were constantly looking at their phones for a message; discussing the process with other Iraqis to make sure they were aware of all necessary information; checking up on their online applications; lining up in front of the IOM offices at four in the morning; spending time on various online forums where Iraqis

exchanged information; and pleading with me and other foreigners with help accessing "Western" UN staff.

As Iraqis laboured to understand the resettlement process and how to advance their particular cases successfully, the "unbound temporality" they experienced effectively exiled them from the present. Alice, the NGO social worker, alluded to this when she explained that the main reason she disliked resettlement was that it "prevented people from making small day-to-day changes in their lives that could help them." In saying this, she was suggesting that the distortions resettlement provoked in people's relation to time made it difficult for them to establish a certain "pattern of regular doings" (Douglas 1991, 287) in their everyday lives. Naʿmeh, for instance, was in his mid-twenties when his family applied for resettlement in 2009; he was an avid hiker who loved exploring Jordan's many valleys. In 2010, a Jordanian friend approached him with a proposal to start an eco-tourism company, an offer Naʿmeh was excited about but that he ultimately turned down. "I didn't want to let him down, and since I did not know when I would leave, I thought it was better to say no. It would not have been respectful or professional to have my friend take this kind of risk." From the time his friend told him about the project to the day Naʿmeh left Jordan, fully two years passed. The sense of paralysis Naʿmeh felt during this period had even harsher consequences for others. For instance, Lana and her husband, like many Iraqi parents, decided not to enroll their two young daughters in school. Thinking that their stay in Jordan would only last a few months, they thought it would be easier for them to simply start school in English in the United States. By the time they accepted that they would be staying in Jordan far longer than anticipated, more than a year had passed. Many Iraqi children and youth were unable to return to school in Jordan given the number of years they had missed.

Similarly, many Iraqi young adults did not pursue additional studies in Jordan; while Iraqi children could attend Jordanian schools free, Iraqis still had to pay university tuition. Not knowing how long they would be in the country, many felt they had to be conservative with their savings, and did not spend on such "extras." "The issue," Bassam told me one day,

> is not the waiting, it is that we do not know how long the waiting will be. If they told me, "You will be here one year, five years, ten years," then ok, I can plan, I can decide what to do and even if I want to wait this time. But like this, we cannot plan. There are rich families even in Marka [a working class area where Bassam lived], but they are saving their money and trying to make it last as long as possible because they do not know how long they will be in Jordan.

"It is All Corruption"

The anxiety and labour of life in the impasse of resettlement alienated Iraqis further from Jordan, making the country—especially as their stay extended from months to years—less and less 'functional' for them. It also provoked strong sentiments of suspicion, anger, and animosity among Iraqis that corroded communal ties and distanced people from one another. Despite the intensive labour they put into securing resettlement, Iraqis were never clear why some people left before others, or why some cases were approved while others were rejected. The opacity of resettlement and its long wait fuelled not only accusations of arbitrariness and of being governed by "moods," but also an intense circulation of rumours about corruption within the resettlement system. "It is all corruption (*kullo fasād*)," was a refrain that echoed throughout my time in

Amman. Overwhelmingly, this corruption centred on the claim that "wealthy" Iraqis could manipulate the system to their advantage, an accusation that acted as a powerful corrosive on social relations. Bassam explicitly evoked this divide when he told me the following stories:

> Rich [Iraqi] people do not know about the situation of the poorer Iraqi families who live here. They do not care. There is no contact between rich people and poor people here. Yesterday, my friend told me about a person who got resettlement and was upset that IOM had given him one week to get ready to travel. When my friend asked him why, he said, "You know I have a Mustang with a Dubai license plate and I need to sell this car here, and it takes time. Also I have to sort out things with my apartments in Rabieh [a wealthy neighbourhood of Amman]." By the way, he is planning to return to Jordan because he has business, he just wants to go to America to get the passport and then he will leave! People like these, they should not be travelling! Like when my cousin was resettled, we went to pick up her ticket and there was a woman there with us, a doctor, who was complaining and asking IOM to delay her departure because she had a big dental clinic here, and two apartments for herself and her son, and it takes time to sell them. They said, "Ok, how much time do you want?" And she said, "Give me two months." They said, "Ok, two months." What is this? Is this right? Are these refugees? Yesterday I wanted to go to the doctor for my health. I did not have money. I spent all my money for my friend, Rajaaʿ, and her medical operations. And these people, they do not need anything, and yet they let them travel! And they let them travel when

they want. I know so many families, with disabilities, poor, who need to travel yet they are still here.

Bassam's anger at wealthy Iraqis is notable, especially since he—unlike many of his compatriots—actually had some contact with them through his work collecting and distributing donations from wealthy families to poorer Iraqis. In many ways, however, Bassam's work actually accentuated rather than attenuated his anger. When he picked up donations, for instance, he rarely if ever met with the Iraqi donors: often, money and in-kind donations, such as clothes or blankets, were left with a house cleaner or driver.

Bassam's emphasis on the ability of wealthy Iraqis to control the timeline of their resettlement is notable; though they too had to wait, the wealthy waited less and could control certain parameters of this waiting. That is, they were not trapped by the anxiety and fear of the "unbounded temporality," that paralysed so many others (Berlant 2011, 199). In contrast, not only did Iraqis like Bassam have to endure a lengthy and open-ended waiting: they also had to leave Jordan very quickly, usually within one week, once their files were approved. Despite this desired outcome, many Iraqis described feeling "confused," "frustrated," and "shocked" at how quickly they had to leave. Naʿmeh, for instance, who had lived in Jordan for thirteen years, was given the usual one-week notice to prepare for his departure for California. When I visited him the last time in his apartment in Sweifieh, it was as though a tornado had passed through it, the mess a testament to his frenetic attempt to pack up a whole life in a few days. Flustered and frustrated despite his happiness, Naʿmeh explained that he had gone to see the people at IOM. "I told them, 'Come on guys, I have a whole life here. I thought I would have a month and I was still worried about how I would get things done. But one week?! We are not Syrian refugees in Zaʿatari camp!"

Complaints about the privileged treatment of "the rich" went hand in hand with rumours of bribery (*rashwa*) at IOM.[192] The story people told me varied in some of its details, but at its core was always the same. A Jordanian IOM employee had an Iraqi counterpart within the community. Together, they worked to expedite the advancement of files for those who could pay anywhere between 2,000 and 6,000 USD. When Lana received news that her family's application for resettlement to the United States had been rejected, I was at a conference in Calcutta. She sent me a text about having received "bad news," and I called her immediately.

Lana: They [the Americans] rejected us. I don't know how it's possible. They are crazy. Now we know. Really crazy.

Giulia: I'm so sorry, Lana. What are you going to do?

Lana: We are going to appeal. It's our bad luck. They are rejecting so many people now for any reason. Maybe they had enough of the Iraqis! What makes it so bad is how long you waited. If they rejected people quickly, it would be different. But they don't think of this. How the people are living here and any other place. How tough it is for them. At IOM they asked me if I want to go to Australia instead.

Giulia: Are you considering going to Australia?

Lana: For now, I don't know. We will appeal and see. It is not easy, to start the process again for another country. And also, I want to go to the US because all my family is there. You know, they get there [to the US] before us.

[192] IOM staff I spoke with were aware of such rumours and did their best to dispel them. For instance, on the IOM login page for refugees, there was a notice clearly stating that IOM did not require any payment, and that any such requests should be reported to them.

Giulia: Who?

Lana: The people who pay. A few days ago, a friend of mine called me and said that at the UN they are telling people—in secret, of course—"If you want to go, give us 6,000 USD per person and we can do it." And there are people who can pay and so they pay. If we knew at the beginning that this is the secret, ok. But we spent so much money here.

The line then fell silent. The silence lasted so long that just as I was about to say "Hello?" to make sure Lana was still on the phone, she continued: "We left our country because of this, Giulia. Is this [bribery] our only hope? I don't know, we are so shocked."

While the accusation of corruption favouring the wealthy could simply be interpreted as an effort to save face by those who were unable to obtain resettlement (Herzfeld 1993), I found that Iraqis were not merely complaining about the bureaucratic system they were trapped in, but were actually developing their own moral claim about how "refugeeness" should be determined. Bassam contrasted his inability to secure his physical health because he had paid for his friend Rajaa'ʿ's operations with the expectation and ability of the Iraqi businessman and doctor to organize logistical, as opposed to substantive, aspects of life at their leisure. In so doing, he gestured to an argument that was pervasive among Iraqis, namely, that the right to resettlement should be determined based on people's capacities to live in the present, not on what they had previously endured in Iraq. Lana, whose family waited over four years for resettlement, often complained bitterly about how often she had to tell her "persecution story," as well as the relevance of such suffering to determinations of refugee status and resettlement. "Any person from Iraq saw everything," she complained, "so it doesn't mean anything!"

The ability of the wealthy to not only move across borders, but to do so with a degree of "choice, flexibility, and focused movement," (Ho 2005, 83)—denied to Mariam, Lana, Bassam, and others—was a central component of their accusation of injustice. That some people could manage their departures and even buy resettlement meant, effectively, that they did not really need it. They had the means, that is, to live well in Jordan. Their application for resettlement, then, was a form of greed: by applying for resettlement when they did not need to, wealthy Iraqis were seen as taking from others, not as asserting their rights as refugees. Louay, an Iraqi who worked with a local NGO, articulated this in explicit terms when I asked him why he had not yet travelled. In contrast to the cavalier attitude to travel displayed by the businessman and doctor, Louay's actions spoke to a different understanding of what responsibilities one has to others. I had expected him to say that his resettlement file was still "pending," but instead he replied, "Let others travel. My situation here is good. I have a residency permit. Others need to travel more than I do. They are more deserving than I am. I have the ability to resist living here."

This sense of everyday justice challenged the dominant understanding of refugee rights, which localizes the legitimacy of the refugee in losses and threats experienced in a country of origin. This privileging of the past over the present is the consequence of a discourse that understands the refugee as suspended in a liminal zone outside of normal life, where forms of suffering are derivative and secondary to those that precipitated exile in the first place. Given that everyone in their country had suffered, Iraqis argued, such sufferings could not be the grounds on which refugee rights were determined; rather, such rights should be allocated in a manner that sustained and supported living in the present (and future). Iraqis therefore reconceptualised "refugee" to index not a

person who had left their country out of fear and was now in exile, but someone without the capacity to live in the present.

This reconceptualization of "refugee" had profound consequences for Iraqis' communal ties in Jordan, not least because who exactly "the wealthy" were was never clear. Many people who were the target of gossip, for instance, had rather modest means. They were targeted, however, because their files moved through the resettlement process in ways that did not make sense to others. "People who just came a month ago take this illegal route, and people like us who have been here for years and done everything legally are still waiting," Mariam, whose family had been in Jordan since 2006, told me in 2013. The stakes people had placed on resettlement, the opacity of the process, and rumours about corruption each contributed to an atmosphere rife with suspicion and anger. The worry that some people were taking advantage of the resettlement system effectively meant that fellow Iraqis, even friends, were turned into suspects overnight. People surveilled others, noticing how often they went out, if they had changed neighbourhoods or apartments, what they were wearing. Moreover, I slowly noticed that Iraqis tried to get information out of me about others even as they asked me not to share what I knew about them. Had they had their medical check-up yet? Had I seen them at IOM? Did I know the status of their files? This surveillance, however ineffective it might have been at gathering information, had the effect of slowly eroding trust, friendship, and solidarity among Iraqis.

Conclusion

Resettlement engaged Iraqis in an arduous and temporally indeterminate process that served less to protect than to contain them, holding them hostage in Jordan as they

waited—a waiting whose outcome remained for many as elusive as a lottery win. Iraqis found the effort to secure resettlement to be psychologically, emotionally, and financially draining, so much so, that many told me that the joy of potentially travelling had been eliminated. "Now," ʿAdel informed me, "if they tell me, tomorrow, that I will travel, I would not feel excited. I am so tired from it all." In effect, while resettlement was desired, the effort required to obtain it was often unbearable. The suspicion, distrust, and division that resettlement provoked and sustained among Iraqis only accentuated the feelings of weariness. In many ways, resettlement worked to weaken—though not categorically break—social ties and connections forged through NGO work and relations of truce. And while Iraqis certainly had multiple reasons for wanting to leave Jordan, my argument in this chapter is that the resettlement process itself paradoxically decreased Iraqis' ability to find comfort in the country, thus making it seem even more alienating.

Caught in a holding pattern that offered no guarantee of future security, Iraqis were left only with an anxiety that gnawed persistently at the marrow of the present, preventing them from engaging fully with their lives in Jordan. Though their prospects in Jordan were certainly limited, many Iraqis had opportunities and chances that they did not explore because they were so heavily invested in resettlement. The consequences of this were obscured for those Iraqis who eventually were resettled to the United States and were able to build new lives for themselves. For Iraqis who never secured resettlement—either because the wait was too long or because their applications were rejected—the limited investments they had made in their lives while in Jordan had enormous consequence. Indeed, most of the families who never secured resettlement eventually returned to Iraq. They had depleted their savings, had few prospects in

Jordan, and had an atrophied social network, both because others travelled on and because of the distances solidified through rancour and rumour. They had effectively consumed all of their resources while pursuing resettlement and found themselves with little in hand when they realised that resettlement would remain forever a mirage.

CONCLUSION

In February 2016, Jordan signed the Jordan Compact, a multilateral agreement negotiated with the World Bank, the United Kingdom, and the United Nations. The Compact stipulated that in exchange for $700 million in development grants, $1.9 billion in concessional loans, and relaxed European Union trade regulations for Jordanian exports from 18 designated economic zones, Jordan would provide 200,000 work permits for Syrian refugees in specific economic sectors, formalize Syrian businesses, and permit Syrian children entry to public schools (Barbelet, Hagen-Zanker, and Mansour-Ille 2018). This agreement reflects an increasingly regional approach to dealing with refugee crises, one that aims to reframe displacement as a challenge of economic development rather than a humanitarian concern and, in so doing, support *de facto*, if not *de jure*, integration in countries of first asylum.

On a short research trip back to Jordan in August 2016, I was told by Jordanian friends who were working in the NGO sector that the Jordan Compact was a way of promoting refugee self-reliance and of decreasing the incentive for onward migration to Europe (see also Heisbourg 2015; Ostrand 2015). Moreover, such an approach made sense, I was also told, because refugees often preferred to stay close to their countries of origin and found spaces of familiarity in neighbouring Middle Eastern states. The argument, then, was that refugees generally felt secure in Middle Eastern host states, but needed greater legal and economic rights to stay in the region long-term. Host states, in turn, were encouraged to enter into such agreements through a largely neoliberal economic logic; namely, that refugees could be commodified—transformed

into a development boon—by being productive workers and by attracting grants, loans, and other concessions from the international community (Tobin 2018).

Certainly, the case of Iraqis in Jordan highlights that legal and economic concerns are critical elements in creating the conditions of possibility for a broader feeling of being at home in any given locale. Moreover, though security concerns of states in the Global North and host states heavily inform policies such as the Jordan Compact, it is also true that these countries are guided by a concern for refugee well-being in a global climate increasingly hostile to migration. Nevertheless, the ambivalent and shifting experiences of Iraqis as they moved across Iraq, Jordan, and the United States indicate that many refugees, faced with a wide range of insecurities and uncertainties, are searching for something more than a place that merely checks off the boxes on a bureaucrat's list.

Four Short Stories of the American Dream

Mariam was sitting with a group of women friends, all Iraqi except for one Palestinian neighbour. Her guests were busy drinking tea and nibbling on the cookies Mariam had carefully laid out before them. Mariam asked one of the Iraqi women how her family's preparation for departure to the United States was going. The woman admitted feeling relieved yet also apprehensive at the thought of a new life in a strange place. Mariam shook her head vigorously before telling her not to worry.

> A friend of my husband's went to California in 2006 with his wife and children. Of course, it was difficult at first, but he found a job in a mall store putting pricing labels on merchandise. One day, the labelling machine broke. He set about fixing

it, since he had been an engineer in Iraq. His boss saw him do this, recognised his potential, and promoted him. He is now responsible for all repairs in the store.

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Reda was one of the few Iraqis in my network of friends and acquaintances who wanted to stay in Jordan. He had been in Jordan nearly three years when I met him in 2012. All but one of his siblings were also living in Jordan, having moved from Iraq prior to the 2003 invasion. Reda had decided to come to Jordan to "improve" himself, to access study and work opportunities that he felt were out of his reach in Basra. Trained as an electrical engineer, he was now a manager for a small company in Amman. One day, after we had shared a quick coffee together with another Iraqi friend, Sara, Reda offered to give us both a ride home. As Reda carefully navigated the traffic clogging Amman's roads, Sara told us that she and her family had finally received their final approval for resettlement and would be travelling soon. We congratulated her. Then Reda proceeded, "I had many opportunities to travel. I even have an uncle in Calgary who is always telling me to go there. But I don't want to go. I like Jordan. I work. My family is here. I managed to improve myself here. And I feel the culture is close to Iraq. I feel satisfied here in Jordan." Sara, who was sitting in the front passenger seat, stared out the side window and said, more to herself than to us, "It is a very precious thing. To have that feeling of being satisfied." "Yes," Reda replied, adding, "But my uncle still insists. He tells me that, of course, I can work in Jordan, but in Canada, you feel that you are a human being (*bi-Canada, taḥis nefsak insān*). But still, I prefer it here in Jordan."

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Nada was one of two single Iraqi women I met who had returned to Jordan after having been resettled in the United States. Nada had arrived in Amman in 2006 from

Basra, a single mother with a young son. In 2009, she and her son had been resettled to Phoenix, Arizona where they stayed just over a year before she decided to move back to Jordan.

> I was all alone there with my son and it was a difficult situation. There was the financial crisis and it was hard to find work. I was lonely, I did not like it. It is better here, even though work here is also unstable. But at least I am closer to my family in Iraq and I can go visit them and they can come visit me. I have a community here. My son loved it [America] though. He is a teenager and America is an open country. Everyone can have tattoos and funny hair. Here it is different, it is not as open.

***

I tried to stay in touch with my Iraqi friends, even as they dispersed across the globe. Amina and I regularly exchanged emails in which she chronicled her new life in Nashville, Tennessee. Prior to leaving Jordan, she had confided to me her worries about a new life in America. "I'm happy to go, but what am I going to do there? We are foreigners there. And at our age!" As she settled into her new life, these worries slowly faded. Her son and daughter were already living there with their families, so Amina and her husband were immediately drawn into the roles of grandparents and caretakers. Additionally, however, Amina took a course to become a licensed seamstress and began working from home making rocking chair cushions and bedding for baby cribs that she sold online with the help of an American friend. While Amina found this work stimulating, and loved that it allowed her to stay home with her grandchildren, she still felt isolated. Joining the local YMCA changed all of that. As she wrote to me, "This

helped us [her and her family] to lose weight, communicate with other people, make friends, and become involved in the community." After six months attending the YMCA, Amina applied for her first "official job" there, as a person in charge of memberships. The ability not only to earn a living but to become integrated into broader networks was critical to Amina's sense of comfort in the United States. Finally, by going to the United States, she also accomplished one of her lifelong goals: in October 2014, armed with a US green card, she was able to go to Saudi Arabia to perform the hajj pilgrimage.[193]

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In 1931, James Truslow Adams (2012, 214–15) coined the term "the American Dream" in his book, *The Epic of America*. He defined it as

> that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. [...] It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.

If America is a dream, then it can and does materialize in different places. Adams' characterisation of the American Dream as one that extends beyond cars and money, one that encompasses a social space in which people feel recognized and capable of being themselves—however they may define this—is echoed in the ways in which Amina, Nada, Reda, and Mariam thought of the place where they did or could feel that

[193] Refugees can apply for a green card, or Legal Permanent Resident Status, after residing in the United States for at least one year. They can apply to become US citizens after five years of Permanent Resident Status. See: https://www.uscis.gov/greencard/refugees

fundamental comfort. Mariam's story alerts us to the importance of an individual's potential being seen and appreciated by others. Reda alerts us to the fact that the place where a person is recognised as a "human being" does not always necessarily coincide with the place in which one's rights are most secure. Nada shows us that comfort is a matter of personal circumstance and, importantly, of social connection. Amina shows us that it is not only important to have social relations, but to experience a productive element in these relations—to be involved with and for others.

While this manuscript has focused principally on the ways in which Iraqis' sense of attachment and detachment emerged in Jordan, its broader argument is that to understand why, how, and when people move or stay in any given place we need to think beyond questions of coercion or of economic and legal security. Facing multiple and enduring instabilities across the places they lived in and imagined, Iraqis neither thought of nor experienced the world as neatly dichotomous zones of security or insecurity, home or exile. The pervasiveness of precarity, then, allows us to notice what else is at stake as people strive to build lives for themselves.

An Effortless Present

In bringing to the fore the everyday processes and practices that acted to connect or distance Iraqis in specific places and at particular times, I have avoided the question of transnational linkages and communities (Appadurai 1991; Clifford 1994; Lynch 2006; Malkki 1995a; Morley 2001; Twigt 2018; Wilding 2007). In large part, this choice was informed by my own experiences with Iraqis in Jordan. While all my Iraqis friends were linked digitally to friends and family in Iraq and beyond, and while the vast majority were working to move out of the Middle East, they were also decidedly *in* Jordan. That

is, as I joined their everyday lives, it became clear that they invested considerable energy in local activities and connections. As Friedman notes (2002, 31), "The fact that people occupying a particular place and living [...] in a particular world are [...] integrated into a larger system of relationships does not contradict the fact that they make their world where they are with the people that are a part of their local lives" (see also Hage 2005).

In approaching home affectively as a sense of comfort, of feeling-at-home, I have therefore foregrounded the ways in which attachments and detachments materialize where people are physically living. In thinking of home-building as an ongoing endeavour, I also think of it as one that is fundamentally localised in the sense of occurring where we happen to be, *now*. While global linkages, real and imagined, certainly sustain, inform, or undermine our sense of comfort in any place, it is nevertheless the case that people strive to feel at home, to feel comfortable, where they happen to be. Just as Amina's sense of comfort in Tennessee is clearly tied to her integration into a broader local community through her participation and work at the YMCA, so too did Nada's sense of comfort materialize in Jordan, where she could see her family physically, not merely virtually. The argument throughout this manuscript has been that this feeling of comfort in place is critical in compelling people to invest in their local lives and, in the end, to either remain or seek other places in which to establish their lives. I have therefore focused on the importance of recognition (of self and others); a sense of productive value—a distinction that Adams (2012) frames as the difference between "making a living" and "living"; the need to not feel like a perpetual stranger; and the ability to feel connected to the present rather than invested only in securing a future.

While people are constantly engaged in home-building, the experiences of Iraqis in Amman gesture to the importance of a certain effortlessness to feeling-at-home. As an affect, comfort is constantly shifting. It also requires consistent engagement in the sense that it is never fully secured; people are always home-builders. Nevertheless, a place's 'functionality' for assembling a liveable life is intimately tied to how much effort it demands of the people living there. For many Iraqis, Jordan proved to be a place that required too much effort—to be recognised, to feel valuable, to feel connected—to be able to live in the present and still plan for the future. This effort made Jordan, as a place, a form of broken equipment that was interrupting daily life (Heidegger 1962). When I asked my friends what they would do if their resettlement files were rejected, many said they would try to stay in Jordan despite the many difficulties. "If I can't leave," ʿAdel told me shortly before he received his resettlement acceptance, "if I don't have the choice, I would stay here. In that case, I would have to work with this. I would have to work with this situation. Because you have to live, you have to go to work, you have to go out." The excessive "work" that was required in Jordan was something that most Iraqis would have preferred to avoid. Migration was one way of trying to find spaces of greater effortlessness (though paradoxically, as Nada shows, for some the United States proved to be a place that required even more effort, and the resettlement process itself was of course the opposite of effortless).

Let me return here to the question of mobility and transnationalism. While effortlessness is profoundly tied to a specific place, it is also the case that a place's effortlessness has global dimensions. Amina gestured to this when she explained that she had been able to perform the hajj pilgrimage once she had obtained her green card: travel to Saudi Arabia on an Iraqi passport is notoriously difficult. A US green card or

passport opened up the world in ways that made travel—for business, tourism, and family—easy. Some of my friends returned to Iraq to visit, others returned to see friends in Jordan. Still others have travelled to Europe, Latin America, and elsewhere without the worry of visas, security checks, and the countless other bureaucratic delays that most non-Western passports elicit.

This ability to have the world readily available was in itself comforting to many Iraqis. "If I find difficulties here [in the US]," Tareq once explained to me, "I can always try to find a job elsewhere, maybe in the Gulf." While such use of passports is often viewed as "strategic" (Zetter and Long 2012), a form of "flexible citizenship" (Ong 1999) at best and a form of opportunistic "convenience" at worst (Palmer 2014), it is far more than that. When Iraqis spoke of having a US passport, they did not frame it in strategic terms, but in powerfully life-giving ones. "Now you are a Canadian," ʿAdel explained. "If something happens to you here [in Jordan], you have a government. In Iraq, there is no government. We are only Iraqi." It is not only that one can move seamlessly across the world: it is that one feels safe doing so. Similarly, Amina told me, "They have closed all the other roads in front of us. We have a passport, but cannot go anywhere with it." The pain of this entrapment was keenly felt. Bassam's mother, for instance, applied multiple times for a visa to visit him while he was still in Jordan. She was always refused. Sadly, she passed away before Bassam was able to visit her in Iraq with a US green card. The effortlessness of travel on a "powerful passport" (McKirdy 2019) was crucial to Iraqis' sense of what made America a comfortable place to be.

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