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Challenging Refugee Men: Humanitarianism and Masculinities in Za‘tari Refugee Camp

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Abstract

Feminist scholarship has demonstrated that ‘womenandchildren’ become the central and uncontroversial objects of humanitarian care and control in contexts of conflict, disaster, and displacement. Yet very little scholarly work has attempted to understand the place of men within humanitarian policies, practices and imaginaries. Through an exploration of the life and governance of Za‘tari Refugee Camp, Jordan, in which 80,000 Syrians live, this thesis argues that for humanitarianism, refugee men present a challenge. Humanitarian actors read Syrian men in gendered and racialised ways as agential, independent, political, and at times threatening. Refugee men thereby disrupt humanitarian understandings of refugees as passive, feminised objects of care, and are not understood to be among the ‘vulnerable,’ with whom humanitarians wish to work.

Grounded in feminist and critical International Relations scholarship, and with an emphasis on the embodied, material and spatial practices of humanitarianism, this thesis draws on twelve months of fieldwork in Jordan, including participant-observation in Za‘tari Refugee Camp, and interviews with humanitarian workers and refugees. It demonstrates that humanitarian actors consistently prioritise their own goals, logics, and understandings of gender, over those of Syrians themselves, and exercise power in masculinised ways that actively disempower their ‘beneficiaries’. In the name of ‘global’ standards, humanitarian interactions with, and control over, refugee women are justified by a rhetoric of ‘empowerment.’ Refugee men, by contrast, are present but made invisible within the distribution of humanitarian aid, time, space, resources, and employment opportunities. These modes of humanitarian governance challenge Syrian men’s understandings and performances of masculinities. Yet when refugee men attempt to exercise agency in response to the disempowerment they experience in Za‘tari, humanitarian actors understand them as problematically political, and too autonomous from the control of humanitarian and state authorities, who attempt to re-assert their authority over the camp, and render Za‘tari ‘governable.’

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I think I will always remember when, during my fieldwork, a video circulated on social media of a young Syrian man from Homs preparing to board a bus to leave the country. On a bitterly cold morning, standing next to the bus, he sang “We are returning, oh country of ours, we are returning. Even if our absence lasts for years, we are returning.” To the Syrians living in Za’tari, and indeed elsewhere, I wish for you all, what you wish for yourselves. After years of studying humanitarianism, this feels like the most important thing I could wish for you.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ARDD	– Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development
BMS	– breast milk substitutes
BNL	– basic needs and livelihoods
CfW	– Cash for Work
CPGBV	– child protection and gender-based violence
FPD	– Family Protection Department
GBV	– gender-based violence
GoJ	– Government of Jordan
IASC	– Inter-Agency Standing Committee
INGO	– international non-governmental organisation
IR	– International Relations
IRC	– International Rescue Committee
IRD	– International Relief and Development
JOD	– Jordanian Dinar
LGBTI	– lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex
MHPSS	– mental health and psychosocial support
MoI	– Ministry of Interior
NGO	– non-governmental organisation
NRC	– Norwegian Refugee Council
SEZ	– special economic zone
SGBV	– sexual and gender-based violence
SOPs	– Standard Operating Procedures
SRAD	– Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate
UK	– United Kingdom
UN	– United Nations
UNDP	– United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	– United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	– United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	– United Nations Children’s Fund
UN Women	– United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAF	– Vulnerability Assessment Framework
WFP	– World Food Programme
WHO	– World Health Organization

A Note on Transliteration and Translation

This thesis follows the Arabic transliteration guidelines from the International Journal of Middle East Studies, except for the diacritic marks, which I omit. I apply the standard convention of a single opening quotation mark (‘) for the *‘ayn*, and a single closing quotation mark (’) for the *hamza*.

Following this style, I have used the spelling “Za‘tari” to refer to the refugee camp in which I did my fieldwork. Other common transliterations are “Zaatari” and “Za‘atari.” Where quoting documents or other sources that use either of these versions of the word, I have kept the original spelling. Za‘tari refugee camp takes its name from the village of Za‘tari, to which the camp is adjacent. With the exception of the abstract, the title of Chapter 3, and when quoting others directly, for the sake of brevity I have referred to Za‘tari refugee camp simply as ‘Za‘tari.’ I have used the term ‘Za‘tari village’ when referring, on the rare occasions it is mentioned, to the village from which the camp takes its name.

In cases where there are widely-used English names of places, persons, or institutions, I have used these English terms.

All translations from Arabic are my own.

“Be interested in masculinities, but be interested in masculinities because you are asking feminist questions, about the workings of culture, the workings of organisations, and the workings of power.”

Cynthia Enloe

‘How to Take Militarized Masculinities Seriously Without Losing Your Feminist Curiosity,’ keynote address at the Center for the Study of Gender and Conflict, George Mason University, 2 April 2015

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis examines the place of refugee men in humanitarian policies, practices, and imaginaries. It asks how humanitarian organisations and workers relate to, work with, and understand their responsibilities towards refugee men. It argues that humanitarian actors read refugee men, in gendered and racialised ways, as agential, independent, political, and at times threatening. They thereby disrupt humanitarian actors' understandings of refugees as passive, feminised objects of care and control, and humanitarian actors see refugee men as distinct from the 'vulnerable' populations for whom they wish to care. Through an ethnographically-informed study of Za'tari refugee camp (hereafter Za'tari), which hosts 80,000 Syrian refugees in northern Jordan, I demonstrate that these gendered and racialised understandings of refugee men are central to humanitarian actors'¹ distribution of aid, time, space, resources, and employment opportunities, and to how they assess refugees' vulnerabilities and needs.

Simultaneously, in response to their new context, refugee men attempt to exercise agency² by re-shaping the space of the camp and by creating opportunities for economic activity. In doing so, they challenge the policies of humanitarian and state actors who exercise sovereign power over them. These actions are deemed, by humanitarian actors, to be too political, too autonomous, and thereby to threaten their vision of refugees as objects of care, and their vision of refugee camps as depoliticised spaces of service provision. Humanitarian actors therefore, while showing a distinct lack of interest in many aspects of refugee men's lives, simultaneously attempt to control, depoliticise, and reform refugee men, in line with their own agendas and priorities. In short, for humanitarianism, refugee men present a challenge. This thesis explores that challenge, and the contestations that result from it.

¹ I use this term to refer to the collectivity of United Nations agencies, international organisations, and international and Jordanian non-governmental organisations that were present in Za'tari, and were all working under the banner of the 'refugee response.'

² Following feminist scholar Naila Kabeer, I understand agency as "the ability to define one's goals and act upon them." As Kabeer argues, agency encompasses not only observable action, but also "the meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity." See Naila Kabeer, "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment," *Development and Change* 30, no. 3 (1999): 438; there is large and varied academic debate on the notion of agency, particularly among feminist scholars, often centred around the work of Saba Mahmood. While aware of these debates, I have opted to use the more minimalist definition above, which speaks well to the phenomena and context I am analyzing. See Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

On a more fundamental level, this is a critical, feminist study of interventions undertaken under the auspices of a humanitarian response to displacement. It argues that, throughout their operations with refugees, humanitarian actors privilege their own understandings and experiences of gender, and their own political priorities, over those of the Syrians for whom they are ostensibly working. In line with other (post-)colonial interventions into the societies of the South, humanitarians' perspectives are legitimised by their designation as 'global,' while Syrians' perspectives are relegated to being 'local.' Through an in-depth exploration of the specific context of Za'tari, this thesis marshals ethnographic methods to make 'strange' the 'familiar' hierarchies of humanitarianism,³ through which humanitarian actors suppress the agency of those in whose lives they intervene. It excavates and critiques the assumptions and beliefs about men and masculinities that undergird the gendered and racialised deployment of humanitarian power.

International Relations, Humanitarianism, and Men and Masculinities

This work is situated at the intersection of feminist International Relations (IR) and critical scholarship on humanitarianism. Feminist IR research has consistently demonstrated the centrality of gender, and processes of gendering, to power, politics, and discourse in the international system;⁴ gender "both constitutes and is constituted by international politics."⁵ I understand gender to be a set of practices, relations, and discourses that define understandings of 'men,' 'women,' 'masculinity,' and 'femininity' in a particular context.⁶ Gender is fluid, interactive, and contingent, and simultaneously structural and a component of individual identity.⁷ Gender and other structures of power and differentiation, including race, class, sexuality, and ability, should be analysed "*both* as

³ See John Van Maanen, "An End to Innocence: The Ethnography of Ethnography," in *Representation in Ethnography*, ed. John Van Maanen (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995), 1–35.

⁴ For some key examples of influential scholarship in this field, see Carol Cohn, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals," *Signs* 12, no. 4 (1987): 687–718; Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990); Charlotte Hooper, *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations, and Gender Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Cynthia Weber, *Faking It: U.S. Hegemony in a "Post-Phallic" Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

⁵ Nicola Pratt, "The Queen Boat Case in Egypt: Sexuality, National Security and State Sovereignty," *Review of International Studies* 33, no. 1 (2007): 129.

⁶ Marsha Henry, "Gender, Security and Development," *Conflict, Security & Development* 7, no. 1 (2007): 61–84; Laleh Khalili, "Gendered Practices of Counterinsurgency," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 04 (2011): 1471–91.

⁷ V. Spike Peterson, "Introduction," in *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory*, ed. V. Spike Peterson (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992), 1–30.

co-constitutive processes and as *distinctive* and historically specific technologies of categorization” (emphasis in original).⁸ Masculinity is one place within a gender order. It varies according to context and its intersections with other structures. Although typically associated with ‘men,’ it can be performed, engaged, and contested, by people of all genders.⁹

By exploring spaces and topics typically deemed irrelevant to research in IR, and by demonstrating their importance to international politics, feminist scholars have demanded that the scope of IR be expanded beyond its ‘traditional’ domain.¹⁰ As part of a broader movement of critical scholarship, which notably includes queer and post-colonial perspectives,¹¹ feminist IR scholars have also called for a broadening of IR’s methodologies, and have resisted the notion that feminists must adopt the methods and topics of ‘mainstream’ IR in order to be considered part of the discipline.¹²

While feminists have asked the crucial question, “where are the women?”¹³ they have simultaneously critically analysed men and masculinities in IR, de-naturalising masculinised modes of power and personhood.¹⁴ Simultaneously, post-colonial feminist scholarship has examined how understandings of men and masculinities in (post-) colonial settings have constituted a key part of imperial projects of intervention and

⁸ Jennifer C. Nash, “Re-Thinking Intersectionality,” *Feminist Review*, no. 89 (2008): 13.

⁹ See Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 2005); Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

¹⁰ E.g. see Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War? Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond* (London: Zed Books, 2013); Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*; Pratt, “The Queen Boat Case in Egypt”; Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

¹¹ E.g. see Meera Sabaratnam, “IR in Dialogue...but Can We Change the Subjects? A Typology of Decolonising Strategies for the Study of World Politics,” *Millennium* 39, no. 3 (2011): 781–803; Cynthia Weber, “From Queer to Queer IR,” *International Studies Review* 16, no. 4 (2014): 596–601.

¹² See Terrell Carver, Molly Cochran, and Judith Squires, “Gendering Jones: Feminisms, IRs, Masculinities,” *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 2 (1998): 283–97; J. Ann Tickner, “You Just Don’t Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminists and IR Theorists,” *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (1997): 611–32; Cynthia Weber, “Good Girls, Little Girls, and Bad Girls: Male Paranoia in Robert Keohane’s Critique of Feminist International Relations,” *Millennium* 23, no. 2 (1994): 337–49.

¹³ See Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* Chapter 1.

¹⁴ E.g. see Henry, “Gender, Security and Development”; Paul Higate and Marsha Henry, “Space, Performance and Everyday Security in the Peacekeeping Context,” *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 1 (2010): 32–48; Khalili, “Gendered Practices of Counterinsurgency”; Paul Kirby and Marsha Henry, “Rethinking Masculinity and Practices of Violence in Conflict Settings,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 14, no. 4 (2012): 445–49; Jane L. Parpart and Marysia Zalewski, eds., *Rethinking the Man Question: Sex, Gender and Violence in International Relations* (London; New York: Zed Books, 2008).

domination.¹⁵ This thesis takes inspiration from, and follows in the path of, those scholars who recognise the complex structures of power in which men living in contexts of intervention in the South are embedded. It refuses to accept the non-intersectional binary “that men are powerful and women are powerless,”¹⁶ and seeks to explore, as an act of feminist curiosity,¹⁷ the ways in which “power and powerlessness are gendered”¹⁸ in a context of humanitarianism.

The second subfield in which this work is situated is critical scholarship on humanitarianism, in particular the research that has explored humanitarianism in contexts of displacement. Humanitarianism can be understood as a system, in which actors are linked “across multiple scales to constitute the local/global humanitarian architecture,” and simultaneously as “an industry that employs hundreds of thousands of individuals, in which actors compete for market share.”¹⁹ This system and industry of humanitarianism overlaps with, and is affected by, the discourses, institutions, and practices of other spheres of political activity, such as security and development.²⁰ Humanitarian organisations are produced by, and themselves shape, politics on ‘local’ and ‘global’ scales.²¹ Furthermore, in addition to these interconnections, the scope of humanitarianism has expanded significantly over the past few decades, as the distinction between emergency humanitarian relief and longer-term development has broken down among policy circles.²² Areas such as human rights, democracy promotion, peace building and, most notably for this thesis, gender equality, are all now considered, by

¹⁵ E.g. see Khalili, “Gendered Practices of Counterinsurgency”; Jasbir K. Puar and Amit Rai, “Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots,” *Social Text* 20, no. 3 (2002): 117–148.

¹⁶ Andrea Cornwall, Henry Armas, and Mbuyiselo Botha, “Women’s Empowerment: What Do Men Have to Do with It?” in *Men and Development: Politicizing Masculinities*, ed. Andrea Cornwall, Jerker Edström, and Alan Greig (London; New York: Zed Books, 2011), 196.

¹⁷ Cynthia Enloe, *The Curious Feminist* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2004).

¹⁸ Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne, “Dislocating Masculinity: Gender, Power and Anthropology,” in *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies, Male Orders*, ed. Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne (London: Routledge, 1994), 20.

¹⁹ Cathrine Brun, “There Is No Future in Humanitarianism: Emergency, Temporality and Protracted Displacement,” *History and Anthropology* 27, no. 4 (2016): 395.

²⁰ Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (Zed Books, 2014).

²¹ Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss, “Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present,” in *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics*, ed. Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 1–48.

²² Riccardo Bocco, Pierre Harrison, and Lucas Oesch, “Recovery,” in *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: A Lexicon*, ed. Vincent Chetail (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 268–78; David G Chandler, “The Road to Military Humanitarianism: How the Human Rights NGOs Shaped A New Humanitarian Agenda,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (2001): 678–700.

humanitarian organisations and their funders, to be part of the purview of humanitarian activity.²³

The idea of humanitarianism, according to Didier Fassin, is:

both rational and emotional, both a principle according to which all human beings share a condition that involves a sense of fraternity and an affect by virtue of which they feel personally concerned with the situation of others.²⁴

In the same article, Fassin elaborates, despite the ostensibly global and unifying nature of this humanitarian ideal, Western discussions and commentaries of humanitarian contexts tend to centre Western actors, rather than those who are on the receiving end of interventions carried out under the banner of humanitarianism.²⁵ In these schema, as Barbara Harrell-Bond has argued, humanitarian organisations, moving from the West to offer ‘help,’ are regularly depicted as acting benevolently and heroically.²⁶ Yet ‘in the field,’ humanitarian governance is hierarchical and authoritarian, as refugees (and others) are ‘managed’ through a “quasi-military mode of operations.”²⁷ As objects of care, refugees are also, inextricably, objects of humanitarian control;²⁸ humanitarian work “strikes with one hand, heal[s] with the other.”²⁹

In recent years, many critical scholars have emphasised that, within any particular context, humanitarianism is a set of embodied, spatial and material practices. Humanitarianism, they have demonstrated, and its relationships with its ‘beneficiaries,’ cannot be understood without acknowledging and analysing its material, spatial and human embodiments.³⁰ More recently, critical scholars of humanitarianism have been

²³ Barnett and Weiss, “Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present.”

²⁴ Didier Fassin, “The Predicament of Humanitarianism,” *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 22, no. 1 (2013): 38.

²⁵ Fassin, “The Predicament of Humanitarianism.”

²⁶ Barbara Harrell-Bond, “Can Humanitarian Work with Refugees Be Humane?,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (2002): 51–85.

²⁷ Jennifer Hyndman, *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 24.

²⁸ Michel Agier, *Managing the Undesirables: Refugee Camps and Humanitarian Government*, English ed (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2011); See also Liisa H. Malkki, “Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization,” *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 3 (1996): 377–404; Guglielmo Verdirame and B. E. Harrell-Bond, *Rights in Exile: Janus-Faced Humanitarianism* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005).

²⁹ Michel Agier, “Humanity as an Identity and Its Political Effects (A Note on Camps and Humanitarian Government),” *An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 1, no. 1 (2010): 29.

³⁰ See Mark Duffield, “Risk-Management and the Fortified Aid Compound: Everyday Life in Post-Interventionary Society,” *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 4, no. 4 (2010): 453–74; Lisa Smirl, “Building

attentive to the rapidly growing use of technology and ‘innovation’ within humanitarianism, and questioned the rationalities, effects, and politics of these new methods of humanitarian governance.³¹ This thesis takes up both of these sets of insights, and applies and explores them within the context of Za‘tari.

This thesis offers original contributions to both of these fields, within which refugee men have rarely been a focus of scholarship. Despite the clear demonstration, by feminist scholars, that ‘womenandchildren’ become the uncontroversial and undifferentiated objects of humanitarian care in contexts of conflict, disaster, and displacement,³² very little scholarly work has attempted to understand the place of men within humanitarian policies, practices and imaginaries. The academic work that has been done in this field has primarily focused on refugee men and gender equality, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), or the perceived security risks posed by refugee men.³³ This academic scholarship therefore often replicates the narrow lenses through which humanitarian actors themselves understand their interactions with refugee men.

By contrast, my thesis refuses to work solely within these frameworks, and explores refugee men as an object of humanitarianism. It examines, for example, the position of refugee men and masculinities in refugee camp governance, in the determination of ‘vulnerability,’ and in the creation of economic livelihoods. My research demonstrates that refugee men are assumed, by humanitarians, to be sufficiently independent and agential such that they do not constitute clear objects of humanitarian care. Yet refugee men’s independent and agential attempts to shape their own circumstances and improve their own conditions are deemed, by those same humanitarians, too autonomous and

the Other, Constructing Ourselves: Spatial Dimensions of International Humanitarian Response,” *International Political Sociology* 2, no. 3 (2008): 236–53; Lisa Smirl, “Plain Tales from the Reconstruction Site: Spatial Continuities in Contemporary Humanitarian Practice,” in *Empire, Development & Colonialism: The Past in the Present*, ed. Mark R. Duffield and Vernon Marston Hewitt (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: James Currey, 2009), 88–102.

³¹ See Mark Duffield, “The Resilience of the Ruins: Towards a Critique of Digital Humanitarianism,” *Resilience* 4, no. 3 (2016): 147–65; Katja Lindskov Jacobsen and Kristin Bergtora Sandvik, “UNHCR and the Pursuit of International Protection: Accountability through Technology?,” *Third World Quarterly* Online first (2018); Tom Scott-Smith, “Humanitarian Neophilia: The ‘Innovation Turn’ and Its Implications,” *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 12 (2016): 2229–51.

³² Cynthia Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

³³ E.g. see Katarzyna Grabska, “Constructing ‘Modern Gendered Civilised’ Women and Men: Gender-Mainstreaming in Refugee Camps,” *Gender & Development* 19, no. 1 (2011): 81–93; Barbra Lukunka, “New Big Men: Refugee Emasculation as a Human Security Issue,” *International Migration* 50, no. 5 (2012): 130–41; Elisabeth Olivius, “Refugee Men as Perpetrators, Allies or Troublemakers? Emerging Discourses on Men and Masculinities in Humanitarian Aid,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 56 (2016): 56–65.

radical, and are therefore resisted by humanitarian actors. Humanitarian relationships with, and understandings of, refugee men, are therefore crucial to understanding how humanitarianism operates in contexts of displacement.

This thesis also offers a novel contribution to the emerging literature on Syrian refugees, and state and humanitarian responses to Syrian refugees in the Middle East. This growing body of scholarship has analysed, to name a few key issues, host states' policies towards refugees; the legal and humanitarian regimes that shape Syrians' access to refuge and aid; and Syrians' lives in, and experiences of, exile.³⁴ Other researchers have produced scholarship on SGBV and early marriage, economic opportunities for Syrians, the possibilities of return to Syria, and journeys from Syria, often on to Europe.³⁵ Within this literature, however, very little work has been conducted about Syrian refugee men specifically – either in terms of their lives in exile, or in terms of how humanitarian actors have responded to and worked with Syrian men.³⁶

Simultaneously, this thesis adds to the existing body of scholarship on masculinities in contexts of displacement and exile. This literature, which is often produced within the fields of refugee studies, migration studies, and development studies, typically focuses, as I later discuss in more detail,³⁷ on how masculinities are performed in exile, or on

³⁴ For a few examples of this literature, see André Bank, "Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Between Protection and Marginalisation," *GIGA Focus Nabost*, no. 03 (2016); Maja Janmyr and Lama Mourad, "Modes of Ordering: Labelling, Classification and Categorization in Lebanon's Refugee Response," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2017; Peter Seeberg, "Migration into and from Syria and Nontraditional Security Issues in the MENA Region: Transnational Integration, Security, and National Interests," in *Migration, Security and Citizenship in the New Middle East*, ed. Peter Seeberg and Zaid Eyedat (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 167–93; Matthew R. Stevens, "The Collapse of Social Networks among Syrian Refugees in Urban Jordan," *Contemporary Levant* 1, no. 1 (2016): 51–63.

³⁵ Ruba Al Akash and Karen Boswall, "Listening to the Voices of Syrian Women and Girls Living as Urban Refugees in Northern Jordan: A Narrative Ethnography of Early Marriage," in *Migration, Mobilities and the Arab Spring: Spaces of Refugee Flight in the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Natalia Ribas-Mateos (Cheltenham; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2016), 142–57; Heaven Crawley et al., *Unravelling Europe's 'Migration Crisis': Journeys over Land and Sea* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2017); Wendy Pearlman, *We Crossed a Bridge and It Trembled: Voices from Syria* (New York: Custom House, 2017); Various, "Syrians in Displacement," *Forced Migration Review* 57 (2018), <http://www.fmreview.org/syria2018.html>.

³⁶ For rare exceptions, see Jennifer Allsopp, "Agent, Victim, Soldier, Son: Intersecting Masculinities in the European 'Refugee Crisis,'" in *A Gendered Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*, ed. Jane Freedman, Zeynep Kivilcim, and Nurcan Özgür Baklacioglu (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2017), 155–74; Rochelle Davis, Abbie Taylor, and Emma Murphy, "Gender, Conscription and Protection, and the War in Syria," *Forced Migration Review* 47 (2014): 35–38; Roxanne Krystalli, Allyson Hawkins, and Kim Wilson, "I Followed the Flood: A Gender Analysis of the Moral and Financial Economies of Forced Migration," *Disasters* 42, no. 1 (2017): 17–39; Magdalena Suerbaum, "Defining the Other to Masculinize Oneself: Syrian Men's Negotiations of Masculinity during Displacement in Egypt," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43, no. 03 (2018): 665–86.

³⁷ See Chapter 2.

questions of gender equality or SGBV.³⁸ In this research, I also explore these areas,³⁹ and do so within a humanitarian crisis that has become a central issue in international politics since 2012, and also bring the aforementioned scholarship into conversation with debates in IR. Nevertheless, I do not claim to offer, in this work, a complete account of masculinities in Za‘tari. Such an account would require access that was unfeasible in the context of Za‘tari, as I discuss below and in Chapter 3, and would also require an analysis of the masculinities of those who do not identify as men,⁴⁰ which I was similarly not able to access or address within the scope of this research project. While I am interested in, and discuss extensively, the masculinities of Syrian men and of humanitarians in Za‘tari, my central object of study is refugee men, and their place within humanitarianism.

To introduce my thesis, in this chapter I firstly offer a brief overview of the context of Jordan, and its history as a refugee-hosting state. I explain why Za‘tari was chosen as the site of my fieldwork, although the camp is introduced in much more detail in Chapter 3. After introducing the broad context of my fieldwork, I explain the methodology I used, my access to the camp, and the organisations with which I worked. I reflect on my positionality in the field, the ethical challenges I encountered, and how I chose to deal with them. Finally, I offer an outline of each chapter in this thesis, and foreshadow both the topics and arguments I will present in each.

The Context of Jordan

For the majority of its existence as a state, Jordan has hosted large numbers of refugees. Refugees have constituted a very high proportion of the country’s population since the creation of the State of Israel and the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to neighbouring countries. Although there are around 630,000 Palestinians in Jordan

³⁸ E.g. see Luigi Achilli, “Becoming a Man in Al-Wihdat: Masculine Performances in a Palestinian Refugee Camp in Jordan,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 2 (2015): 263–280; Grabska, “Constructing ‘Modern Gendered Civilised’ Women and Men”; J. Hart, “Dislocated Masculinity: Adolescence and the Palestinian Nation-in-Exile,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 1 (2008): 64–81; Rosemary Jaji, “Masculinity on Unstable Ground: Young Refugee Men in Nairobi, Kenya,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22, no. 2 (2009): 177–94; Lukunka, “New Big Men”; Simon Turner, “Angry Young Men in a Tanzanian Refugee Camp,” in *Refugees and the Transformation of Societies: Agency, Policies, Ethics and Politics*, ed. Philomena Essed, Georg Frerks, and Joke Schrijvers (New York ; Oxford: Berghahn, 2004), 94–105.

³⁹ See in particular Chapters 5 and 6.

⁴⁰ I did not ask for my interlocutors’ gender self-identification, but have used the terms ‘man’ and ‘woman’ about my interlocutors in accordance with their gender presentation within the prevailing gender schema. I recognise, however, that they may self-identify in other ways.

who do not hold Jordanian citizenship, the clear majority of Palestinians in Jordan do.⁴¹ There are no official, public figures differentiating between so-called ‘West Bank’ (Palestinian) and ‘East Bank’ Jordanians (also known as ‘Transjordanians’), but most analysts assume that Palestinians comprise at least half of the 6,600,000 Jordanian citizens living in Jordan.⁴² In addition to large numbers of Palestinian arrivals in 1947-9 and 1967, Jordan received around 300,000 (almost all Palestinian) citizens of Jordan who were expelled from Kuwait and other Gulf states in the early 1990s.⁴³ From the 1990s onwards, Jordan has hosted a large number of Iraqi refugees – approximately 160,000 according to one 2007 study,⁴⁴ although the Government of Jordan (GoJ) claimed the figure was closer to 750,000.⁴⁵ As of the time of my fieldwork, there were around 65,000 registered Iraqi refugees in Jordan, as well as much smaller populations of Somali, Sudanese, and Yemeni refugees.⁴⁶

When faced with the Syrian uprising across its border, and tens and then hundreds of thousands of Syrians attempting to enter Jordan from 2012 onwards, the GoJ initially maintained a relatively open border policy. But even by early 2013, as Human Rights Watch reported, Jordan was denying access to Palestinian and Iraqi refugees living in Syria, all single men of ‘military age,’ and anyone not possessing identification documents.⁴⁷ From mid-2013, due to the strain this new population placed on communities in northern Jordan especially, Jordan began to restrict the number of Syrians it processed, and sporadically closed and re-opened its borders. By 2016, the restrictions on entry to Jordan had become so severe that around 75,000 refugees were living in no man’s land on the eastern border between Syria and Jordan, in an area known

⁴¹ Rochelle Davis et al., “Hosting Guests, Creating Citizens: Models of Refugee Administration in Jordan and Egypt,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (2017): 1–32.

⁴² See Mohammad Ghazal, “Population Stands at around 9.5 Million, Including 2.9 Million Guests,” *Jordan Times*, January 30, 2016, <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/population-stands-around-95-million-including-29-million-guests>; Curtis R. Ryan, “Identity Politics, Reform, and Protest in Jordan,” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 11, no. 3 (2011): 564–78.

⁴³ Nicholas van Hear, “The Impact of the Involuntary Mass ‘Return’ to Jordan in the Wake of the Gulf Crisis,” *International Migration Review* 29, no. 2 (1995): 352–74.

⁴⁴ Fafo Institute, “Iraqis in Jordan 2007: Their Number and Characteristics,” 2007, <http://www.fafo.no/ais/middeast/jordan/IJ.pdf>.

⁴⁵ For more on this controversy, see Lewis Turner, “Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees: Security, Class and the Labour Market in Lebanon and Jordan,” *Mediterranean Politics* 20, no. 3 (2015): 386–404.

⁴⁶ Davis et al., “Hosting Guests, Creating Citizens.”

⁴⁷ Bill Frelick, “Fleeing Syria: Insights on Lebanon’s Open Border,” *Human Rights Watch*, March 24, 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/03/24/fleeing-syria-insights-lebanon-s-open-border>.

as ‘the berm,’ because they could neither return safely to their homes in Syria nor enter Jordan.⁴⁸

By 2015-2016, when I was conducting my fieldwork, there were around 630,000 registered Syrian refugees living in Jordan, a number which has slowly risen to around 650,000 by the start of 2018.⁴⁹ This population is relatively young, with around half of Syrian refugees in Jordan being under 18 years of age, and women, men, girls and boys are each roughly a quarter of the total number. As in the 2000s when Iraqi refugees were the subject of significant international attention, the GoJ has again claimed that the actual number of Syrians in Jordan is significantly higher than the figures from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The December 2015 census reported a figure of 1.257 million Syrians in the country, which assumes that an estimated 600,000 Syrians were in the country before the start of the uprising, a figure deemed deeply unrealistic by many humanitarian actors. The GoJ, nonetheless, has regularly used figures of between 1.2 and 1.4 million to emphasise the burdens under which Jordan has been placed by its hosting of Syrian refugees.⁵⁰

As Davis et al. have explored in depth, Jordan’s policies towards refugees vary extensively according to the nationality of the refugees in question. Like Iraqi refugees before them, Syrians were designated as ‘guests’ by the GoJ, while UNHCR was delegated to determine refugee status. Approximately 80 percent of Syrian refugees (like all Iraqi refugees in Jordan) live outside of camps. To access government health and education services, after registering with UNHCR, Syrians were required to register with the Ministry of Interior.⁵¹ Syrians living outside of camps – in the cities, towns, villages, farmland and deserts of Jordan – are referred to as living in ‘host communities.’ A clear majority of the registered Syrians who live in host communities, just over 500,000 people in total, live in the large cities of Amman, Irbid, Mafraq and Zarqa. The remaining 20 percent live in refugee camps. There are small camps, which host hundreds or a few thousand refugees, including Emirati-Jordanian Camp, Cyber City, and King Abdullah

⁴⁸ Davis et al., “Hosting Guests, Creating Citizens.”

⁴⁹ Unless stated otherwise, all figures for the Syrian refugee population, and the demographic breakdown thereof, are from UNHCR, “Syria Regional Refugee Response Inter-Agency Information Sharing Portal,” March 21, 2018, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

⁵⁰ Katharina Lenner, “Blasts from the Past: Policy Legacies and Memories in the Making of the Jordanian Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis,” EUI Working Papers (Florence: European University Institute, 2016).

⁵¹ Davis et al., “Hosting Guests, Creating Citizens.”

Park, and two large camps, Azraq and Za'tari, which host approximately 50,000 and 80,000 Syrian refugees respectively.

Za'tari, the Syrian refugee camp in Jordan with the largest population, was the main focus of my fieldwork. I selected Za'tari, rather than another camp or a non-camp setting, for multiple reasons. Refugee camps have long been an interesting and productive focus of scholarly attention. Researchers have examined the modes of humanitarian and state governance within them, how camps become (de)politicised, the effects of encampment on refugees' rights, how refugees attempt to build lives and communities under encampment, and the struggles they must engage in to do so.⁵² Events in Za'tari, a newly-established, large, formal encampment, were very relevant to these scholarly debates. I was also interested in Za'tari specifically because, in an era in which there have been some moves away from formal encampment,⁵³ Za'tari had emerged as a restrictive, securitised, differentiated space within Jordan, whose governance was being deeply contested by refugees themselves. The intensity of humanitarian governance that encampment allows also made Za'tari a very suitable site for investigating humanitarian policies and their effects. On a personal level, my long-standing interest in questions of exile, encampment, and refugeehood in the Middle East, which grew out of extensive time spent in Palestine, also made the politics of Syrian displacement of great interest to me. On a practical level, Za'tari was much easier to access on a sustained basis than the other main camps for Syrians in Jordan, such as Azraq and Emirati-Jordanian camps.

Methodology

My fieldwork in Jordan lasted for almost 12 months, from the beginning of September 2015 to late August 2016. Over this period of time, as I will subsequently outline in detail, I conducted interviews with 28 humanitarian and non-governmental organisation (NGO) workers; 3 employees of a private security organisation working in Za'tari; 3 (prospective) employers of refugees outside of Za'tari; 2 employees of European donor

⁵² For some of the central contributions to these debates over the past few decades, see Agier, *Managing the Undesirables*; Hyndman, *Managing Displacement*; Liisa H. Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Simon Turner, "Suspended Spaces - Contesting Sovereignities in a Refugee Camp," in *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World*, ed. Thomas Blom and Finn Stepputat (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Verdirame and Harrell-Bond, *Rights in Exile*.

⁵³ See Jeff Crisp, "Finding Space for Protection: An Inside Account of the Evolution of UNHCR's Urban Refugee Policy," *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 33, no. 1 (2017): 87–96.

agencies; 2 senior officials from Jordanian think tanks; interviews with 16 Syrian refugees in Za'tari; a group discussion with 12 Syrians at the Questscope Youth Centre; interviews with 16 Syrian refugees living in Jordanian host communities, many of them former residents of Za'tari; undertook 27 days of participant and non-participant observation within Za'tari; 1 day of non-participant observation and interviews in Azraq Refugee Camp; 2 days of non-participant observation and interviews in Emirati-Jordanian Refugee Camp; 4 days of non-participant observation in refugee community centres run by the Danish Refugee Council in non-camp areas of Jordan; 19 full and 6 part days of office-based project work for ARDD; and the equivalent of at least 6 days' work conducted for ARDD from home. In addition to these activities, I was invited to assist with 6 days of workshops on gender, identity and gender-based violence (GBV) taking place at the Collateral Repair Project, which runs a community centre for refugees living in East Amman in November 2015. In addition to my interviews, I also visited the offices and projects of six other NGOs and think tanks working on refugee-related questions; attended public discussion events, in both English and Arabic, on topics including early marriage, the portrayal of Syrian refugees in the media, and the rights of refugee and migrant women in Jordan; visited fellow researchers conducting related research in cities such as Mafraq and Irbid; attended a weekly reading group of students and researchers in Jordan for 3 months; and attended academic presentations and 2 multi-day academic conferences.

During this time period from September 2015 to August 2016, with the exception of trips outside of Jordan for conferences, to renew my visa, and a Christmas break, I was living in and based in Amman. I chose to base myself in Amman in part because it was where I had some pre-existing networks, but more because it was where the vast majority of NGOs working in the country, including those working in Za'tari, had their main offices. By being based in Amman, I could more easily build networks, hold meetings, conduct interviews with humanitarian workers, and attend relevant events. I also judged, in advance of my fieldwork, that living in Amman, a large capital city, would allow me to more easily take breaks, meet like-minded people with whom to socialise, and to 'switch off' from my fieldwork, and would thereby be better for my mental health while undertaking fieldwork that would include multiple challenges.

Central to my fieldwork was my work with a Jordanian NGO named ARDD (Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development). I undertook a part time internship with ARDD, which formally lasted from September 2015 to February 2016, although I continued to assist with their work on a more ad-hoc basis for the remainder of my fieldwork. Subsequent to the end of my fieldwork, ARDD employed me as a consultant to assist with the authorship of a report about their work. I was introduced to ARDD's Director, Samar Muhareb, through Y Care International, a London-based charity with which I had previously volunteered. Upon reading about ARDD's work online, and from an e-mail introduction to Samar and her assistant, ARDD seemed like a very appropriate organisation with which I could establish a relationship. I explained to ARDD the broad research questions that I was interested in, and that I wished to undertake volunteering with an organisation in Za'tari, which would both help me undertake research and to contribute to the humanitarian work taking place. In April 2015 we agreed that I would become an intern with them, and left the final details of my role until my arrival in Jordan in September 2015.

At my first in-person meeting at ARDD, in September 2015, I was introduced to the team from the Civic and Political Participation Unit, who had been undertaking a project on civic engagement in Za'tari, funded by UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women). The next element of this work, which was due to begin that same month, was working with men and boys on SGBV prevention. We agreed that, over the course of my internship, I would visit the camp with them to assist with the workshops taking place, which typically meant going to the camp one day a week. In addition to visiting the camp to conduct workshops on SGBV prevention and civic engagement, I joined ARDD on visits to the camp for the opening of a women's centre, for events to mark a campaign against GBV, and to visit initiatives organised by our project's participants. I spent three more days in Za'tari with ARDD in July and August 2016, to assist, in a similar capacity, with the next iteration of this work. As I discuss in Chapter 3, access to the camp is very highly regulated by the Ministry of Interior, and it is necessary for any visitor to the camp to have a permit. ARDD arranged a permit for me for all of the visits associated with their work.

In the September-February period, and again for a short period in July, I spent between one and two days a week in ARDD's Amman office supporting the project. In this

office-based role, my primary responsibilities were to write reports for colleagues and donors on what had happened in the workshops that week, and to assist with the collection and analysis of data about the project. Although I spent these office-based days in Amman, this time was of critical importance in building my understanding of the work that takes place in Za'tari. It allowed me to experience the rhythms of a project cycle, interactions among colleagues and with donors, and the (dis)connections between offices in Amman and projects implemented in Za'tari. Perhaps paradoxically, this time in Amman allowed me access to Za'tari in ways that it would otherwise have been very hard to achieve as a researcher, given the restrictions on accessing the camp, and the wariness that some organisations had about assisting researchers with permits.⁵⁴

Additionally, I spent time in Za'tari in a variety of other capacities. I spent three days as a volunteer English teacher in the camp, in December 2015 and March 2016, through a programme run under the auspices of International Relief and Development (IRD), and organised by a friend and fellow researcher. I spent two days visiting Za'tari through two friends, the first of whom was working there, the second of whom was employed by a foundation looking to support work in the camp. I also visited the Emirati-Jordanian camp with this latter friend. These visits allowed me more time in the camp, and to experience it in a multitude of capacities. For example, I was able to experience, to an extent, how outsiders with different affiliations were greeted and how NGO workers discussed their work with potential donors. In the summer of 2016, as I discuss in further detail below, I received a permit from the Ministry of Interior to visit the camp as a researcher, and spent a further three days in Za'tari, as well as a day in Azraq Camp and a day in Emirati-Jordanian Camp.

I did not conduct interviews with humanitarian workers in my capacity as an ARDD intern, but the connection with ARDD was nevertheless very helpful for arranging and conducting these interviews. It gave me a series of networks and relationships in the humanitarian sector, more credibility in the eyes of some of my interlocutors, and a more in-depth and personal understanding of the work being undertaken by the sector, all of which enhanced the quality and productiveness of my interviews. Furthermore, some of my interviewees were people I met initially through my work with ARDD. Others interviews resulted from introductions or recommendations by friends and acquaintances

⁵⁴ See Chapter 3

from the United Kingdom (UK) and Jordan, others I approached through publicly available contact details because of the relevance of their work, and some interviewees recommended or introduced me to others that I subsequently interviewed.

Over the course of my fieldwork, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 28 humanitarian and NGO workers, as well as 3 employees of a private security organisation working in Za'tari, 3 (prospective) employers of refugees outside of Za'tari, 2 senior officials from Jordanian think tanks, and 2 employees of European donor agencies.⁵⁵ The humanitarian and NGO workers were from a variety of organisations, seniorities, and positionalities. In terms of seniority, they ranged from an NGO Director to project managers to junior field staff. I interviewed employees of multiple United Nations (UN) agencies, including former and current staff members of UNHCR, employees of international NGOs (INGOs), and employees of Jordanian NGOs.

Almost half of these interviewees (18) were Jordanian. The other interviewees were of a range of nationalities, including from other Middle Eastern states, although 15 were from states in Europe, North America, and Australasia. Given that, as I discuss in this thesis, the perspectives of Jordanian and non-Jordanian humanitarian workers often differed, and that they tended to occupy different roles within humanitarian structures, it was important to interview a significant number of both Jordanians and non-Jordanians. 17 of these interviewees were women (9 Jordanian, 8 non-Jordanian), and 21 men (9 Jordanian, 12 non-Jordanian). I can converse comfortably and conduct interviews in Arabic, as I did with my Syrian interviewees. The vast majority of native Arabic speakers working in humanitarian roles, however, preferred to conduct the interviews in English, with some explaining that they were more accustomed to discussing their work in English, even if it was implemented in Arabic. A small number of these interviews, however, included exchanges in Arabic as well.

The questions I asked interviewees differed greatly depending on the expertise and experience of the interviewee, and as befits a project that explores multiple aspects of humanitarianism with a gendered lens. For example, some interviews focused in depth on specific projects that the interviewee had personally undertaken with refugees, others focused on the interviewees' broader experiences of working in the humanitarian sector,

⁵⁵ One of the interviews with a donor agency took place in July 2017, after my fieldwork in Jordan, and was conducted via telephone from London.

and others still focused on the interviewee's perceptions of how the humanitarian sector works with refugees in gendered ways. The semi-structured nature of these interviews allowed me to both give the interviewee some information about the proposed topics of discussion in advance, for me to plan the questions I wanted to ask them, and to be flexible when new or unexpected topics, which I wanted to pursue in more detail, arose during the interview. For all of these interviews, I explained to them the research project I was undertaking, and used a digital recorder to record the consent of the interviewee, the level of anonymity they required, and whether and how they wished to be referred to in my thesis and publications. Some chose to allow me to use their names, with others I discussed and agreed how they could be referred to, and a small number asked that the interviews be for background only. I also explained that they could withdraw their consent for the interview at any time, including for information they had already disclosed, and that they did not have to answer any questions they did not want to answer.

These interviews, which typically lasted about one hour, usually took place either in the Amman office of the agency or NGO for which the interviewee worked, or in a public place such as a café. Occasionally, interviewees invited me to their homes. A small number of interviews were conducted via Skype from Jordan, and one additional interview, subsequent to my fieldwork, was conducted via telephone from London. Conducting these interviews in Amman, rather than in Za'tari itself, in which there were few private spaces and where humanitarian workers had busy schedules, enabled me to conduct interviews more easily. Furthermore, since Za'tari is part of the broader refugee response in Jordan, some of the policies and programmes that are carried out there are decided by teams working on country-wide policies. Some of my interviewees were therefore people who, for example, worked on developing policies on SGBV for the refugee response as a whole, even if they themselves were not typically based in Za'tari.

While working with ARDD in Za'tari, I was not able to conduct any interviews with Syrians: we were working according to ARDD's schedule and requirements, and I did not want to potentially jeopardise their work in the camp by conducting research interviews while entering the camp on my permit as an NGO worker. I did, however, have many interesting and fruitful discussions and interactions, with both Syrians and humanitarian workers, during these visits, and this thesis is very informed by this time

spent in the camp. When I entered the camp with a research permit from the Ministry of Interior, I was able to enter for 3 days over a specific two-week period, which was in July-August 2016. During this time, I arranged a visit to the Questscope Youth Center, to whose staff I was already known, which resulted in very productive individual and group conversations, and I met dozens of other Syrians, and held conversations with them which ranged greatly in formality and length.

I was advised by multiple humanitarian sources that it would be impossible for me to tape record interviews, or even to tape record verbal consent for interviews, with Syrians in the camp, because it would create too much nervousness among my interviewees living in a context, and with a long history, of intense policing. This accorded with my own, by this stage extensive, experience and understanding of the camp's politics. People would similarly, I knew, be extremely reluctant (and in some cases unable) to read and sign a long consent form. To respond to this context, I decided to ask people to sign their names to a very brief statement I had written, in Arabic, beforehand, stating that "I agree to answer questions for Lewis Turner's research about life in Za'tari camp." Some were even reluctant to sign something this brief and clear. The boundaries between 'interviews' on the one hand, and conversations that took place and that I recorded later as 'fieldnotes,' therefore became somewhat blurred in some instances. I have recorded as an 'interview' the conversations that were more formal, typically although not always longer, in which I felt I had an appropriate amount of time to introduce my research and positionality, and when I was confident that my interlocutors understood the nature of our interaction. In this context, I was typically able to take notes of my interviews, either during or directly after the exchanges, and I usually did this on my mobile telephone.

Nevertheless, over the days I entered the camp with a research permit, all of my interlocutors for both more informal conversations and more formal interviews were aware that I was a researcher, none knew of my association with ARDD, and so were not liable to understand me to be an NGO worker. The vast majority of people I approached appeared very happy to talk to me, sometimes at length. My conversations and interviews on these days sometimes lasted just a few minutes, but at other times, for example with Syrians at Questscope, more than an hour. In response to these dynamics, I have not felt able to quote my Syrian interlocutors at length as much as I would have liked, but I argue that this is an appropriate response to the complexities of conducting research and

obtaining informed consent in such an environment. I also decided that if a Syrian who my UNHCR guide, my police escort (see below), or I had approached showed any hesitation in talking to me, I would quickly declare that we should move on, so as to not pressure them to talk with me, and did this on more than one occasion.

In these discussions and interviews while entering the camp with a research permit, I typically asked Syrians in Za'tari about their relationships with humanitarian actors, their perceptions of the extent to which humanitarian actors were interested in, and provided for, different sectors of the camp population, and how living in the camp had brought gendered changes in their families and communities. Many of my interviewees were or had been shop-holders or workers in the market, and/or Cash Workers for NGOs⁵⁶ and in these instances some of my questions focused on the work they had done, their perceptions of it, what it provided them, and the challenges they had encountered in pursuing livelihood opportunities. 11 of these interviewees were men, and 5 were women.

I conducted 13 interviews with Syrians in non-camp settings in Irbid Governorate in northern Jordan. A majority (9) of these interviewees were former residents of Za'tari camp, who had spent anything from a few days to several months living there upon their arrival to Jordan. 7 of these interviewees were women, and 6 were men. I conducted these interviews in order to improve my understanding of the earlier years of the camp, and to understand how life as a Syrian refugee differed in camp and non-camp contexts. With these interviewees, my questions typically focused on their experiences in Za'tari (for those who had previously stayed there), their experiences and perceptions of the differences between camp and non-camp environments, their relationships with humanitarian actors outside of the camp, their experiences and perceptions of the gendered nature of these interactions, and livelihood opportunities and challenges in non-camp areas. Because these interviewees were not subject to the same levels of police surveillance as in Za'tari, and following the advice of my local academic and humanitarian contacts, I asked to record consent for these interviews using a tape recorder, to which all of these interviewees agreed. In the following section, I discuss my access to, and ethical issues surrounding, these interviews.

⁵⁶ See Chapters 6 and 7.

I did not conduct any formal interviews with officials from Jordanian Government Ministries or with Jordanian officers within Za'tari, although I did, as noted below, have the opportunity for extensive informal discussions with Jordanian police officers, and conducted interviews with the British trainers and mentors of the Community Police in the camp.⁵⁷ The reasons for this decision were relevance, utility, and practicality. I was clear that humanitarian, rather than state, policies towards refugee men would be my focus, and while state policies provided a background to the humanitarian work taking place, humanitarian actors rarely referenced state policies as relevant to their work. On the issues on which they were relevant, for example deportation, I was aware, from fellow researchers and humanitarian workers, that it would be impossible to obtain formal interviews on these issues. I was also concerned that I might put my dual positionality as a researcher and NGO worker (and therefore my permit and regular access to the camp) in jeopardy, were I to discuss in detail my research about the camp with Jordanian officials.

In addition to these interviews, in order to further help me locate Za'tari within the broader Jordanian context, and to better understand the specificities of camp and non-camp contexts, I spent 4 days undertaking non-participant observation in community centres run by the Danish Refugee Council in Ma'an, Karak, and Amman, where I also conducted 3 interviews with Syrian volunteers at their centres. I did not use a tape recorder for these interviews. They were, however, each between 30 and 60 minutes long, during which I had extensive time to explain my research and ensure informed consent was being given. I took notes during the interviews. I also assisted, as noted above, with 6 days of workshops on gender-related questions that took place at the Collateral Repair Project community centre in Amman.

More broadly, while living in Amman, I was to a significant extent absorbed in certain kinds of humanitarian environments. A high proportion of my social circles, including the person with whom I shared a flat, were working in, volunteering in, writing about, or researching, the humanitarian sector and/or the lives of Syrian refugees in Jordan, and some of my friends and acquaintances in Amman were themselves Syrians. Therefore, even though I lived some distance (approximately 40 miles by car) from the main site of my fieldwork, the concentration of office-based work, interviews, events, and relevant

⁵⁷ See Chapter 3.

interactions in Amman meant that my fieldwork remained relatively immersive throughout the twelve-month period.

Positionality and Ethics

My positionality, and the nature and topic of my fieldwork, presented a series of personal challenges and ethical dilemmas in the field. There were, in the first instance, ethical choices to be made about what, precisely, to research. When I began this project, I had envisaged its central focus would be on changing masculinities among Syrians in exile, and that my work would speak primarily to literatures and debates on gender and masculinities in the Middle East. The work that has resulted is of relevance to these scholarly fields, and Syrian masculinities in Za'tari have remained part of my focus. Nevertheless, in 2015, around the beginning of my fieldwork, I began to orient myself more towards a study of humanitarianism. This was influenced, in part, by the aforementioned access restrictions, which, it became clear, would limit the amount of time I could spend in Za'tari, and the aspects of life that I would be able to experience and effectively research.

This shift in focus, however, was also the result of a political decision to 'study up.'⁵⁸ I was concerned that a project that centred Syrian men and their understandings of gender, in a context of displacement that resulted from mass violence, might be liable to be appropriated by social and political actors attempting to exclude, repress and disempower the refugees and others who were arriving in Europe at that time. Syrian men in Europe, and men read as 'Arab' and 'Muslim', were being denounced as 'terrorists' and 'sexual predators,' thereby delegitimising the attempts of millions to seek decent, safe, and secure lives in Europe.⁵⁹ The political context within which a researcher works should help to shape decisions about what is researched, said and written.⁶⁰ Syrian men, their understandings of masculinities, and their resistance to camp and state authorities, all appear extensively throughout this thesis, but within the framework of a decision to focus my attention on the policies, practices, and imaginaries of humanitarian actors.

⁵⁸ See Laura Nader, "Up the Anthropologist - Perspectives Gained from Studying Up," in *Reinventing Anthropology*, ed. Dell Hymes (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 284–311.

⁵⁹ Lesley Pruitt, Helen Berents, and Gayle Munro, "Gender and Age in the Construction of Male Youth in the European Migration 'Crisis,'" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43, no. 3 (2018): 687–709.

⁶⁰ See Nicola Pratt, "Weaponising Feminism for the 'War on Terror', versus Employing Strategic Silence," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 6, no. 2 (2013): 327–31.

Other challenges that I experienced relate to my prior discussion of methodology. Because many of my social circles were involved in humanitarian work, social events rarely felt entirely like social occasions, in which I might ‘switch off’ from research. These casual interactions were at times extremely valuable for my research, as they added a great deal of depth, context, and perspective to my fieldwork. Writing fieldnotes about social occasions however, in order to reflect on the conversations and interactions that had taken place, made me feel as if I were ‘spying’ on the social settings, while also taking part in them. Occupying this kind of dual role often left me feeling drained and duplicitous.

These challenges felt particularly acute with regard to my colleagues and work at ARDD. ARDD staff members were all aware that I was a PhD student who had come to Jordan to undertake research as well as to participate in their work. I was also introduced to the Syrians we worked with as someone who was both working with ARDD and studying for a PhD about the Syria refugee response. I was aware, however, that in the context of a refugee camp, where residents encounter a huge range of NGO workers and other outsiders, the nuances of my positionality may well not have been clear to the Syrians in our workshops. This dynamic, at times, left me deeply uncomfortable. My training in ethnographic methods, the ethical review process I had undertaken, and discussions with my supervisor, all helped me to gain confidence in making decisions about what to use, what to anonymise, and what to not use at all. Most pertinently, conversations on confidential topics that took place within workshops have not been used in this thesis, except where ARDD felt it appropriate to put that information into the public domain, and in these cases I have cited ARDD’s publicly-available reports. Nevertheless, I could not un-know, or un-learn, what I had heard or learned in spaces of confidentiality, and the discomfort that this created was, to an extent, an unavoidable part of the research methodologies I was employing.

At the same time, this discomfort was also productive. While I disliked feeling uncertain and anxious about these dual roles, I also recognised (and was encouraged by my supervisors to recognise), that there was an immense productivity in simultaneously experiencing a context in multiple ways. The discomfort was an indication that I was participating and observing at the same time, and part of the process of learning and critically examining how newly-encountered spaces operate. Furthermore, particularly as

I gathered more data from a range of settings and sources, I began to see the ways in which it would be possible for me to discuss the issues I wanted to without betraying confidences or acting unethically, and thus my feelings of discomfort eased over the course of my fieldwork. Once I returned from Jordan, I started publishing short pieces of work on the topics of refugee men and masculinities, as well as other topics relating to the refugee response. I was delighted to receive many positive reactions to these publications from colleagues at ARDD. My work was shared by some of them, and by the organisation, on their social media pages. About 18 months after my fieldwork ended, as I write these words, my work appears to have cemented, rather than disrupted or betrayed, these relationships.

Due to the immersive nature of fieldwork, and the specific topics and contexts with which I was engaging, I also regularly found myself feeling exhausted and/or upset. On many days I would return home from a day in Za'tari or in ARDD's office, having attempted to both fulfil my work role and to observe and understand the context, and would then need to write fieldnotes. I tried to make these as extensive as possible, and often they extended to around 5,000 words about one day, particularly if I had spent a day in Za'tari. This process, especially when I worked with ARDD multiple days in a row, was exhausting. My supervisor encouraged me to take breaks (including leaving Amman and/or Jordan on a regular basis), and to attempt to socialise with people who had nothing to do with my research. These tactics, in particular the breaks from Amman/Jordan, however short, helped to combat this challenge, although did not entirely overcome it.

In addition to, and reinforcing, the exhaustion was the fact that the stories I would hear from Syrians were at times deeply distressing. I heard stories of torture, death, bereavement, imprisonment, deportation, and hopelessness, to name a few. I was also aware that the stories I was hearing, and the spaces I was encountering, were only tiny fragments of what has become one of the largest humanitarian catastrophes in decades. The enormity of what is termed the Syria crisis, both inside and outside its borders, was at times overwhelming. Feeling overwhelmed and sad felt entirely appropriate, but nonetheless needed to be managed and processed. Taking regular breaks again helped with this, and I sought the support of friends, both in Jordan and in the UK. I also had a

policy, at least when in my apartment, of allowing myself to express sadness when I felt it, which helped me to understand and process what I was witnessing and feeling.

Throughout my fieldwork, I also had to be cognisant that interactions between researchers and refugees are structured by relations of power and inequalities.⁶¹ In my case, as someone identified as a white Western man, these inequalities ran along lines of at least gender, race, and citizenship, in addition to other resultant inequalities, such as access to space and freedom of movement. None of my interactions with Syrians led me to believe that I was being read by them as non-heterosexual. These power inequalities can readily lead to the exploitation of refugees, and disrespect for their needs, time, and perspectives.⁶² As the Syrian photographer Manar Bilal has argued, specifically citing Za'tari as an example, refugee camps are used by privileged outsiders as tourist attractions, and to bolster their own portfolios, profiles, and images even while they profess to be 'spreading awareness.' Bilal argues that outsiders should only "[e]nter the camps when you have a purpose and are able to provide something."⁶³

In line with Bilal's argument, part of my motivation for working with an NGO was that I could also contribute to the work being done, even as I entered for purposes that were undeniably my own, and from which I have, and will continue, to benefit. My Arabic language skills, extensive experience in the Middle East, and my experience working on questions of gender with NGOs, all meant that I was able to substantively contribute to ARDD's work. I sincerely hope that, through engagement with non-academic audiences, the research I have undertaken will also provide benefits for refugees, and I have taken substantive steps to try to ensure this happens. In addition to the work I undertook with ARDD, since my fieldwork, I have been interviewed for and reviewed policy briefs and research reports for NGOs,⁶⁴ and have written short articles that are designed, in terms

⁶¹ For a summary of many key ethical issues involved in research with refugees, and for an extensive list of further resources, see Christina Clark-Kazak, "Ethical Considerations: Research with People in Situations of Forced Migration," *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 33, no. 2 (2017).

⁶² Moe Ali Nayel, "Palestinian Refugees Are Not at Your Service," Text, The Electronic Intifada, May 5, 2013, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/palestinian-refugees-are-not-your-service/12464>.

⁶³ Manar Bilal, "Our Refugee Camps Are Not Tourist Attractions," The Huffington Post, n.d., http://www.huffingtonpost.com/manar-bilal/our-refugee-camps-are-not-tourist-attractions_b_9041800.html.

⁶⁴ E.g. see CARE and Promundo, "Men and Boys in Displacement: Assistance and Protection Challenges for Unaccompanied Boys and Men in Refugee Contexts" (CARE and Promundo, 2017), https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CARE-Promundo_Men-and-boys-in-displacement_2017.pdf; Henri Myrtilinen and Megan Daigle, "When Merely Existing Is a Risk: Sexual and Gender Minorities in Conflict, Displacement and Peacebuilding" (London: International Alert, 2017).

of both content and publication choice, to be accessible to both academic and non-academic audiences.⁶⁵ I am not under any illusions, however, that it is likely that the individuals in Za'tari who gave me their time, and shared with me their views, will themselves personally and directly benefit from anything that comes from this research.

When conducting interviews with refugees living outside of camps, to whom I was introduced through academic contacts as explained above, I had not been working with an NGO in that community, as I had been in Za'tari. I therefore decided, after consulting both my contacts from the community organisation that would facilitate my interviews, and those who had introduced me to them, that it would be appropriate for me to make a small donation to the families we were visiting. In deciding the appropriate level, I relied on the advice of these contacts and others who were familiar with the organisation's work and the local context. I decided on offering each family 15 Jordanian Dinars (JOD) (approximately \$21)⁶⁶, and a blanket, which the community organisation had identified as a need, and which they purchased in advance. As Clark-Kazak argues is appropriate, this compensation was not tied to the completion of the interview, or to a particular length of time being spent in conversation;⁶⁷ some interviews lasted for 45 minutes, others less than 10, but the same compensation was offered to each family, in exactly the same way.

Ethical challenges also presented themselves, in particular, when accessing the camp through the permit I received from the Ministry of Interior to visit the camp to conduct research. When using this permit, when I arrived at the camp I reported, as required, to the police headquarters. For the first two days of my three days using this permit, I was given a police accompanier for the duration of my visit. On the third day I was not, because the camp was receiving a large political delegation that day.⁶⁸ I was similarly given police accompaniers during the visits to Azraq and Emirati-Jordanian camps undertaken using this same research permit. When meeting Syrians on these days, therefore, I was typically in the presence of a police officer, although at times they chose

⁶⁵ See Lewis Turner, "Are Syrian Men Vulnerable Too? Gendering the Syria Refugee Response," *Middle East Institute* (blog), November 29, 2016, <http://www.mei.edu/content/map/are-syrian-men-vulnerable-too-gendering-syria-refugee-response>; Lewis Turner, "Who Will Resettle Single Syrian Men?," *Forced Migration Review*, no. 54 (2017): 29–31.

⁶⁶ The Jordanian Dinar has been pegged to the US dollar since 1995, at a rate of 1 JOD to \$1.41.

⁶⁷ Clark-Kazak, "Ethical Considerations," 12–13.

⁶⁸ See Chapter 3 for more details.

to wait outside of buildings I entered, or to engage in separations conversations to the ones I was having.

Very conscious that the camp is policed extensively, and wanting to ensure that there were no adverse effects of my presence or interactions for the Syrians I was speaking to, I chose not to ask questions about specific topics in the presence of police officers (for example on deportations) and to use depoliticised language that did not explicitly call into question Jordan's role (and self-perception of its role) in the refugee response. That I had multiple ways of accessing the camp, as discussed above, and a research day in Za'tari without a police officer, meant that different discussions were possible at different times. It is also worth noting that having extensive opportunities to casually interact with police officers was both useful and thought-provoking, as I discuss in different parts of this thesis.

When in the presence of police officers, I also attempted to frame my questions, wherever possible, as questions about gender relations in the Syrian community, and whether and how humanitarian actors were serving the needs of women, men, boys and girls. In my discussions with police officers and other state employees, both when applying for the permit and when reporting to the police stations in the camps, it had become clear to me that framing my topic in these ways would help my research to be seen as non-threatening and appropriately 'non-political'. On rare occasions, a police officer would interject to emphasise the 'burdens' that Jordan was experiencing, for example when discussions of service provision appeared to touch on state policy. At other times, they would appear intrigued, or at times amused, by Syrians' views of humanitarian actors and their work. Humanitarian structures and policies were clearly unfamiliar, even strange, to the police officers, as they were to many Syrians.

Despite the aforementioned structural inequalities between myself as a researcher and the refugees I met, many of my Syrian interlocutors appeared to differentiate me from many of the other Western outsiders they had met, because I could comfortably and extensively converse with them in Arabic. On one occasion, a Syrian man heavily involved with NGO activities in the camp listed to me the names of the Arabic-speaking non-Arab staff that he had encountered in more than 2 years of living in Za'tari. So memorable were these encounters, that he knew each of their names. I was the fifth

person on his list, and I knew three of the others personally.⁶⁹ My linguistic abilities also made me less of a burden to NGOs and others I was visiting, as I did not require their assistance in speaking to Syrians. More importantly, however, not operating through a translator allowed for more open and meaningful conversations between myself and Syrian refugees, for more direct engagement with them, and for them to speak to me in their own words and frameworks.

Early in my fieldwork, I decided that another way in which I could act ethically in this context was to not, in my capacity as a researcher, take photographs of individual Syrians, for example my interviewees. In my work with ARDD, unfortunately, it was not possible to follow this rule, because of the perceived need to document our workshop activities, but all individuals who were photographed in the workshops had given their written consent to the organisation in advance. Nevertheless, it was clear to me, from my conversations with both Syrians and humanitarian workers, that continually being photographed was one of the aspects of humanitarian practice to which Syrians objected the most, even when they formally gave their consent. To the extent possible, I did not want to participate in or reinforce these practices and therefore decided that the most appropriate response to the situation was to not ask for photographs in my capacity as a researcher. Furthermore, my project is centrally concerned with how ideas about gender, race, refugeehood, and ‘vulnerability’ are imagined. In that context, I worried that to take photographs and use them in this thesis might even invite the same kind of gaze onto refugees that has reinforced the hierarchies and exclusions being critiqued here. I hope that the words speak for themselves.

Chapter Outline

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 explores the place of refugee men in humanitarianism. This chapter reviews critical, feminist, and postcolonial literatures on gender and humanitarianism, refugeehood and humanitarianism, and the politics of (humanitarian) interventions in the South. It combines this literature review with ethnographic observations and interview excerpts from my fieldwork, including how my research was received and interpreted in the field. In doing so, it argues that refugee men have an uncertain position within humanitarian operations and imaginaries. Refugee men disrupt humanitarian understandings of ‘gender’ and refugeehood, and complicate how

⁶⁹ Fieldnotes, Za‘tari, 27.07.2016.

humanitarian organisations navigate their understandings of, and relationships to, ‘politics’ and power. In advancing these arguments, this chapter expands the focus of academic inquiry on men in contexts of displacement and humanitarianism beyond the areas that are typically central to research, such as changing masculinities, gender equality, and SGBV.

Chapter 3 turns to an exploration and history of Za‘tari. It argues, in contrast to much of the existing literature, that refugee camps should be understood not as spaces of exception but rather simultaneously as instantiations of variegated state sovereignty and sites of humanitarian intervention. Through an overview of the camp’s history, and with a focus on the material, spatial, and embodied practices of humanitarianism, this chapter examines the key contestations that have surrounded Za‘tari’s development and governance. In particular, it analyses humanitarian attempts to create an ‘orderly’ depoliticised camp, Syrians’ attempts to resist these modes of governance, and humanitarian responses to, in particular, Syrian men’s ‘political’ attempts to exert agency over the life and governance of camp life.

Chapter 4 examines how the different humanitarian understandings of refugee men, outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, lead to a failure to recognise refugee men’s needs, and to a lack of interest in working with them on the ‘softer side’ of humanitarian activities, such as psychosocial support and providing community spaces. Syrian men themselves are understood by humanitarians to be uninterested in, and unavailable for, humanitarian work, and therefore to be responsible for the relative lack of work involving them. By contrast, refugee women, in particular those living without male partners, are deemed automatically to be ‘the most vulnerable.’ This justifies not only the targeting of women for specific services, but also helps to reinforce a hierarchical power relationship between humanitarians and refugee women, in which women’s autonomy and decisions are overridden by the ‘global’ goals of humanitarianism.

Encounters between the ‘global’ and the ‘local’ are similarly a theme of Chapter 5, which looks at the area of humanitarian work in which there was the most extensive enthusiasm for increasing work with refugee men: ‘engaging’ them in SGBV prevention. The ways in which this work is conducted, this chapter argues, reveal the perceived supremacy, for humanitarian actors, of ‘global’ humanitarian frameworks over the ‘local’ interpretations

of reality among the Syrian community. The perceived ‘challenges’ of implementing the work in an ‘Arab’ cultural and linguistic context, analysed in this chapter, uncover key aspects of humanitarians’ understandings of gender in the Syrian community. Moreover, humanitarians’ relative inability to conceptualise refugee men as victims of GBV demonstrates again, from a different angle, the assumption that it is women and children who should be the central objects of humanitarian care and concern.

In Chapter 6 the focus turns to the question of livelihoods, which was a key preoccupation of refugee men themselves. Being a ‘breadwinner,’ I argue, was central to the performance of masculinities for many Syrian men in Za‘tari, although men’s access to work, and their relationships to work and masculinity, varied somewhat along the lines of class and generation. Humanitarian policies on livelihoods, and their attempts to give access to the paid labour market to women and ‘the vulnerable,’ challenged many Syrian men’s (and women’s) understandings of masculinities. In the resulting contestations, I argue, humanitarian actors again prioritised their own perspectives and experiences on work, livelihoods, and gender, over the perspectives and experiences of Syrians themselves.

This final substantive chapter focuses on the market of Za‘tari, which was brought into existence by Syrians themselves. This chapter argues that Syrians’ struggles to create and sustain the market should be understood as attempts to resist the passive, feminised subject positions demanded of them by authorities, and to create spheres of life outside of their control and surveillance. The market, however, represents a form of self-reliance that is too autonomous from, and therefore too radical for, humanitarian agencies, who bring to the market their own agendas: of approved self-reliance, private sector partnerships, and the promotion of ‘innovation.’ Humanitarian agencies utilise masculinised forms of power, alongside a repressive state apparatus, to attempt to control and regulate Syrians’ autonomous economic activities. Yet at the same time, humanitarians promote Syrians’ activities in the market to external audiences, marketing them as ‘entrepreneurial’ refugees. Following this chapter, the conclusion reviews the main arguments and material presented in this thesis, outlines areas that the thesis was unable to tackle, discusses possible topics for future research, and summarises the thesis’ main contributions to scholarship.

Chapter 2: Humanitarianism and Refugee Men

I arrived at the café to which I had been invited to meet a humanitarian worker for a conversation about my research. As the café was brimming with a combination of foreigners and Jordanian hipsters, we sat outside, making the most of the faint February sunshine. “I’m really glad you’re asking these sorts of questions,” he said, “because there is no-one working on men, especially single young men.” He recounted to me meeting some Syrian men in their mid-twenties in a small Jordanian town. They had all entered Jordan informally, because men travelling without families were often turned back at the border. Their families, still in Syria, depend on them financially, and the men send back every bit of money they can, meaning they live in terrible conditions in Jordan. But their earning capacities are limited; they even time their work for the periods of the day when they think the police are least likely to be patrolling their neighbourhood. Yet these men, he told me, appeared to be of little interest to the vast majority of humanitarian organisations and workers he had encountered. Every 6 months or so, someone would bring up the lack of progress made on a ‘men and boys’ strategy. The lack of progress was lamented, briefly, but the issue would remain untouched for another 6 months.

This chapter explores the position of refugee men in humanitarianism. It provides a literature review of a diverse range of critical, feminist, and postcolonial scholarship on gender and humanitarianism, refugeehood and humanitarianism, and the politics of (humanitarian) interventions in the South, and combines this review with ethnographic observations and interview data from the field. It thereby situates my research both within these scholarly fields and within the context of the refugee response in Za‘tari, while demonstrating the importance of this research to the production of knowledge about humanitarianism. It argues that refugee men have an uncertain position in humanitarian policies, practices and imaginaries because of humanitarian understandings of gender, refugeehood, politics and power. Humanitarians’ inability to understand men as objects as well as subjects of power means that refugee men appear before them as agential, independent, political, and at times threatening, and thereby, as the above vignette demonstrates, not a central object of humanitarian concern.

Refugee Men and Masculinities as Objects of Research

When I introduced my research to acquaintances, friends, interlocutors and colleagues in the NGO sector in Jordan, the topic typically prompted some combination of interest, intrigue, and at times even excitement. These reactions surprised me. I had assumed that ‘research fatigue’ would lead to me being greeted as simply ‘yet another’ foreign researcher, and this did happen to an extent. But prior to my fieldwork I had also been concerned about whether research on ‘refugee men and masculinities,’ which was how I would often summarise my research topic, would seem relevant and appealing to people working in the humanitarian sector. For example, I was concerned that some people might assume, because of the subject of my research, that I was hostile to work with refugee women, or part of a movement that claims that feminism, and its focus on women’s lives, has gone ‘too far.’¹

With these concerns in mind, I had expected that in order to facilitate good relations with interlocutors it might be necessary or beneficial to explain my research as being about ‘gender,’ which is often understood within NGOs, as elsewhere, to be synonymous with ‘women.’² I would therefore on occasion firstly introduce myself as someone researching ‘gender and the refugee response,’ before subsequently explaining my specific focus. Contrary to my expectations, however, it was the idea of research about men and masculinities that elicited enthusiasm, rather than research about ‘gender.’ Visiting the office of a major INGO in Amman, where I was being shown around by the friend of a London-based contact, I met an employee who worked in refugee protection. She received my one sentence introduction about ‘gender and the refugee response’ politely, but with no great enthusiasm. She asked me “what about gender” I was studying, to which I replied that my focus was on “men and masculinities.” As I wrote in my fieldnotes later that day, “I would almost say her eyes lit up.”³

While this largely unexpected interest in my research proved, at many points, to be an asset, it prompted me to question the reasons behind people’s reactions. Over the course of my fieldwork I identified four factors that motivated this interest among humanitarian and NGO workers. These different factors were each often associated with groups that

¹ Suvi Keskinen, “Antifeminism and White Identity Politics,” *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3, no. 4 (2013): 225–32.

² Judy El-Bushra and Judith Gardner, “The Impact of War on Somali Men: Feminist Analysis of Masculinities and Gender Relations in a Fragile Context,” *Gender & Development* 24, no. 3 (2016): 443–58.

³ Fieldnotes, Amman, 01.10.2015.

were identifiable because they shared particular positionalities and/or political positions. One first such element was novelty. In contrast to extensive interest in ‘gender’ (‘women’), my interlocutors appeared to have encountered very few people researching or writing about refugee men, which was consistent with my review of academic and grey literatures (see below). In the first months of Za‘tari, “Everyone who came in, every PhD person, every consultant and everyone else,” was specifically looking at issues relating to women and girls.⁴ Some of these visitors, in particular journalists working on issues such as ‘early marriage,’ had produced sensationalised stories about Syrian women and girls, thereby hampering the prevention and response work that agencies were undertaking.⁵ In a context where large quantities of research are produced, particularly on (certain aspects of) ‘gender,’ and where people are regularly asked to take part in interviews, my choice of an ‘unusual’ topic was part of what generated my interlocutors’ enthusiasm.⁶

Secondly, I noticed early on in my fieldwork that many of my interlocutors assumed that my research, because it was about ‘masculinities,’ was focused on sexual violence prevention. As discussed in Chapter 5, work to ‘engage men and boys’ to be ‘allies’ against SGBV was rapidly gaining ground around the time that my fieldwork commenced. Research on ‘masculinities’ was therefore regularly seen through that lens.⁷ After one meeting with a think tank, only a couple of weeks into my fieldwork, I found myself reflecting on the conversations that had just taken place, wondering how exactly they had become so focused on sexual violence prevention.⁸ I realised that this appeared to be the only way my interlocutors could understand the ‘relevance’ of researching refugee men and masculinities. I quickly thereafter learned that discussing SGBV prevention work was a productive way of explaining introducing my research to NGOs, particularly to individuals working in gender, and a topic through which I could approach potential interviewees. When conducting interviews with gender-focused humanitarian workers, however, moving the conversation away from discussions of SGBV prevention, so that it could focus on the humanitarian sector’s responsibilities towards refugee men more generally, sometimes proved challenging. This was because, it appeared to me,

⁴ Interview with former NGO worker in Za‘tari, via Skype, 08.12.2015.

⁵ Interview with SGBV specialist (1), Amman, 30.11.2015; see also Chapter 4.

⁶ Interview with women’s protection and empowerment programme manager, Amman, 28.03.2016; conversation with NGO workers, Amman, 12.12.2015.

⁷ Meeting with think tank, Amman, 16.09.2015; conversation with NGO workers, 28.03.2016.

⁸ Fieldnotes, Amman, 16.09.2015.

SGBV prevention work with men occupied a central place in their understandings of what work with refugee men should involve.⁹

Other people I met within the NGO sector who exhibited great enthusiasm for my work, were those who felt that the refugee response was systematically overlooking, or ignoring, refugee men. These NGO employees, who worked in the refugee response but typically not as gender specialists or in gender-focused roles, were tired of a seemingly relentless focus on ‘vulnerable’ women, or, to adapt Cynthia Enloe’s term, ‘refugeewomenandchildren.’¹⁰ This focus, which some believed was in part donor-driven, existed and continued whether or not there was evidence to support it, and at times in spite of contrary evidence about where resources might be most needed.¹¹ From conversing with these people, often in informal social settings, I considered many of them to be people who I might think of as my ‘typical allies’ – left-leaning feminists who appeared to have, broadly speaking, a similar outlook on politics.¹²

At times, however, I encountered supporters of my research with whom I was much less comfortable. Some of those who were very enthusiastic about my research appeared to want to critique the humanitarian sector’s approach towards refugee men using perspectives that I would regard as non- or anti-feminist. I found myself being encouraged fervently by people (mostly, but not exclusively, men), who described themselves as not feminists but equalists,¹³ who asked why there was a UN Women but no UN Men,¹⁴ or who emphasised to me the ‘natural’ and ‘biological’ differences between men and women.¹⁵ I found such support, and my own discomfort with it, to be a useful reminder that research and writing on men and masculinities can be used to support and to further anti-feminist agendas that stand in opposition to the motivations for my research.¹⁶

⁹ Conversations and interviews with humanitarian and NGO workers, Amman, 30.11.2015, 28.03.2016 and 18.05.2016.

¹⁰ Conversations with NGO workers, Amman, 06.09.2015 and 20.02.2016. See Enloe, *The Morning After*, 166–67.

¹¹ See Chapter 4.

¹² Fieldnotes, Amman, 20.02.2016 and 29.02.2016.

¹³ Conversation with humanitarian worker, Amman, 28.01.2016.

¹⁴ Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 12.06.2016.

¹⁵ Interview with former NGO worker in Za’tari.

¹⁶ See Connell, *Masculinities*, Chapter 1; Rachel O’Neill, “Whither Critical Masculinity Studies? Notes on Inclusive Masculinity Theory, Postfeminism, and Sexual Politics,” *Men and Masculinities*, 2015, 100–120.

My research was similarly considered something of a novelty to many Syrians I met in the camp. Syrian men regularly appeared surprised to be asked about the issues specifically facing them *as men*, or to be asked how men specifically experienced life in the camp.¹⁷ During a visit to the Community Police station in Za‘tari, the Jordanian officers who had been giving me a tour of the station, and who met many visitors such as me, asked what topics I was interested in. They nodded approvingly as I explained, in Arabic, my interest in men’s lives in the camp. While I was explaining my research topic to them, the Syrian man who appeared to be employed to clean the police station, and who had hurried in front of us during the tour to unlock the door of whichever room we were entering next, reappeared from the space we had just been in. Standing behind the police officers, he leaned against the doorframe, cocked his head slightly, and smiled inquisitively at me as I explained my work.¹⁸

By contrast, there was no shortage of outsiders who would come to ask about the lives of Syrian women. A Syrian man I met in the course of my interviews told me that he had been talking to journalists who were visiting the camp, and offered to take them to visit his friends in their nearby shop. Upon asking a little about the people to whom he was referring, the journalists declined, saying they were only interested in talking to Syrian women. For my interlocutor, this was indicative of many visitors’ attitudes towards Syrian men. I asked him if he agreed with my perception that NGOs were very interested in working with women and children, but not really with men. “Yes, of course,” he chuckled, “this is our life.”¹⁹ Even though, as became clear in some of my discussions with Syrian men, we did not always share a broader outlook on questions of gender, this dynamic nevertheless helped to create a level of rapport with some of the men I met. It was understood to demonstrate, I believe, a level of interest in the particularities of their circumstances that it was unusual to hear from an outsider.²⁰

Perhaps paradoxically, therefore, it was humanitarian actors’ widespread lack of interest in Syrian men’s lives and gendered experiences of refuge that created the extensive enthusiasm I encountered for my research. The lives of refugee men have similarly been of relatively little focus for academic scholars. Not only has gender remained somewhat

¹⁷ Conversations with Syrian refugees, Za‘tari, 21.07.2016, 27.07.2016, and 01.08.2016.

¹⁸ Fieldnotes, Za‘tari, 21.07.2016.

¹⁹ Conversation with Syrian refugee man, Za‘tari, 21.07.2016.

²⁰ Fieldnotes, Za‘tari, 21.07.2016, 27.07.2016, and 01.08.2016.

marginal within studies of refugees and migration,²¹ but within that scholarship only a few studies have specifically looked in-depth at refugee men and masculinities. These contributions to knowledge have typically focused on refugee men's understandings or performances of masculinities. For example, scholars have explored the effect of the experiences of refuge on intergenerational hierarchies among refugee men,²² the different masculinities that can prevail within a particular context,²³ how they interact with broader political movements and ideologies such as nationalism,²⁴ and how they relate to issues of SGBV.²⁵ As a body of literature, it demonstrates how contexts of refugehood often challenge pre-existing conceptions of masculinities, because men's circumstances in exile make it very difficult for ideals, such as breadwinning, the protection of the family, and status in the community, to be embodied and performed. In Chapter 6 I explore, in a similar vein, how economic breadwinning was a central feature of masculinity for many men in Za'tari, and how difficult it was to fulfil these gendered responsibilities in a context of encampment and humanitarian governance.

But the defining focus of this thesis is not Syrian men's understandings of masculinities, but rather humanitarian actors' understandings of Syrian men and masculinities, and the practices and relationships these understandings create. From the early stages of my fieldwork, humanitarians' reactions to my research topic, and the ways in which they discussed Syrian men, fascinated me. Rather than centring Syrian men's masculinities in my analysis, I decided to centre those who hold power over them, yet seemed so unfamiliar with them. In doing so, my thesis takes a relatively unusual approach of understanding men as simultaneously, in Farha Ghannam's words, "the subjects and objects of systems of power." This entails, she argues, looking not only at forms of 'masculine domination,' but also at men's vulnerabilities, dependencies, and

²¹ Sarah J. Mahler and Patricia R. Pessar, "Gender Matters: Ethnographers Bring Gender from the Periphery toward the Core of Migration Studies," *International Migration Review* 40, no. 1 (2006): 27–63.

²² See Julie Peteet, "Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian 'Intifada': A Cultural Politics of Violence," *American Ethnologist* 21, no. 1 (1994): 31–49; Turner, "Angry Young Men in a Tanzanian Refugee Camp."

²³ Gustavo Baptista Barbosa, "Non-Cockfights: On Doing/Undoing Gender in Shatila, Lebanon" (London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), 2013); Jaji, "Masculinity on Unstable Ground"; Peter Kabachnik et al., "Traumatic Masculinities: The Gendered Geographies of Georgian IDPs from Abkhazia," *Gender, Place & Culture* 20, no. 6 (2012): 773–93; James Alan Schechter, "Governing 'Lost Boys': Sudanese Refugees in a UNHCR Camp" (University of Colorado, 2004); Alice Szczepanikova, "Gender Relations in a Refugee Camp: A Case of Chechens Seeking Asylum in the Czech Republic," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 18, no. 3 (2005): 281–98.

²⁴ Achilli, "Becoming a Man in Al-Wihdat"; Hart, "Dislocated Masculinity."

²⁵ Lukunka, "New Big Men"; Marjolein Quist, "Traumatic Masculinities: The Disconnect Between the Feminized Policies and Practices of Humanitarian Aid and the Gendered Reality of Syrian Refugee Life in Settlements in Lebanon" (Utrecht University, 2016).

disempowerments.²⁶ In the context of Za'tari, understanding men's disempowerments requires a critical analysis of the actors who hold power over them, and the humanitarian system in which they live. In line with intersectional feminist scholarship,²⁷ this thesis recognises that Syrian men are internally differentiated, and that they can be privileged in some contexts, parts of their lives, or relative to other positionalities and identities, and simultaneously be disempowered in other ways. Within Za'tari, Syrian men's positions within social structures, and the ways in which they are gendered and racialised by humanitarian and state actors, has led to them being understood both as troublemakers who need to be 'governed,' and as having very little relevance to much humanitarian work.²⁸

In following this path, as noted in the first chapter, the thesis speaks to cross-disciplinary scholarship that has analysed the position of men and masculinities in projects of intervention, colonialism and foreign domination, in the Arab world and elsewhere. Scholars have demonstrated how portrayals and understandings of colonised men as effeminate,²⁹ and the 'Orient' as a place of perverse sexuality, were key parts of imperial projects.³⁰ As Laleh Khalili has argued, while some men from colonised nations were "naturalized as feminine, conquered, penetrated, and possessed," others were part of "martial races," able to 'redeem' their masculinity by fighting for the empire.³¹ This continues in contemporary Afghanistan, she demonstrates, where Afghan men, in the eyes of the US, "can be at once courageous and manly allies *and* sodomising homosexual rapists." In (post-)colonial Jordan, Joseph Massad argues, Arab men were similarly simultaneously positioned by colonialists as hypermasculine and feminine, both "unscrupulous men of violence and yet 'so gentle'."³²

²⁶ Farha Ghannam, *Live and Die Like a Man: Gender Dynamics in Urban Egypt* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 170.

²⁷ See Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989 (1989): 139–67; Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99; Nash, "Re-Thinking Intersectionality."

²⁸ See Chapters 3 and 4.

²⁹ Jasbir K. Puar, "Mapping US Homonormativities," *Gender, Place & Culture* 13, no. 1 (2006): 67–88.

³⁰ Rachel Adams and David Savran, "Part IV: Empire and Modernity Introduction," in *The Masculinity Studies Reader*, ed. Rachel Adams and David Savran (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 227–31; Puar, "Mapping US Homonormativities."

³¹ Khalili, "Gendered Practices of Counterinsurgency," 1485.

³² Joseph Andoni Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 140; see also Amira Jarmakani, *An Imperialist Love Story: Desert Romances and the War on Terror* (New York, London: New York University Press, 2015).

This approach avoids a problematic tendency found in some areas of the literature on men and masculinities within the Arab world. As Paul Amar has argued, “masculinity studies, until today, remains haunted by the need to problematize deviant, working-class, youth, colonized and racialized masculinities and to provide pragmatic interventions and public policy fixes.”³³ Within wider public, journalistic, and some scholarly discourse, Amar continues, the masculinity of Middle Eastern men has become one of the “primary public tools for analyzing political and social conflict in the region.”³⁴ I therefore do not aim to understand what is ‘wrong’ with Syrian masculinities or how they can be ‘corrected;’ this work is done by the humanitarian sector itself.³⁵ Nor do I wish to position “emasculated” refugee men as “a human security issue.”³⁶ I seek not policy fixes, but a critique of policy.

The position of Syrian men within humanitarianism in Za‘tari, I argue, cannot be understood solely in terms of men’s position within broader post-colonial dynamics or understandings of men in the Arab world. It must be placed within an analysis of how ‘gender’ and ‘gender work’ are understood by the humanitarian sector, the ways in which the gendered and racialised figure of the Syrian/Arab man stands in tension with prevailing depictions of ‘the refugee,’ and humanitarianism’s gendered understandings and deployment of politics and power. In the remainder of this Chapter, by drawing on my ethnographic fieldwork and by reviewing scholarly literatures, I will address these issues in turn

Doing ‘Gender Work’ in a Humanitarian Context

Firstly, humanitarian relationships with refugee men must be analysed in the context of humanitarian actors’ understandings of ‘gender’ and what constitutes ‘gender work’ in a humanitarian context. Like many development actors, humanitarian actors have increasingly taken on gender equality as a goal of their work and have promoted gender mainstreaming and women’s ‘empowerment,’ as part of their efforts to achieve this. Within this work, however, ‘gender’ is still understood, despite rhetoric to the contrary, to mean ‘women,’ and ‘gender work’ understood to mean ‘helping women.’³⁷

³³ Paul Amar, “Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of ‘Men in Crisis,’ Industries of Gender in Revolution,” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 7, no. 3 (2011): 45.

³⁴ Amar, 38.

³⁵ See Chapter 5.

³⁶ Lukunka, “New Big Men.”

³⁷ Andrea Cornwall, “Revisiting the ‘Gender Agenda,’” *IDS Bulletin* 38, no. 2 (2007): 69–78.

Furthermore, in contexts like Za'tari, this 'gender work' must simultaneously be understood as part of, and undergirded by, a long line of gender-focused (post-)colonial interventions into the societies and cultures of the South.³⁸

'Women' and 'gender' have increasingly been on the agenda of UNHCR and refugee-related NGOs since the late 1980s.³⁹ Early advocacy for refugee women focused on challenging the alleged 'gender-blindness' and 'neutrality' of the refugee regime, attempting to incorporate women's experiences of persecution into the definition of a refugee set out in the 1951 convention, increasing women's opportunities for resettlement, and highlighting and responding to the threats that refugee women face, in particular SGBV.⁴⁰ In 1989, UNHCR appointed a Senior Coordinator for Women Refugees for the first time, and in the subsequent years the agency produced a series of new policy documents on refugee women.⁴¹ The potential, agency and participation of refugee women, which had been side-lined in the consistent portrayals of them as 'vulnerable,' was increasingly part of international policy debates.⁴² UNHCR and other refugee agencies were subject to increasingly prominent critiques for the ways in which their policies reinforced, rather than challenged, patriarchal structures within the communities they worked with, for example through the automatic distribution of resources to male 'heads of households.'⁴³

The developments in refugee policy were the result of persistent lobbying for refugee women by transnational advocates, and part of a broader trend that was seen in other spheres of international politics, particularly in development. Notably, the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 included a commitment to "integrating a gender perspective in all forms of development and

³⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Righting Wrongs," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2 (2004): 523–581.

³⁹ Erin K. Baines, *Vulnerable Bodies: Gender, the UN and the Global Refugee Crisis* (Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2004); Jennifer Hyndman, "Managing Difference: Gender and Culture in Humanitarian Emergencies," *Gender, Place & Culture* 5, no. 3 (1998): 241–60.

⁴⁰ Jane Freedman, "Mainstreaming Gender in Refugee Protection," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 23, no. 4 (2010): 589–607; Grabska, "Constructing 'Modern Gendered Civilised' Women and Men"; Audrey Macklin, "Refugee Women and the Imperative of Categories," *Human Rights Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (1995): 213–77.

⁴¹ Freedman, "Mainstreaming Gender in Refugee Protection."

⁴² Baines, *Vulnerable Bodies*, 32–33.

⁴³ See Baines, *Vulnerable Bodies* Chapter 1; Christine M. Cervenak, "Promoting Inequality: Gender-Based Discrimination in UNRWA's Approach to Palestine Refugee Status," *Human Rights Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1994): 300.

political processes.”⁴⁴ This commitment became known as ‘gender mainstreaming,’ which has become “ubiquitous within development discourse.”⁴⁵ Despite the ubiquity of its terminology, numerous scholars have questioned how effective the mainstreaming of gender has been, and in particular whether it has merely attempted to integrate ‘gender’ as a component into existing policy frameworks, and thus has failed to undertake a more radical gender transformation of these structures. In particular, there are ongoing debates about the ways in which ‘gender’ has been institutionalised. Feminist scholars have argued that the impact of ‘gender mainstreaming’ has been blunted by the co-optation of ‘gender’ by institutions and agendas that are contrary to both a feminist ethos, and to the feminist political activism that succeeded in getting gender on the agenda in the first place.⁴⁶ Actual gender analysis, furthermore, is all too often lost or sidelined; as Andrea Cornwall has argued “‘doing gender’ is often conflated – in practice – with ‘helping women’.”⁴⁷

At least on paper and in their rhetoric, humanitarian organisations, including UNHCR, now include gender equality as one of their goals, and ‘gender mainstreaming’ is designed to be a way to advance towards that goal.⁴⁸ The increased prominence of gender equality within humanitarian operations can be understood not only as a result of feminist pressure and advocacy, but also as part of a broader merging of humanitarianism and development, and the changes that were taking place in parallel within this latter sphere, as documented above. While humanitarian relief and development work were once predominantly seen as two succeeding phases, with the former catering for emergencies and the latter for longer-term projects, since the early 1990s there have been calls to coordinate, or even integrate, relief and development operations.⁴⁹ This can be understood, as David Chandler argues, within a post Cold War context in which there was no longer the same clear “division between state-led development aid, open to

⁴⁴ Suzanne Clisby and Athena-Maria Enderstein, “Caught between the Orientalist–occidental Polemic: Gender Mainstreaming as Feminist Transformation or Neocolonial Subversion?” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19, no. 2 (2017): 235.

⁴⁵ Clisby and Enderstein, 235.

⁴⁶ For more on these debates, in refugee-related and other contexts, see Nadjie Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt, *What Kind of Liberation?* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2009), 172–74; Clisby and Enderstein, “Caught between the Orientalist–occidental Polemic”; Freedman, “Mainstreaming Gender in Refugee Protection”; Hyndman, “Managing Difference”; Srila Roy, “The Positive Side of Co-Optation? Intersectionality: A Conversation between Inderpal Grewal and Srila Roy,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19, no. 2 (2017): 254–62.

⁴⁷ Cornwall, “Revisiting the ‘Gender Agenda,’” 74.

⁴⁸ Baines, *Vulnerable Bodies*; Barnett and Weiss, “Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present.”

⁴⁹ Bocco, Harrison, and Oesch, “Recovery”; see also Mark Duffield, “Global Civil War: The Non-Insured, International Containment and Post-Interventionary Society,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 2 (2008): 145–65; Ulrike Krause, *Linking Refugee Protection with Development Assistance* (Nomos, 2013).

political considerations, and politically neutral humanitarianism.”⁵⁰ At the same time, many ‘development’ and ‘humanitarian’ NGOs were together pushing for a more ‘rights-based approach’ to development, reinforcing the merging of these fields.⁵¹ Much of the ‘gender’ work that is undertaken in Za‘tari, therefore, as part of the humanitarian response, might have, in earlier decades, been primarily associated with (gender and) development, rather than humanitarianism. In a context of protracted displacement, such as the experience Syrian refugees in Jordan, this merging becomes even more apparent on the ground.⁵²

In line with this approach, all humanitarian projects are now meant to show whether or not they have the potential to make a contribution to gender equality. The contemporary discursive formation in which this appears is typically through an emphasis on ensuring that humanitarian programming meets the distinct needs of refugee women, girls, boys and men. Whether a project does this or is liable to do this is measured through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender Marker, which has a coding system – 0, 1, 2A or 2B – for humanitarian projects. The code signifies whether the project “is designed well enough to ensure that women/girls and men/boys will benefit equally from it or that it will advance gender equality in another way,”⁵³ and the code is assigned to a project by a team in each humanitarian cluster (e.g. protection, shelter, health).⁵⁴ The team assesses whether gender is taken into account in the needs assessment for a project, whether that leads to gender-responsive activities, and whether and how the gender-responsiveness of the activities that are implemented successfully will be measured and assessed.⁵⁵ The marks range from 0 - “no visible potential to contribute to gender equality” to 2B for projects whose “principal purpose is to advance gender equality” (2B).⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Chandler, “The Road to Military Humanitarianism,” 681–82.

⁵¹ Andrea Cornwall and Celestine Nyamu-Musembi, “Putting the ‘Rights-based Approach’ to Development into Perspective,” *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 8 (2004): 1415–37.

⁵² E.g. see Katharina Lenner and Lewis Turner, “Making Refugees Work? The Politics of Integrating Syrian Refugees into the Labor Market in Jordan,” *Middle East Critique* Online first (2018).

⁵³ IASC, “IASC Gender Marker - Frequently Asked Questions,” August 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

⁵⁴ For background on the cluster approach, see Bocco, Harrisson, and Oesch, “Recovery.”

⁵⁵ IASC, “The IASC Gender Marker,” n.d., <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

⁵⁶ IASC, “IASC Gender Marker - Frequently Asked Questions.”

While this might appear to be a move away from the long-standing elision between ‘gender’ and ‘women,’⁵⁷ in practice the linguistic change to ‘women, girls, boys and men’ does not represent a changed understanding of ‘gender’ or what ‘gender work’ involves. While some people writing project proposals and reports do, at least rhetorically, emphasise the distinct needs of women, girls, boys and men to demonstrate that they are ‘gender aware,’ in practice, one NGO manager told me “the numbers [UNHCR] really care about are how many women and girls” are in a project.⁵⁸ Another commented that, at the field level, “most people knew that gender really just meant get a good score on the gender marker by putting in men, women, boys and girls as much as possible.”⁵⁹ Yet for some organisations, even this basic analysis does not take place – not all organisations working in the humanitarian response are disaggregating their statistics to differentiate between men and women, much to the frustration of gender specialists.⁶⁰ As Erin Baines argued almost fifteen years ago, despite the apparent progress in getting refugee women on the agenda of UNHCR and other agencies, and some resultant policy changes, “implementation continues to be slow and ad hoc.”⁶¹

Furthermore, despite the apparent ubiquity of gender mainstreaming and commitment to gender equality, some interlocutors would trivialise the issues that they associated with ‘gender,’ while yet others would express astonishment at the lack of progress on seemingly crucial issues that have been brought to the attention of humanitarian agencies for decades. Interestingly, for both gender specialists and those who were opposed to their agenda (or who disputed the ‘practicality’ of its implementation), the question of toilets appeared to be emblematic. For some of my interviewees and interlocutors, the lack of segregated toilets, and the lack of street lighting to get to them safely at night in the early days of Za‘tari, were examples of UN incompetence, a lack of consideration of women’s needs, or the far too slow ‘learning curve’ that appears to come with every new humanitarian response.⁶² For others, it was an example of the unrealistic, predictable, and repetitive demands made by gender consultants and NGOs. Such requests were not sufficiently attuned to the circumstances on the ground, I was told by one interviewee,

⁵⁷ Andrea Cornwall, “Revisiting the ‘gender agenda,’” *IDS Bulletin* 38, no. 2 (2007): 69–78; El-Bushra and Gardner, “The Impact of War on Somali Men.”

⁵⁸ Conversation with INGO programme manager, Amman, 20.02.2016.

⁵⁹ Interview with former UNHCR worker in Za‘tari, via Skype, 06.02.2016.

⁶⁰ Discussion with humanitarian workers with gender focus, Amman, 09.06.2016.

⁶¹ Baines, *Vulnerable Bodies*, 1.

⁶² Interviews with former employee of international organisation in Za‘tari, Amman, November 2015; and Jordanian women’s rights activist, Amman, 05.12.2015; fieldnotes, 11.12.2015.

for example as in Za'tari where latrine blocks had been “stolen” by refugees.⁶³ In any case, a different interlocutor told me, in an emergency, there wasn't much time to choose where to put things such as toilets.⁶⁴ A rhetorical focus on ‘gender’ (‘women’) exists, as does resistance to, and derision of, the agenda put forward by gender specialists. Remarkably, a seeming consensus on women's vulnerability co-existed with a failure to ensure women had safe access to toilets.

‘Gender’ work within humanitarianism therefore remains, notwithstanding rhetorical positionings to the contrary, ‘for’ and about women, rather than gender, and discussions of men and masculinities are rarely included under this rubric. For example, I interviewed one of the two Health Sector Gender Focal Points, who talked me through the gender analysis report she had co-written about her sector and its work. When we reached a short section on men, aware of my research interests, she pointed it out, “this is the two lines about men. And that's it, enough for men,” she laughed.⁶⁵ This not only demonstrates the continued elision of ‘gender’ and ‘women,’ but also adds further evidence of why my research topic was often greeted with some enthusiasm: ‘gender’ and ‘men’ were rarely put into conversation.

Furthermore, when there is evidence that suggests the need for a re-evaluation of the ‘gender’ as ‘women’ framework, humanitarian actors will often defend, either explicitly or implicitly, the frameworks within which they work. The issue of men being survivors of SGBV was a clear example of this. One SGBV specialist recounted to me, the disappointment clear in her voice, how the claims of male survivors of SGBV would sometimes be dismissed or downplayed by her colleagues and her counterparts at other organisations. This would be done using the same excuses that, in her experience, were previously more commonly used to dismiss women's experiences of violence: explaining the violence away as a ‘cultural practice,’ for example, or claiming that the numbers were so few that they were not significant or did not show a trend: “you really would like to refresh the memory of some people,” she lamented.⁶⁶ Her colleagues, it appeared, did not

⁶³ Interview with former UNHCR worker in Za'tari.

⁶⁴ Conversation with humanitarian worker, Amman, 28.01.2016.

⁶⁵ Interview with Ruba Abu-Taleb, Nutrition Coordinator, Jordan Health Aid Society and Health Sector Gender Focal Point, Amman, 15.06.2016. The report does not only contain two lines about men, although the interviewee's joke was indicative of the general focus of the report. For the full report, see: Elsa Groenveld and Ruba Abu-Taleb, “Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) Health Sector Gender Analysis” (Amman, Jordan, July 2016).

⁶⁶ Interview with SGBV specialist (2), Amman, 04.07.2016.

want to delve further into the phenomenon of male survivors of SGBV. Interestingly, throughout the interview, and despite her aforementioned comments, she consistently referred to “women and children” as the victims/survivors of SGBV.⁶⁷ Her language mirrored and reinforced the exclusions that she was simultaneously critiquing.

A second example comes in the form of a 2013 UN Women report on SGBV among Syrian refugees in Jordan.⁶⁸ According to the responses collected from Syrians, “when comparing males and females in the same age group, boys were ranked as more likely to suffer sexual violence,” with adult women ranked the highest group, and adult males the lowest.⁶⁹ The report follows this with the claim that “the practice shows that women and girls are typically most susceptible to sexual violence in conflict settings, and during protracted refugee settings,” citing a 2002 report from the Secretary General of the United Nations. “Despite this,” it continues, “it is possible...that some survey responses may have been a reflection of perceived susceptibility to violence in Syria or during border crossings.”⁷⁰ The report then notes the use of sexual violence against men and boys in prisons in Syria, and that some respondents may have heard of, witnessed, or experienced sexual violence against men in Syria, before advocating for the needs of male survivors to be met, and for the reality of their experiences to be publicly acknowledged. It is striking that, despite the important call for male survivors of SGBV to receive services and have their experiences acknowledged, the report repeatedly appears to cast doubt on the validity of the perceptions of the Syrian community, through its repeated references to SGBV against men *in Syria*, or *on the journey* from Syria to Jordan. It appears as if teenage boys being subjected to sexual violence more than teenage girls in this particular context was deemed almost inconceivable.⁷¹

Humanitarian ‘gender work’ being ‘for’ and about women, and the centring of women as objects of intervention in this work, cannot only be understood in the context of the changes in humanitarian and development work since the late 1980s. It must also be placed into the context of a different and longer history of external interventions into the societies and politics of the South. The “invasive gender work of the international civil

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ UN Women, “Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection Among Syrian Refugees in Jordan, with a Focus on Early Marriage” (Amman: UN Women, 2013).

⁶⁹ UN Women, 25.

⁷⁰ UN Women, 25.

⁷¹ See Chapter 5.

society” is representative of a liberalism that has, as a “defining characteristic,” an “unfailing tendency to experience non-Western peoples as somehow incomplete.”⁷² The peoples of the South, in the eyes of interveners of various stripes, appear as in need of reform and education.

Within the context of the Middle East specifically, the status of women has been used both historically, and recently, by colonial and imperial powers to justify their claims to control, govern, invade, or intervene in different territories.⁷³ These gender interventions, for example to ‘save’ the Muslim women of the Middle East, are often backed, like humanitarianism, by claims that their visions of human rights and gender equality are ‘universal.’⁷⁴ Feminism, as Inderpal Grewal argues, is not, and never has been, separate from power.⁷⁵ This claim to universality, to be above particularistic interests, is a discursive move that functions to provide authority and legitimacy to the actions of those who claim it.⁷⁶ Policies to promote (particular understandings of) women’s rights, gender equality, and women’s empowerment within the refugee response were similarly understood by humanitarian workers to be manifestations and applications of ‘global’ standards.

Yet as post-colonial scholarship has clearly demonstrated, claims to universality on the part of external actors in the South hide, however thinly, the ‘Western’ ideas, understandings, and reference points that make up the domain of the ‘global.’⁷⁷ One of my interviewees, when explaining the reforms to Jordanian law that the international agency she worked for was advocating, used the word ‘Western’ on more than one occasion to describe legal and human rights principles that she claimed were only partially incorporated into Jordanian law. I noticed that she looked decidedly

⁷² Mark Duffield, “The Liberal Way of Development and the Development—Security Impasse: Exploring the Global Life-Chance Divide,” *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 1 (2010): 61.

⁷³ Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others,” *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 783–790; Nadjé Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt, “The United States, the Iraqi Women’s Diaspora and Women’s ‘Empowerment’ in Iraq,” in *Women and War in the Middle East*, ed. Nadjé Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt (London; New York: Zed Books, 2009), 65–98; Deniz Kandiyoti, “Identity and Its Discontents: Women and the Nation,” *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 20, no. 3 (1991): 429–43.

⁷⁴ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), 79; Barnett and Weiss, “Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present,” 38.

⁷⁵ Roy, “The Positive Side of Co-Optation?,” 5.

⁷⁶ see Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*

⁷⁷ Abu-Lughod; B. S. Chimni, “Geopolitics of Refugee Studies: A View from the South,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 11 (1998): 350; Malkki, *Purity and Exile*; Prem Kumar Rajaram, “Humanitarianism and Representations of the Refugee,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 15, no. 3 (2002): 247–64.

uncomfortable by her own use of the term ‘Western’. She corrected herself: “[these aspects of Jordanian law] were developed in a [pause] I wouldn’t say western system, but at least bringing the principles from a more global understanding of human rights.” This was subsequently contrasted to Jordan’s *shari’a* law, which, it appeared to go without saying, did not reflect ‘global understandings of human rights.’⁷⁸ The ‘global’ or ‘universal’ ideas of humanitarianism that legitimate interventions into the lives of those who are deemed humanitarianism’s ‘beneficiaries’ are therefore simultaneously local, particular and ‘Western.’

However, acknowledging that all ‘global’ standards are at the same time ‘local’ standards typically derived from ‘the West’ has the potential to simultaneously obscure other relations of power. As Gayatri Spivak argued of human rights organisations, and which I argue can be applied more broadly to humanitarian actors, there is a “layered discontinuity” between those running, managing, and implementing NGO programmes in the South and those termed ‘beneficiaries.’ This discontinuity is not fully encapsulated along a straightforward North/South axis.⁷⁹ According to Spivak, a key discontinuity to be considered is the epistemic discontinuity between those from the South who can draw aid from the North, and “understand and state a problem intelligibly and persuasively to the taste of the North,”⁸⁰ and those upon whom they work. Therefore although “human rights culture runs on unremitting Northern-ideological pressure, even when it is from the South,”⁸¹ it is “disingenuous” to call human rights work Eurocentric; rather the work of “righting wrongs is shared above a class line that to some extent and unevenly cuts across race and the North-South divide.”⁸²

The relevance of Spivak’s insights were very clear throughout my fieldwork. For example, I would regularly encounter Jordanian NGO workers who would claim that Syrians are ‘more conservative’ than Jordanians, which was deemed to explain some of the gender practices of Syrian refugees in the country. This kind of claim would often be offered as a general statement, as if it were possible to discuss issues of societal conservatism at this level of abstraction. Even if one were to accept the plausibility of such generalisations, the proposition itself is deeply questionable. For example, according to the anthropologist Ann-Christin Wagner, who studies Syrian refugees in Mafraq, one

⁷⁸ Interview with SGBV specialist (2), Amman, July 2016.

⁷⁹ Spivak, “Righting Wrongs,” 527.

⁸⁰ Spivak, 527.

⁸¹ Spivak, 527.

⁸² Spivak, 525.

of biggest complaints of Syrian women living in the city is that their mobility in Mafraq is significantly more restricted by conservative social norms, which they did not experience in Syria.⁸³

At other times, however, these sentiments would be referring to, or making examples of, specific groups of Syrians, particularly those, echoing the themes of Spivak's article, who were deemed 'poor' and 'rural.' These statements would therefore often be attached to the population of Za'tari in particular, the majority of whom lived in rural Dera'a prior to the conflict. 'Early marriage', for example, was an issue that was deemed to be representative of the rurality and poverty of the camp population.⁸⁴ As copious scholarship has demonstrated, identities are created in contrast to 'others.'⁸⁵ These statements were therefore the creation of a division between the English-speaking, typically well-educated Jordanians who work in the refugee response and the allegedly conservative refugees who were their 'beneficiaries.' Western humanitarians in Jordan are not the only ones to engage in righting (gendered) wrongs.

For many of the men I spoke to in Za'tari, the gender work of humanitarian actors, and their consistent focus on women through this work, appeared to be experienced as a form of social engineering. I consistently encountered the perception that women were becoming more powerful, that gendered roles and responsibilities were changing, and that the policies of humanitarian actors and NGOs were the root cause of this change.⁸⁶ The frameworks and goals were understood to be external to the Syrian community and the Muslim context in which the residents of Za'tari lived, even if many of the programmes were implemented by Jordanian staff who were themselves practising Muslims. As Spivak argued, the frameworks are infused with "unremitting Northern-ideological pressure."⁸⁷ Why was all the education and learning in the camp coming from "Norwegians and Europeans," one Syrian man asked me, "what are we meant to learn

⁸³ Fieldnotes, Mafraq, 26.05.2016. I am very grateful to Ann-Christin for showing me around Mafraq, introducing me to her friends, and for sharing her insights about life in the city with me.

⁸⁴ Conversations with humanitarian and NGO workers, 17.09.2015 and 06.10.2015; interviews with SGBV specialist (1), Amman, November 2015; and Ruba Abu-Taleb.

⁸⁵ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1–47.

⁸⁶ E.g. in conversations with Syrian refugee men and women, Za'tari, 01.08.2016; interview with Syrian shop-holder in Za'tari, man (3), Za'tari, 01.08.2016.

⁸⁷ Spivak, "Righting Wrongs," 527.

from them?”⁸⁸ Or, as another man straightforwardly asked me, “why are they trying to change things?”⁸⁹

The gender interventions that were part of the Syria refugee response, therefore, while cloaked in a language of objectivity and universality, are in fact deeply particular and political interventions into the lives, social formations, and gendered understandings, of the Syrian refugee population. It is ‘known’, ‘globally’, that refugee women (particularly poor rural women) are the ones who need humanitarian assistance, and are the ones who ‘gender’ is ‘about.’ But the view of refugee men as not a fundamental or central object of interest for humanitarian work was not limited to work that was focused on ‘gender,’ nor was the conflation between ‘gender’ and ‘women’ the only cause of men’s uncertain position in humanitarian work. Rather, gendered and racialised understandings of ‘the refugee’ render questionable Syrian men’s status within the category of people whom humanitarians are ostensibly there to serve.

Interrogating the Figure of the ‘Refugee’

As noted in the introduction, in the existing literatures on refugee men, and on men in development and humanitarianism, the focus is typically on the creation of masculinities or on men’s place in, or relationship to, the gender interventions of the humanitarian sector. Such a perspective, while important, is far too narrow a way to understanding humanitarianisms’ relationships with refugee men. A more thorough analysis must include an understanding of how Syrian men are positioned relative to the figure of the ‘refugee.’

As Hyndman and Giles have argued, refugees in contexts of protracted displacement in the South are typically designated as non-threatening to states and other actors in/from the North. These populations of refugees, they claim, “are feminized based on 1) their location and 2) lack of legal status,” in contrast to refugees moving to the North who “are positioned as potential threats to 1) security and 2) the welfare state” because they defy the assumed passivity of refugeehood to move towards the North.⁹⁰ Those refugees

⁸⁸ Conversation with Syrian refugee man, Za’tari, 02.02.2016.

⁸⁹ Conversation with Syrian refugee man, Za’tari, 27.07.2016.

⁹⁰ Jennifer Hyndman and Wenona Giles, “Waiting for What? The Feminization of Asylum in Protracted Situations,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 18, no. 3 (2011): 363; on the feminisation of refugees in the South, see also Heather L Johnson, “Click to Donate: Visual Images, Constructing Victims and Imagining the Female Refugee,” *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 6 (2011): 1015–37; Malkki, “Speechless Emissaries”; Nahla Valji,

who remain ‘in place,’ they argue, “are both feminized and depoliticised through the purported benevolence of humanitarian aid.”⁹¹ As they further note, a space of long-term displacement in the South can “be feminized as a space of vulnerable ‘womenandchildren’” even when the population is comprised of women, men and children.⁹² Men are, in physical and demographic terms, part of that population, often to the same degree as in refugees’ countries of origin, but simultaneously they do not fit into the gendered ways in which refugee populations in protracted displacement in the South are imagined – as passive and non-threatening. This renders men in contexts of displacement as present but made effectively invisible.

This invisibility of refugee men is demonstrated by the regular absence of men as a category or demographic with whom humanitarians believe they should work. Despite regular lip-service being paid to accounting for the needs of ‘women, men, girls, and boys’, outside of this formulation ‘men’ are rarely mentioned as a category with whom humanitarians should work, except if it is to prevent sexual violence against women and children. The Jordan section of the 2013 Syria Regional Response Plan for protection states it is a challenge to provide sustainable protection services, “especially child/adolescent/women friendly spaces in camps and host communities, and life-saving services for children and women victims of violence.”⁹³ An Inter-agency update for the 2014 Jordan plan discusses “vulnerable refugees inside the camp (female-headed households, elderly, disabled, youth at risk, etc.)”⁹⁴ In a similar vein, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2015 response plan, when discussing Syria itself, states that “[w]omen, youth, the elderly and children are caught in the conflict.”⁹⁵ As will be explored in depth in Chapter 4, these understandings of who constitutes a ‘vulnerable’ population continue in spite of evidence that they do not accurately reflect the needs of the population on the ground.

“Women and the Refugee Convention: Fifty Years of Seeking Visibility,” *Refuge: Canada’s Journal on Refugees* 19, no. 5 (2001): 25–35.

⁹¹ Hyndman and Giles, “Waiting for What?,” 362.

⁹² Hyndman and Giles, 367.

⁹³ UNHCR, “Syria Regional Response Plan,” 2013, 145, <http://www.unhcr.org/51b0a6469.pdf>.

⁹⁴ UNHCR, “Syrian Refugee Response Jordan Interagency Update,” May 27, 2014, 2, http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/PCPD/images/JordanInteragencyUpdate_27April-10May-opt.pdf.

⁹⁵ UNDP, “Resilience Building In Response to the Syria Crisis,” 2015, 14, <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rbas/doc/SyriaResponse/Kuwait%20III/Resilience%20Building%20In%20response%20to%20the%20Syria%20Crisis%20Eng.PDF>.

The existence of a ‘youth’ category, and the founding of a Youth Task Force in Za‘tari, created an avenue for some forms of work with young refugee men, although in the early years of the camp this work too was sorely lacking.⁹⁶ Who is classified as a ‘youth,’ however, is contested. Jordan’s ‘National Youth Strategy’ defines ‘youth’ as those between ages 12 and 30,⁹⁷ in contrast to the more restrictive United Nations definition of those between ages 15 and 24.⁹⁸ Some organisations working in the refugee response adopted their own wider definitions, with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) opening its youth programmes to those between the ages of 16 and 32.⁹⁹ Furthermore, while these categorisations of youth are based on numerical age, the concept of ‘youth’ (*shabiba*) is more fluid than any numerical definition will allow for, as it represents a transition from ‘childhood’ to ‘adulthood’,¹⁰⁰ which can itself be disrupted by displacement.¹⁰¹ As Chapter 4 will outline, these ‘youth’ activities were oversubscribed, in part because of interest from men over 30, who did not fall into any of the other demographic categories with whom humanitarians wanted to work.

The absence of ‘men’ as a category with whom to work stands in tension with their obvious presence among a population that the humanitarian sector understands itself to be assisting. According to one NGO Director, who was critical of the ways in which humanitarian actors dealt with refugee men, because men are part of the overall population, humanitarians “can’t actually choose to be against them.”¹⁰² At the same time they are not really ‘for’ them either; men are seen as separate to the population with whom humanitarians should work. In his words:

there is a place in our minds where we are kind, [for example] to children and [in] child-friendly spaces, and a place in our minds [where] people aren’t there...[while] no humanitarian relief person would ever say life would be better in a refugee camp if there were no young

⁹⁶ Interview with former NGO worker in Za‘tari.

⁹⁷ Higher Council for Youth and United Nations Development Programme, “National Youth Strategy for Jordan 2005-2009: Summary,” December 2004, http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Jordan_2005_National_Youth_Strategy.pdf.

⁹⁸ see UNESCO, “What Do We Mean by ‘Youth’?,” UNESCO, n.d., <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition/>.

⁹⁹ Women’s Refugee Commission, “Norwegian Refugee Council Jordan Youth Programme Evaluation” (Norwegian Refugee Council, May 2016), https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/evaluations/nrc-youth_programme-jordan-final_report.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ Pruitt, Berents, and Munro, “Gender and Age in the Construction of Male Youth in the European Migration ‘Crisis.’”

¹⁰¹ Christina R. Clark, “Understanding Vulnerability: From Categories to Experiences of Young Congolese People in Uganda: Understanding Vulnerability,” *Children & Society* 21, no. 4 (2007): 284–96.

¹⁰² Interview with Curt Rhodes, International Director of Questscope, Amman, 19.05.2016.

males, they're not there [in our minds], consequently the programming for them is not there, the priority is not there.¹⁰³

Put another way, many humanitarians did not seem to understand working with refugee men as part of their job. One interviewee and former Za'tari NGO worker explained to me how, in early 2013, they believed that numerous organisations were prioritising women and girls in the forthcoming plans for the year without providing any evidence that this was what was most needed by the camp population. Together with a colleague from another NGO, they compiled information about all of the projects then operating in the camp, and to whom those projects were open. At that time, there were only 3 activities even open to males over 18. Not even all of these were specifically targeted at, or suitable for, adult males, but were merely technically open to them, and some were only open to a proportion of them because they were designated as activities for 'youth.'¹⁰⁴ They presented their findings to a meeting of numerous organisations involved in planning forthcoming priorities. I asked my interviewee how their findings were received. "There wasn't any hostility to it," they explained, "so it wasn't so much about it being poorly received, as not being received at all." Some were intrigued by the suggestion that they should be working with adult males, but others did not seem to believe that the absence of work with men was even a gap that needed filling.¹⁰⁵

Another interlocutor explained that in one project in Za'tari that he had been overseeing, the attendees had been more than three quarters female. He enquired with his staff about this statistic, and was told the various reasons why men weren't attending – primarily a (perceived) lack of interest from Syrian men.¹⁰⁶ While my interlocutor found these reasons potentially plausible, he asked his staff what they had been doing to try and get men and boys more involved in their work. His question, he told me, was greeted with "blank stares all round," as he leaned towards me with his eyes open as wide as possible to demonstrate with exaggerated effect. It appeared not to have occurred to his staff that they should be *encouraging* men to attend their programmes.¹⁰⁷

These understandings of refugeehood are also shared, some humanitarian workers told me, by major refugee response donors, and by some of the senior management of

¹⁰³ Interview with Curt Rhodes.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with former NGO worker in Za'tari.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ See Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁷ Conversation with humanitarian worker, Amman, 28.01.2016.

international organisations, who are typically based in Europe or the United States. Some individuals who had tried to advocate for more assistance for particular groups of refugee men (for example single men), or who at least were dissatisfied with the approach their organisations were taking on questions of gender, told me that their donors were primarily interested in refugee women and children, and in particular ‘female-headed households.’¹⁰⁸ It is noteworthy, however, that the number of humanitarian workers who told me they had wanted to, or had tried to, work with refugee men but were prevented from doing so by the donors was very small. In the clear majority of cases, it appeared that this gendered epistemology of refugeehood was subscribed to by humanitarian workers in the field.

Race also plays an important role in understandings of ‘refugeehood,’ because the figure of the refugee is not only gendered, but also racialised. As numerous critical scholars have demonstrated, Northern understandings of the ‘refugee’ have changed dramatically since the period after World War II. BS Chimni has argued that in the era of the Cold War, when refugees were strategically useful to Northern states, the “image of a ‘normal’ refugee was constructed – white, male and anti-communist.”¹⁰⁹ In this context, the politics of refugees were strategically useful to Western states and actors, because refugees’ anti-communist credentials reinforced Western narratives about the USSR and its allies persecuting their populations. In the 1980s, however, when there was a perception that more Southern refugees were coming to the North, the image of the refugee began to change. Using visual depictions of refugees produced by UNHCR, Heather Johnson has demonstrated that the “popular image of the ‘normal’ refugee is now that of a poor African woman or child.”¹¹⁰ This figure, she argues, was feminised, racialised, and also depoliticised, as the focus shifted from the “heroic, political individual to a nameless flood of poverty-stricken women and children.”¹¹¹

As is explored at different points of this thesis, the racialised assumption that ‘normal’ or ‘default’ refugees were poor ‘Africans’ was widespread among humanitarians working in

¹⁰⁸ Conversation with INGO programme manager and INGO worker, Amman, 12.02.2016 and 20.02.2016.

¹⁰⁹ Chimni, “Geopolitics of Refugee Studies,” 351.

¹¹⁰ Johnson, “Click to Donate,” 1023.

¹¹¹ Johnson, 1016.

Za'tari. 'Africa' appeared to be where humanitarians learned how to be humanitarians.¹¹² The preferences, needs, and actions of Syrian refugees were deemed surprising, either pleasantly or problematically, when they diverged from the expected behaviour of refugees in 'Africa.' This racialisation of the refugee population appeared in humanitarians' reflections on Syrians' demands for a varied diet,¹¹³ in their desire to work rather than receive aid,¹¹⁴ and in their 'entrepreneurship' and transformation of the camp space.¹¹⁵ Like Iraqis before them,¹¹⁶ Syrians were also deemed fundamentally different to 'typical' refugees because they came from, and were hosted in, middle-income countries, unlike refugees in 'Africa.' This presented a puzzle for some humanitarians, because Syrians' material needs and expectations were higher than those to which many humanitarians were accustomed.¹¹⁷

Many refugee populations differ, in multiple ways, from the prevailing feminised and racialised understanding of the refugee as 'African women and children.' It is noteworthy, however, that the ways in which, within global politics, Arab men in particular are depicted as threatening, violent and patriarchal,¹¹⁸ positions them as radically other to this picture. Yet, at the time of my fieldwork, humanitarians did not typically evoke these stereotypes of Arab men. In the early years of the camp, men's protests over resource distribution and living conditions, and their attempts to exercise agency over the space of the camp, were seen by humanitarian and state agencies to necessitate increased governance of the camp, including increased and at times draconian policing.¹¹⁹ Yet once these governing actors were (at least relatively) successful in exerting their agency over the camp, men lost one of the main ways in which humanitarian actors could understand them: as subjects to be governed. Their invisibility reappeared.

As feminist scholarship has demonstrated, the category 'men' has often, and problematically, been used as an "unmarked universal category to stand in for humanity

¹¹² Social discussion with humanitarian workers, Amman, 09.04.2016; see also Liisa H. Malkki, *The Need to Help: The Domestic Arts of International Humanitarianism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 7.

¹¹³ Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 27.10.2015.

¹¹⁴ Conversation with humanitarian and NGO workers, Amman, 18.12.2015.

¹¹⁵ See Chapter 7.

¹¹⁶ Crisp, "Finding Space for Protection," 91.

¹¹⁷ Conversation with humanitarian and NGO workers, Amman, 18.12.2015.

¹¹⁸ Marcia Claire Inhorn, *The New Arab Man: Emergent Masculinities, Technologies, and Islam in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

¹¹⁹ See Chapter 3.

in general,”¹²⁰ leaving women as a marked category. In one sense, the absence of men as a category within the frameworks of humanitarian action has the same result; men are rendered invisible, the implicit default against which ‘women,’ ‘children,’ ‘youth,’ ‘the elderly,’ are marked. As Terrell Carver has argued, however, in a valuable theoretical contribution to the study of men and masculinities, the abstract individual in political theory is presented simultaneously as masculine and as degendered. While this excludes women and their experiences from this default, abstract subject position, it also obscures the hierarchies of masculinities that exist, through its presentation of only dominant and stereotypical forms of masculinity.¹²¹ Within the context of humanitarian work with refugees, refugee women are marked in gendered ways as ‘the vulnerable,’ thus as removed from the default abstract figure of ‘humanity,’ who embodies a stereotypical form of dominant masculinity complete with agency and independence. Yet simultaneously, and perhaps paradoxically, because refugee women’s perceived vulnerability accords with the contemporary figure of ‘the refugee,’ they also occupy a default position within humanitarian action. As bodies seen to deviate from this figure, refugee men have an unclear position within humanitarian schema.

Humanitarianism, Politics, and the (Dis)empowerment of Refugees

While refugee men are made invisible within and by understandings of gender and refugeehood, their place within humanitarianism is also rendered uncertain by gendered understandings of politics and power, and their relation to humanitarianism. The mandate of UNHCR, like many other humanitarian agencies, is explicitly humanitarian, not political,¹²² which can enable humanitarian organisations increased room to manoeuvre relative to states.¹²³ Nevertheless, the idea that humanitarianism is apolitical is a “convenient fiction,” which relies on a particularly narrow conception of politics,¹²⁴ and/or a redefinition of what is ‘political.’¹²⁵ Even humanitarian organisations’ accountability to refugees is often understood to be a technical, rather than a political

¹²⁰ Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne, “Introduction,” in *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*, ed. Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne (London: Routledge, 1994), 1; see also Connell, *Masculinities*, 70.

¹²¹ Terrell Carver, *Gender Is Not a Synonym for Women* (Boulder; London: Lynne Rienner, 1996) Chapter 1.

¹²² Chandler, “The Road to Military Humanitarianism.”

¹²³ Barnett and Weiss, “Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present,” 38.

¹²⁴ Barnett and Weiss, “Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present.”

¹²⁵ Chandler, “The Road to Military Humanitarianism.”

issue.¹²⁶ When some forms of humanitarian action are recognised as political, this designation often utilises a restrictive sense of the term politics, which equates to, for example, ‘politics as policy.’¹²⁷ Attempts to separate humanitarianism and politics, by both humanitarian practitioners and some scholars, continue, as Fassin notes, however obvious it is that humanitarianism is in fact embedded in politics.¹²⁸ In addition to its ostensible apolitical status, as this thesis will demonstrate, humanitarianism in contexts of displacement is also depoliticising of the populations it works with. It is thus not only ostensibly non-political, but in practice also anti-political.¹²⁹

As the previous discussions made clear, women’s rights and empowerment are now understood as part of humanitarianism, and therefore as part of the implementation of ‘objective,’ ‘global’ standards, rather than as part of the ‘political,’ from which humanitarians attempt to separate from their work. Reminiscent of James Ferguson’s dissection of development in Lesotho, in gender work in humanitarianism there is a “common discourse and the same way of defining ‘problems,’ a common pool of ‘experts,’ and a common stock of expertise.”¹³⁰ These attempts to promote (particular conceptions of) women’s rights and empowerment as part of humanitarianism, and as separate from politics, thereby re-inscribe women’s rights as a non-political objective.¹³¹ It re-affirms one of the “recurring litany of Western dualisms,” against which feminists have been struggling, that sees women as non-political and located primarily in the private sphere, and men as political agents in the public sphere.¹³²

While this re-iteration of the dichotomies of political/non-political and public/private depoliticises refugee women in line with visions of refugeehood as feminised, it also locates men within the public, political sphere. This means that they can be understood as distinct to the typical populations for whom humanitarians should care, as is

¹²⁶ Katja Lindskov Jacobsen and Kristin Bergtora Sandvik, “Introduction: Quest for an Accountability Cure,” in *UNHCR and the Struggle for Accountability: Technology, Law and Results-Based Management*, ed. Kristin Bergtora Sandvik and Katja Lindskov Jacobsen (London: Routledge, 2016), 1–25.

¹²⁷ Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*, 95–98.

¹²⁸ Fassin, “The Predicament of Humanitarianism,” 39.

¹²⁹ Naohiko Omata, “Unwelcome Participation, Undesirable Agency? Paradoxes of De-Politicisation in a Refugee Camp,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (2017): 108–31; Linda Tabar, “Disrupting Development, Reclaiming Solidarity: The Anti-Politics of Humanitarianism,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 45, no. 4 (2016): 16–31.

¹³⁰ James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 8.

¹³¹ For a discussion of the ways in which refugee women are represented in depoliticised ways, see Baines, *Vulnerable Bodies*.

¹³² Peterson, “Introduction,” 7.

represented by Jordanian authorities' threats to separate all single men from the rest of the camp population in Za'tari,¹³³ and the differential treatment given to Syrian military defectors, clearly political actors, for whom specific accommodation was set up.¹³⁴ The location of men within the public and political also means that many of the gendered threats that men disproportionately experience become subjects that humanitarian actors cannot, or will not, speak about publicly. As will be explored in more depth in Chapter 4, Syrian men are particularly (although not exclusively) likely to be subject to police harassment for working without a permit, forced encampment, deportation to Syria, and particular forms of police surveillance because of the securitisation of male, Muslim bodies.¹³⁵

In order to maintain their relationships with the Jordanian state, which is the basis on which they can be present within Jordan, humanitarian agencies discuss questions such as deportations to Syria primarily away from the public eye and behind 'closed doors.' In public they emphasise, as then Head of UNHCR Jordan Andrew Harper said, that they "understand the government's legitimate security concerns."¹³⁶ In May 2017, I was interviewed, alongside a spokesperson from UNHCR, on *Newsmakers*, the flagship news programme of TRT World about Syrian refugees' access to work in Jordan. I raised the point that refugees who held work permits were less likely to be deported as a punishment for work, which was one of the main benefits of obtaining a work permit, according to Syrian refugees who hold them.¹³⁷ The interviewer shifted the focus of his questions to this topic, and to whether Jordan was offering Syrian refugees due process and adequately protecting their rights. The UNHCR spokesperson declined several opportunities to state that Jordan could "do better" in terms of its deportation policy, and chose to emphasise the burden Jordan faced hosting refugees, and re-iterated that UNHCR advocates for the rights of all refugees.¹³⁸ The insistence on the particular understanding of non-political humanitarianism severely impedes humanitarians' abilities

¹³³ Taylor Luck, "Authorities to Separate Single Men from Families at Zaatari," *Jordan Vista*, September 25, 2012, <http://vista.sahafi.jo/art.php?id=18cc6ec107059f54d530fe6759e9949ab18cb386>.

¹³⁴ Jfra News, "جفرا نيوز", *نقل كبار الضباط السوريين المنشقين الى الراجحي*, August 24, 2012, <http://www.jfranews.com.jo/post.php?id=41317>.

¹³⁵ Amar, "Middle East Masculinity Studies"; Inhorn, *The New Arab Man*.

¹³⁶ Hazim al-Hamwi and Musab Shawabkeh, "Jordan: Deadly Expulsions," ARIJ: Arab Reporters for Investigate Journalism, June 2015, <http://en.arij.net/report/deadly-expulsions/>.

¹³⁷ ILO, "Work Permits and Employment of Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Towards Formalising the Work of Syrian Refugees" (Beirut: International Labour Organization, 2017), 35.

¹³⁸ TRT World, *The Newsmakers: Refuge in Jordan*, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMQ07ShOA9s>.

to publicly discuss or condemn some of the worst violations of the rights of those they are mandated to defend.

Similarly, humanitarian understandings of power highlight some power inequalities, and obscure and perpetuate others. A key element of the depoliticised implementation of 'global' women's rights is the 'empowerment' of refugee women. Although humanitarian documents often do not define empowerment, or discuss it largely in economic terms,¹³⁹ the literature from humanitarian agencies is keen to demonstrate how their programmes contribute to 'women's empowerment,' whether that be programmes to support survivors of SGBV, creating 'safe spaces,' or providing 'Cash for Work' (CfW) opportunities.¹⁴⁰ The generality and ubiquity of the term was one of the striking elements of NGO discussions about refugee women during my fieldwork.¹⁴¹ As in other contexts, it was assumed that women needed to be 'trained' in order to be 'empowered.'¹⁴² Subsequently, as one NGO worker put it, "after all this getting empowered" refugee women could run their own projects in the community.¹⁴³ As feminist scholars have argued, the ways in which the notion of empowerment is deployed are limited. 'Empowerment' for women often reflects an individualist and "liberal notion of feminist choice" that fails to unsettle the privileges that allow some to make more choices than others.¹⁴⁴

In line with 'global' understandings, it is also assumed that women want to be empowered in the particular ways that humanitarians offer. One interlocutor recalled an incident from her office, where she worked in a team promoting 'women's empowerment.' Her manager, a white woman from the United States, was confronted with data that said many Syrian women in Jordan would prefer opportunities to conduct paid work from inside, not outside, the home. The manager's response to this was to

¹³⁹ E.g. see UN Women, "Restoring Dignity and Building Resilience: Monitoring Report on UN Women's Programming in Za'atari Refugee Camp June-October 2015" (Amman: UN Women, 2016); Women's Refugee Commission, "Unpacking Gender - The Humanitarian Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan" (New York: Women's Refugee Commission, November 2014).

¹⁴⁰ E.g. see Melanie Megevand, "Women's Protection and Empowerment Programming for Syrian Refugees in Urban Jordan: Challenges and Lessons Learned," *Field Exchange Emergency Nutrition Network* 48 (November 2014): 97–100; UN Women, "Restoring Dignity and Building Resilience."

¹⁴¹ Fieldnotes, Amman, 07.10.2015, 18.01.2016 and 19.04.2016.

¹⁴² Al-Ali and Pratt, "The United States, the Iraqi Women's Diaspora and Women's 'Empowerment' in Iraq."

¹⁴³ Conversation with NGO workers, Amman, 17.01.2016.

¹⁴⁴ Wendy Harcourt, "Another Hotel Room, Another City, Another Training: Reflections on Co-Optation of Feminism by Development," *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 2017, 4.

argue that women were expressing these preferences because they were conditioned by the society in which they live.¹⁴⁵ While these views may indeed be socially conditioned, so may those of the manager herself. But contemporary liberal thought, as Beate Jahn has argued, assumes “that it is not the actual consent of real, existing people that establishes legitimacy,” but rather what they would consent to, were they ‘rational’ people.¹⁴⁶ Revealingly, she argues, this structure of thought is shared by liberalism and imperialism, which further locates humanitarianism, with its liberal underpinnings, within the broader and longer context of Western (post-)colonial interventions in the Middle East. As has been demonstrated in other contexts such as Gaza and Somalia, women often experience becoming the leading provider and decision-maker for the family humiliating and exploitative, rather than empowering.¹⁴⁷

In this narrow understanding of empowerment, women were to be ‘empowered’ as a means to gender equality, that is, empowered relative to the men in their communities. Humanitarian agencies did not appear to believe, however, that refugee women or men needed empowerment relative to humanitarian agencies themselves or against the state that hosts them, and enacts violence upon them. There are some attempts to create avenues for refugees’ voices to be heard; for example a Women’s Committee has been founded, under the auspices of UN Women, to “serve as interlocutors between the community, service providers and camp decision-makers.”¹⁴⁸ IRD run regular meetings for both men and women in the camp to raise community issues, although the camp residents with whom I spoke about these meetings said that the responses they get usually concerned reports, process, and information about the progress made so far.¹⁴⁹ These programmes, which reflect humanitarian rhetorical commitments to ‘participation,’¹⁵⁰ do not facilitate, or imply a need for, a transfer of power away from humanitarians and towards refugees themselves.

¹⁴⁵ Fieldnotes, Amman, 09.04.2016.

¹⁴⁶ Beate Jahn, “Kant, Mill, and Illiberal Legacies in International Affairs,” *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (2005): 200.

¹⁴⁷ See El-Bushra and Gardner, “The Impact of War on Somali Men”; Aitemad Muhanna, *Agency and Gender in Gaza* (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013).

¹⁴⁸ UN Women, “UN Secretary-General Visits UN Women Centre in Za’atari Refugee Camp,” UN Women, March 28, 2017, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/3/news-un-secretary-general-visits-un-women-centre-in-zaatari-refugee-camp-jordan>.

¹⁴⁹ Interviews with married Syrian man in Za’tari (2), Za’tari, 27.07.2016 and married Syrian woman in Za’tari (2), Za’tari, 27.07.2016.

¹⁵⁰ E.g. see Tania Kaiser, “Participating in Development? Refugee Protection, Politics and Developmental Approaches to Refugee Management in Uganda,” *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (2005): 351–67; Elisabeth Olivius, “Displacing Equality? Women’s Participation and Humanitarian Aid Effectiveness in Refugee Camps,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (2014): 93–117.

Whether refugee men in particular are, or should be, among the ‘empowered’ is a question that never seems to be asked. I recorded in my fieldnotes the first time I heard a humanitarian worker discuss the ‘empowerment’ of men. It was 13th June 2016, nine and a half months into my fieldwork. Even in that instance, the sentence in which the ‘men’ and ‘empowerment’ were connected was arguing “the Jordanian government doesn’t want men to be empowered because they are a threat to the labour market.”¹⁵¹ Even though I had previously contemplated, much earlier in my fieldwork, the absence of men from the empowerment agenda, I was still almost taken aback by her words. The pairing seemed awkward, if not somehow contradictory, within the world in which I was operating. In line with the previously discussed failure to understand men both as subjects and objects of power, refugee men appear simply as an undifferentiated category of privilege.

The empowerment of refugee women as part of the implementation of humanitarian agendas, and the silence surrounding whether refugee men need empowerment, places a single axis of power and differentiation, between Syrian women and Syrian men, at the foreground of humanitarian thinking and work on empowerment. This is reflective of the binaries that are infused into humanitarian and development gender work – of the “kind of thinking that sets up women as victims and men as the problem and that says that men are powerful and women are powerless.”¹⁵² Men are assumed to have power and agency, thus rendering the notion of their empowerment counterintuitive.

In focusing on this particular form of empowerment for women, humanitarian agencies simultaneously keep the focus off the multiple axes of power and differentiation in which they themselves are implicated. The apparent depiction of humanitarianism as apolitical is accompanied by a portrayal of humanitarians as devoid of power.¹⁵³ But they are not merely impartial defenders of the marginalised, but exercisers of power over those marginalised subjects. Empowering refugees to take control of their own lives would, to a significant extent, reduce the need for and role of NGOs themselves. More meaningful and substantive empowerment, therefore, represents a risk and a threat to NGOs. They are “so scared of it...because, to a certain extent, empowerment is a zero-sum game,”

¹⁵¹ Conversation with INGO worker, Karak, 13.06.2016.

¹⁵² Cornwall, Armas, and Botha, “Women’s Empowerment: What Do Men Have to Do with It?” 196.

¹⁵³ Barnett and Weiss, “Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present.”

one former NGO worker explained to me.¹⁵⁴ While it might be assumed that it is Syrians who need NGOs, the reverse is also true. As Curt Rhodes, the International Director of Questscope explained, NGOs “need local people as the stage upon which they act.” Yet within the context of the camp you cannot give up power or control “because the paradigm in which you must perform will not allow [that].”¹⁵⁵

Humanitarianism itself is deeply disempowering of refugees; hierarchy lies at its heart.¹⁵⁶ UNHCR specifically has long been critiqued for its accountability flowing primarily upwards, to its donors and powerful states, rather than downwards, to the populations it serves. As Jacobsen and Sandvik note, after decades of discussing downward accountability, in 2012 UNHCR could only claim that it “increasingly recognized that their principal accountability is to the people they serve.”¹⁵⁷ Despite some ostensible progress, UNHCR remains one of many humanitarian organisations “that has yet to achieve radical improvements in accountability to persons of concern.”¹⁵⁸ As Harrell-Bond, Voutira and Leopold argued many years ago, humanitarianism:

borrows from the idea of charity the concept of non-reciprocation...and, in turn, uses it in order to impose a condition on the donations: desert or merit which is construed in terms of absolute destitution on the part of the recipient.¹⁵⁹

These are not relations between equals; indeed, the relation underlying work with refugees “is almost always one of philanthropy or humanitarian obligation, not entitlement.”¹⁶⁰

The methodology of a humanitarian survey in Za‘tari demonstrates clearly the disempowering and instrumentalising nature of humanitarianism, even as it claims to help and empower. In 2015 the International Medical Corps and the Sisterhood is Global Initiative, conducted a mental health and psychosocial support needs assessment of Syrian refugees in Jordan, in camp and non-camp settings, and Jordanians in

¹⁵⁴ Interview with former NGO worker in Za‘tari.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Curt Rhodes.

¹⁵⁶ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011) chapter 9.

¹⁵⁷ UNHCR (2012), quoted in Jacobsen and Sandvik, “Introduction,” 9.

¹⁵⁸ Jacobsen and Sandvik, 14.

¹⁵⁹ Barbara Harrell-Bond, Eftihia Voutira, and Mark Leopold, “Counting the Refugees: Gifts, Givers, Patrons and Clients,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 5, no. 3–4 (1992): 205–25.

¹⁶⁰ Hyndman and Giles, “Waiting for What?” 367.

communities hosting Syrians.¹⁶¹ Their sample in Za'tari consisted of 147 individuals who were “approached by the research team randomly [who] asked the first person encountered in the street by explaining to them the purpose and type of study conducted” and sought their consent for a 20-30 minute interview.¹⁶² Some of the interviews, the report says, were conducted in “community areas” and “safe spaces facilities” of NGOs in the camp, although it does not state how many, or where else interviews were conducted. 5% of people approached either did not agree to be interviewed, or withdrew before the process was finished. The interview consisted of a series of questions, including

about how often during the last 2 weeks did you feel **so afraid that nothing could calm you down** – would you say **all** of the time, **most** of the time, **some** of the time, **little** of the time, or **none** of the time?...Question four: during the last 2 weeks, about how often did you feel **so hopeless that you wanted to be dead?** [Emphasis in original].¹⁶³

In the name of helping Syrian refugees, Syrians were approached at random on the street by a stranger, in a refugee camp which they could not readily leave, and were expected to answer potentially (re-)traumatising questions about their recent preference for death over life.

This disempowerment is part of a wider facet of humanitarian action that this thesis explores: the privileging of humanitarian goals, understandings, and knowledge, over those of refugees. The knowledge generated by the local community, for example on who is really in need of particular services such as psychosocial support, is disregarded in favour of the ‘global’ knowledge of humanitarianism. Humanitarian actors understand, plan, and assess their livelihood programmes in respect of their own objectives, rather than how they are experienced by Syrian refugees. As Frantz Fanon argued, in reference to his psychiatric practice, for a system to work for the people whom it is ostensibly serving, those people’s “structuring values have to be embraced without any complexes,” rather than being, in the case of the Syria refugee response, centred around the values of humanitarians.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ See International Medical Corps and Sisterhood is Global Institute, “Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Needs Assessment of Displaced Syrians and Host Communities in Jordan,” November 2015.

¹⁶² International Medical Corps and Sisterhood is Global Institute, 10.

¹⁶³ International Medical Corps and Sisterhood is Global Institute, 14,17.

¹⁶⁴ Frantz Fanon, quoted in Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait* (Cornell University Press, 2006), 71.

This power that the humanitarian sector deploys is not only disempowering for refugees, but is deeply gendered and racialised. In its deployment of ‘objectivity,’ its prioritisation of the ‘global’ knowledge of humanitarianism, and its understandings of what Syrians would ‘rationally’ want, humanitarians exercise their power in ways that accord with what Terrell Carver has labelled ‘rational-bureaucratic’ masculinities. These modes of personhood value “rationality, logic, economy, functionality, specialization, infallibility, consistency, value, reliability, interchangeability, and most importantly, freedom from emotion.”¹⁶⁵ This demonstrates and embodies the rational element of humanitarianism, in which it seeks to apply supposedly universal principles, even as it is motivated by emotion and the desire to save strangers.¹⁶⁶ As Anibal Quijano and Maria Lugones have demonstrated in their work on the colonality of power, the notion of rationality is expressive of a gendered binary and hierarchy and is located within prevailing power structures as an exclusively European property, demonstrating that both gender and race are built into these hierarchies.¹⁶⁷

At other times, when confronted with the agency and politics of refugees, and refugee men in particular, humanitarian workers deploy “masculine forms of white authoritarian leadership.”¹⁶⁸ The former UNHCR chief official in Za‘tari, Kilian Kleinschmidt, demanded that the population over which he held power was subservient, depoliticised, and that it respect his ‘macho’ performances as indicative of his power and control over the camp.¹⁶⁹ As Linda Tabar has argued, humanitarian responses to suffering are predicated on the “non-Westerner’s conformity to a subordinate position that denies their voice and agency.”¹⁷⁰ In the context of Za‘tari, it was refugee men in particular who were seen to disrupt this subordinate position, and that masculinised performances of humanitarian power attempted to challenge. In addition to constituting an attempt to realign the population of Za‘tari with a particular vision of refugeehood, it can also be understood as another attempt, common in the history of external interventions in the region, to disempower men in (post-)colonial nations through their feminisation.

¹⁶⁵ Terrell Carver, “Being a Man,” *Government and Opposition* 41, no. 3 (2006): 464.

¹⁶⁶ Fassin, “The Predicament of Humanitarianism.”

¹⁶⁷ See María Lugones, “Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System,” *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007): 186–209; Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007): 168–78.

¹⁶⁸ Cynthia Weber, “The Trump Presidency, Episode 1: Simulating Sovereignty,” *Theory & Event* 20, no. 1 (2017): 132.

¹⁶⁹ See Chapter 3.

¹⁷⁰ Tabar, “Disrupting Development, Reclaiming Solidarity,” 23.

Conclusion

This chapter has asked new questions of humanitarianism. Despite the now long-standing debates and scholarship on the feminisation of asylum and refugeehood, there is surprisingly little interrogation of humanitarianism's relationships with those who do not fit straightforwardly into that framework. Much of the scholarship on refugee men focuses on men's masculinities, how they change in exile, and how men fit into and respond to humanitarian work on gender equality and SGBV. By contrast, I have turned the focus onto humanitarianism itself, and its understandings of refugee men. In doing so, I have argued that refugee men disrupt humanitarian understandings of 'gender' and refugeehood, and they therefore have an uncertain position in humanitarian policies, practices and imaginaries. Humanitarian understandings of power and politics depoliticise women's rights and empowerment, side-line the gendered threats that men face, and obscure the masculinised, racialised and disempowering ways that humanitarians exercise power over refugee populations.

The analysis presented in this chapter has reviewed literatures on gender and humanitarianism, refugeehood and humanitarianism, and the politics of (humanitarian) interventions in the South, and put them into conversation with qualitative fieldwork from Jordan, to advance these arguments about the position of refugee men within humanitarianism. The frameworks and understandings of humanitarianism, however, are played out in different contexts in specific ways. Humanitarian practices are embodied, spatial, and material, and are attributed particular meanings that are dependent on context. The next chapter of this thesis, therefore, focuses its attention to the life, governance, and development of Za'tari, the location of my fieldwork.

Chapter 3: Za'tari Refugee Camp

Upon visiting Za'tari, it is impossible not to notice the camp's heavily militarised boundaries, which begin with a checkpoint at its entrance. As someone whose formative experiences of life in the Middle East were in Palestine, at times I found it impossible not to compare the Jordanian checkpoints of Za'tari to the Israeli checkpoints of the West Bank; impossible not to compare the extensive levels of regulation, restriction and surveillance that state authorities sought to acquire through these systems; impossible not to compare the nervousness, bureaucracy, and inconvenience that these systems create. A friend half-joked to me that if she wanted to take her baby to Za'tari to visit her friends and colleagues in the camp, she would smuggle it in rather than apply for a permit (and rather than work out whether a permit was officially necessary).¹ In that moment I also found it impossible not to compare the Jordanian baby without a permit potentially unable to cross into Za'tari, to the Palestinian donkey without a permit I witnessed being stopped from crossing into the farmland of Qalqiliya in 2006. These systems are at once oppressive and absurd.

The checkpoints and permits are some of the many performances of Jordanian sovereignty in and around the camp. Accordingly, I do not see Za'tari as a depoliticised space of exception, as refugee camps are often understood. I begin this chapter by arguing that it is rather a product of a specific context, an instantiation of Jordan's variegated sovereignty, a space that both fragments and extends the space of the nation state, and a spatial mode of governance that facilitates humanitarian control and intervention. I explore how the camp is accessed and experienced by humanitarians and other outsiders, and introduce the camp population and its humanitarian service providers. In analysing the contestations between humanitarian and state authorities and refugees, I demonstrate how Syrians have consistently asserted their agency in the camp by rejecting humanitarian attempts to create a depoliticised space of service provision. Syrian men, in particular, were understood to be 'troublemakers' over whom control must be exerted, which was pursued through a combination of authoritarian and ostensibly 'softer' techniques of governance and policing.

¹ Conversation with NGO worker, Za'tari, 21.07.2016.

Camps as Spaces of Variegated Sovereignty and Intervention

The ‘refugee camp’ as a space, and the modes of governance it enables, has attracted a wealth of scholarship. This work often builds on the analysis of Giorgio Agamben, who has become the new “charismatic legitimator” within critical refugee studies over the past few decades.² In particular, Agamben’s analysis of ‘the camp’ as a space of exception, or as creating a state of exception,³ has become central to many analyses of camp governance and of the lives of refugees, and others, living within them.⁴ As Nando Sigona has noted, Agambenian analysis is deployed “from the Nazi concentration camps to Guantanamo Bay via asylum reception centres.”⁵ Yet as numerous critics have argued, Agambenian scholarship on refugee camps has the effect of generalising, dehistoricising, and depoliticising camps, while leaving little analytical space for the contingencies and specificities of local contexts, or for the agency of refugees, which is central to the analysis presented in this thesis.⁶ In contrast to Agambenian ahistorical understandings of ‘the camp,’ Sigona argues, scholars should ‘de-exceptionali[se] the exception,’ and use agent-oriented approaches “more rooted in the materiality of the camp.”⁷ Similarly, the Agambenian notion of the camp as a space outside of politics has been challenged by scholars who have argued that the camp should instead be understood as a space of ‘hybrid’ or ‘contested’ sovereignties, with states, humanitarian actors, and NGOs exercising aspects of sovereign power.⁸

A multiplicity of sovereign actors has been argued to be an important feature of the contemporary neoliberal landscape across a wide range of contexts beyond camps. Aihwa Ong, for example, has outlined a Foucauldian analysis of what she terms ‘graduated sovereignty.’ Different segments of a population are treated differently in accordance with the requirements of market forces, and “some aspects of state power

² P. Owens, “Reclaiming ‘Bare Life’?: Against Agamben on Refugees,” *International Relations* 23, no. 4 (2009): 567.

³ see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998); Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁴ Richard Ek, “Giorgio Agamben and the Spatialities of the Camp: An Introduction,” *Geografiska Annaler: Series B* 88, no. 4 (2006): 363–86.

⁵ Nando Sigona, “Campzenship: Reimagining the Camp as a Social and Political Space,” *Citizenship Studies* 19, no. 1 (2015): 4.

⁶ Dan Bulley, “Inside the Tent: Community and Government in Refugee Camps,” *Security Dialogue* 45, no. 1 (2014): 63–80; Adam Ramadan, “Spatialising the Refugee Camp,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38, no. 1 (2013): 65–77; Kim Rygiel, “Politicizing Camps: Forging Transgressive Citizenship in and through Transit,” *Citizenship Studies* 16, no. 5–6 (2012): 807–25; Sigona, “Campzenship.”

⁷ Sigona, “Campzenship,” 5.

⁸ Maja Janmyr and Are J. Knudsen, “Introduction: Hybrid Spaces,” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 7, no. 3 (2016): 391–95; Turner, “Suspended Spaces.”

and authority are taken up” by other actors, in Ong’s case study by foreign corporations in special economic zones (SEZs).⁹ As the work of Lucas Oesch demonstrates, in his use of Ong’s framework to study Al-Hussein Palestinian refugee camp in Amman, this is also the case in refugee camps, although non-state actors have been taking on aspects of state power and authority in camp settings for decades prior to the rise of neoliberalism.¹⁰

Despite this longer history, I argue that these frameworks, and Ong’s analysis of variegated forms of neoliberalism,¹¹ can productively advance our understandings of the nature of contemporary governance in Za’tari. In line with Ong’s analysis of ‘graduated sovereignty,’ scholars such as Pascal Debruyne, José Martínez, Pete Moore, Christopher Parker and Jillian Schwedler have all demonstrated how neoliberalisations in Jordan have created an internally differentiated Jordanian sovereign territory.¹² Amongst the city-cum-corporation of Aqaba, numerous opaque SEZs, and long-standing Palestinian encampments, Za’tari is a new dot on the variegated landscape in which the state’s reach, control, and governance are highly context-dependent. The state’s sovereignty, unevenly spread across its territory, is therefore not merely an abstract ideal, nor a centralised and militarised state power, but must be understood “as a construction, as an ideas-practice complex” that is created through everyday discursive and material practices of representation, categorisation and distribution.¹³

Following the critiques of Agamben’s analysis of camps, recognising the diversity of instantiations of ‘the camp,’ and in line with this broader scholarship on Jordan, this thesis understands Za’tari neither as a generic ‘space of exception’ from the rest of Jordan, nor simply the same as ‘the rest’ of Jordan, for Jordan itself is a highly differentiated entity. Za’tari is materially and ideationally located within the specific

⁹ Aihwa Ong, “Graduated Sovereignty in South-East Asia,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 17, no. 4 (2000): 57.

¹⁰ Lucas Oesch, “The Refugee Camp as a Space of Multiple Ambiguities and Subjectivities,” *Political Geography* 60, no. Supplement C (2017): 110–20.

¹¹ Ong, “Graduated Sovereignty”; Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press, 2006).

¹² See Pascal Debruyne, “Spatial Rearticulations of Statehood: Jordan’s Geographies of Power under Globalization” (Ghent University, 2013); José Ciro Martínez, “Leavening Neoliberalization’s Uneven Pathways: Bread, Governance and Political Rationalities in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan,” *Mediterranean Politics* 22, no. 4 (2017): 464–83; Pete W. Moore, “QIZs, FTAs, USAID and the MEFTA: A Political Economy of Acronyms,” *Middle East Report*, no. 234 (2005): 18–23; Christopher Parker, “Tunnel-Bypasses and Minarets of Capitalism: Amman as Neoliberal Assemblage,” *Political Geography* 28, no. 2 (2009): 110–20; Jillian Schwedler, “The Political Geography of Protest in Neoliberal Jordan,” *Middle East Critique* 21, no. 3 (2012): 259–70.

¹³ Sophia Hoffman, “Disciplining Movement: State Sovereignty in the Context of Iraqi Migration to Syria” (SOAS, University of London, 2011), 107; see also Ong, “Graduated Sovereignty.”

circumstances of Jordan's history, politics, and economy. Palestinian refugee camps are essentially *de facto* permanent features of the landscape in Jordan, and were long seen by the Jordanian regime as spaces of extra-territoriality, and thereby potential sources of violence and instability.¹⁴ Numerous Jordanian interlocutors would compare Za'tari to Palestinian camps – in terms of the security risks it might pose, and the possibility that it might similarly become a much more permanent settlement.¹⁵ In Jordan, throughout the region, and across the wider world, camps have often provided shelter, resources and recruits for armed groups among refugee populations, who have used the humanitarian label of camps to pursue their political and military agendas.¹⁶ Security incidents in camps continue to occur in Jordan, such as the attack on intelligence officers, five of whom died, in Baqa'a Palestinian refugee camp near Amman in the summer of 2016.¹⁷ Nevertheless, states have regularly insisted on the creation of camps for refugees, to attract aid and attention, to isolate and contain refugee populations for security reasons, or to segregate them from the wider labour market.¹⁸

Within Za'tari, there are varied and extensive attempts by Jordanian state actors to create Za'tari as a Jordanian space. The separation of Za'tari from the rest of the population is an assertion of Jordanian sovereignty over the territory, and helps to create it as a temporary enclave for refugees. Yet in order to avoid the aforementioned challenges posed by refugee camps, the space within the camp must also be rendered as 'Jordanian.' Za'tari must simultaneously be not-Jordan and Jordan. That is, as a space that is both under Jordan's control, unlike Palestinian camps historically, and that will not develop

¹⁴ For discussion of Palestinian camps in Jordan and the region, see Luigi Achilli, "Does the Political Bore?: The Denial and Camouflage of the 'Political' in a Palestinian Refugee Camp" (SOAS, University of London, 2012); Julie Peteet, "Cartographic Violence, Displacement and Refugee Camps: Palestine and Iraq," in *Palestinian Refugees: Identity, Space and Place in the Levant*, by Are Knudsen and Sari Hanafi, Routledge Series on the Arab-Israeli Conflict (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁵ Conversations with Jordanian NGO workers and police officers, Za'tari, 27.10.2015, 21.07.2016 and 01.08.2016.

¹⁶ See Gil Loescher and James Milner, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Domestic and International Security Implications*, Adelphi Papers (Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2005); Idean Salehyan, "Transnational Rebels: Neighboring States as Sanctuary for Rebel Groups," *World Politics* 59, no. 2 (2007): 217–42; Fiona Terry, *Condemned to Repeat?: The Paradox of Humanitarian Action* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2002).

¹⁷ Peter Beaumont, "Jordan Says Intelligence Officers Killed in Refugee Camp Attack," *The Guardian*, June 6, 2016, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/06/jordan-intelligence-officers-killed-refugee-camp-attack-baqaa>.

¹⁸ Karen Jacobsen, "Factors Influencing the Policy Responses of Host Governments to Mass Refugee Influxes," *International Migration Review* 30, no. 3 (1996): 655–78; Rose Jaji, "Social Technology and Refugee Encampment in Kenya," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 25, no. 2 (2012): 221–38; Loescher and Milner, *Protracted Refugee Situations*; Turner, "Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees."

into a permanent ‘temporary’ feature of the landscape.¹⁹ The Syrian population, and the Palestinian history, necessitates the performance of Jordanian sovereignty. This is seen in the regulation of access into and out of the camp; in the pictures of the Jordanian royal family that festoon camp buildings; in the police foot patrols through the market; in the singing of the Jordanian national anthem at events; in the military jeeps that are spaced out around the camp; and in the heart-shaped Jordanian flag painted on the side of an IRD office, flanked by two doves bearing the logos of UNHCR and IRD.²⁰ Like SEZs in other contexts, Za’tari has “both fragment[ed] and extend[ed] the space of the nation state.”²¹

Syrians themselves have a role in some of these rituals of sovereignty. At the beginning of an event organised by Syrians (albeit under the pretext of a NGO-led ‘civic engagement’ project), ritualistic praise was offered to King Abdullah, and all of Jordan, for the hospitality that they had extended to their Syrian brothers and sisters.²² On a walk around the market, accompanied by a Jordanian police officer, numerous Syrians would greet him, demonstrating, he told me, the trust and respect that the Syrian population accords the Jordanian police.²³ As Lisa Wedeen argued of the Hafez al-Asad era, “rituals of obeisance that are transparently phony” are “symbolic displays of power [that] not only operate in tandem with overt coercive controls, they are themselves a subsystem of coercive control.”²⁴ A subsystem of control, as Wedeen demonstrated, with which Syrians are intimately familiar. Nevertheless, as is noted at different points in this chapter, these performances of Jordanian sovereignty do not mean that the camp is uniformly experienced by Syrians ‘as Jordan.’

Furthermore, as previously noted, Jordanian state actors are not the only ones exercising, or performing, sovereignty in Za’tari. Following Foucault,²⁵ Ong argues that sovereignty

¹⁹ Philipp Misselwitz and Sari Hanafi, “Testing a New Paradigm: UNRWA’s Camp Improvement Programme,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28, no. 2–3 (2009): 360–88; Peteet, “Cartographic Violence.”

²⁰ Author observation, Za’tari, 25.11.2015, 03.12.2015, 09.02.2016, 03.03.2016 and 21.07.2016.

²¹ Ananya Roy, “Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, no. 2 (2011): 234; see also Oesch, “The Refugee Camp as a Space of Multiple Ambiguities and Subjectivities.”

²² Fieldnotes, Za’tari, 09.02.2016.

²³ Fieldnotes, Za’tari, 21.07.2016.

²⁴ Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 6, 27.

²⁵ See Graham Burchell, Peter Miller, and Colin Gordon, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*. (London: Allen Lane, 2003).

is exercised partly through “control, surveillance and regulation vis-à-vis markets, populations and external agencies.”²⁶ This necessitates, in the camp context, a focus on humanitarian actors, and in particular UNHCR. Indeed, the refugee camp has a long history as a site in which humanitarian agencies perform roles that might more typically be understood as functions of the state. While a dominant model for “isolating groups seen as problems, risks, or threat [sic] during the colonial period,” it became a model for managing refugee populations during World War II,²⁷ and one of the main forms of “spatial organisation of forced migration.”²⁸ Spatially containing, separating, and isolating refugees in camps, from the perspective of humanitarian agencies, facilitates aid distribution and improves administrative efficiency.²⁹ As demonstrated by the debates in the 1990s and 2000s over extending UNHCR’s work more systematically to non-camp spaces, for some in the agency refugees seemed properly ‘in place’ only in refugee camps.³⁰

While, by definition, temporary, camps often develop from spaces to distribute emergency life-saving relief to sites for the delivery of “long-term ‘care and maintenance’ programs [sic].”³¹ In this context, humanitarian actors treat refugees not just as biological matter to be kept alive, but as the objects of what Simon Turner has called an ‘ethical project’: “it was not enough to tell the refugees what they were and were not allowed to do. They also had to be convinced of the value of these rules.”³² As the site of this ‘ethical project,’ the camp “becomes a kind of human laboratory.”³³ Just as a camp is, as Liisa Malkki has argued, “a standardized, transferable device of power,”³⁴ large elements of this ethical project are similarly understood to be replicable across space in

²⁶ Ong, “Graduated Sovereignty,” 56.

²⁷ Oesch, “The Refugee Camp as a Space of Multiple Ambiguities and Subjectivities,” 114; Cf Kirsten McConnachie, “Camps of Containment: A Genealogy of the Refugee Camp,” *An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 7, no. 397–412 (2016).

²⁸ Liisa Malkki, “National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees,” *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 34.

²⁹ Verdirame and Harrell-Bond, *Rights in Exile*.

³⁰ See Crisp, “Finding Space for Protection”; Guglielmo Verdirame and Jason M. Pobjoy, “The End of Refugee Camps?” (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, 2013).

³¹ Janmyr and Knudsen, “Introduction,” 391; see also Simon Turner, “What Is a Refugee Camp? Explorations of the Limits and Effects of the Camp,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 29, no. 2 (2016): 139–48.

³² Turner, “Suspended Spaces,” 320.

³³ Turner, 332; Cf Simon Turner, “Under the Gaze of the ‘Big Nations’: Refugees, Rumours and the International Community in Tanzania,” *African Affairs* 103, no. 411 (2004): 227–47.

³⁴ Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 52.

humanitarian actors' attempts to implement 'global standards.' Organisations came to Za'tari wanting to replicate their work in other contexts.³⁵

The implementation of these agendas in camps is "inextricably linked," according to Jennifer Hyndman, to "refugee containment and immobility."³⁶ The residents of Za'tari are contained in the camp, and represent, in a quite literal sense, a captive audience for the enactment of humanitarianism's ethical project. This is demonstrated by the ways that the population is discussed by humanitarian workers. When there were delays in the start date of the project on which I was due to work, colleagues explained that this was mitigated to some extent by the fact that people in the camp "do not have much to do" and "have a lot of time on their hands."³⁷ Our work was constructed as if it would be filling a void, rather than creating an imposition.

Some of my more critical interviewees shared my understanding that the containment of Syrians in Za'tari was being taken advantage of in order to pursue humanitarian 'ethical projects.' One NGO worker, who had been working in Za'tari for eighteen months when we met for an interview, spoke frankly:

Sometimes I feel...that we as a humanitarian body...it's like we have a doll's house or SIMS and you're trying to create a mini-world, which is acknowledging of the culture of the people inside to the extent you need to be able to understand them and then try to put things in a way that's going to be understandable or applicable or relevant, but actually it's like we're trying to fix things that are not just a result of the refugee crisis. It's suddenly like you've got this whole town of people and you guys are in charge [pause] we're in charge, so how are we going to do it? What would be the perfect world?³⁸

However, the exercise of sovereignty, and the implementation of these agendas, by both state and humanitarian actors, does not go unchallenged by Syrian refugees, who have continually contested the exercise of power over them, and dominant understandings of how camps should be run. A journey to and through Za'tari demonstrates this clearly.

³⁵ Conversations with (I)NGO workers, Amman, 03.09.2015; interview with former NGO worker in Za'tari.

³⁶ Hyndman, *Managing Displacement*, 24; cf McConnachie, "Camps of Containment."

³⁷ Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 29.09.2015.

³⁸ Interview with NGO worker in Za'tari, Amman, 16.10.2015.

The Slip Road to Dignity: The Journey to Za'tari

Each weekday morning, dozens of cars, buses, and minivans head approximately 80 kilometres north-east from the Jordanian capital Amman to Za'tari. For humanitarian workers (and the journalists, politicians, diplomats and researchers who regularly accompany them), Za'tari is a place visited by day, and exited before dusk. Apart from Syrians, the Jordanian police and military officers are the only ones allowed to stay in the camp overnight.³⁹ The humanitarians who work in Za'tari overwhelmingly live in Amman, creating a daily rush to leave the camp by 3pm or 4pm to avoid some of the quotidian gridlock that engulfs parts of the capital in the early evening.

On my first journey to the camp in October 2015, I observed that our route included taking a turn-off from the highway that was signposted towards *al-Karama* (which means 'dignity' in Arabic). I later discovered that *al-Karama* is the name of the one official land border crossing between Jordan and Iraq. Upon realising this, the signpost appeared less cruelly ironic, as I had previously experienced it. Instead, it offered a subtle reminder of Jordan's fragile geopolitical positioning, which, as the joke goes, is "between Iraq and a hard place."⁴⁰ Along with roadsigns for Iraq (or 'dignity'), one of the more striking features of the car journey between Amman and Za'tari is the large number of signs for Syria, and specifically *Jabir* (the nearest border crossing between Jordan and Syria). Vehicles are even invited to turn off towards Syria as they leave the northern villages and return towards the Jordanian capital.

³⁹ Interview with Stephen Boddy, Community Safety Team Leader, SIREN Associates, Amman, 15.10.2015.

⁴⁰ Curtis Ryan, "Still Between Iraq and a Hard Place," Middle East Research and Information Project, 2014, <http://www.merip.org/still-between-iraq-hard-place>.

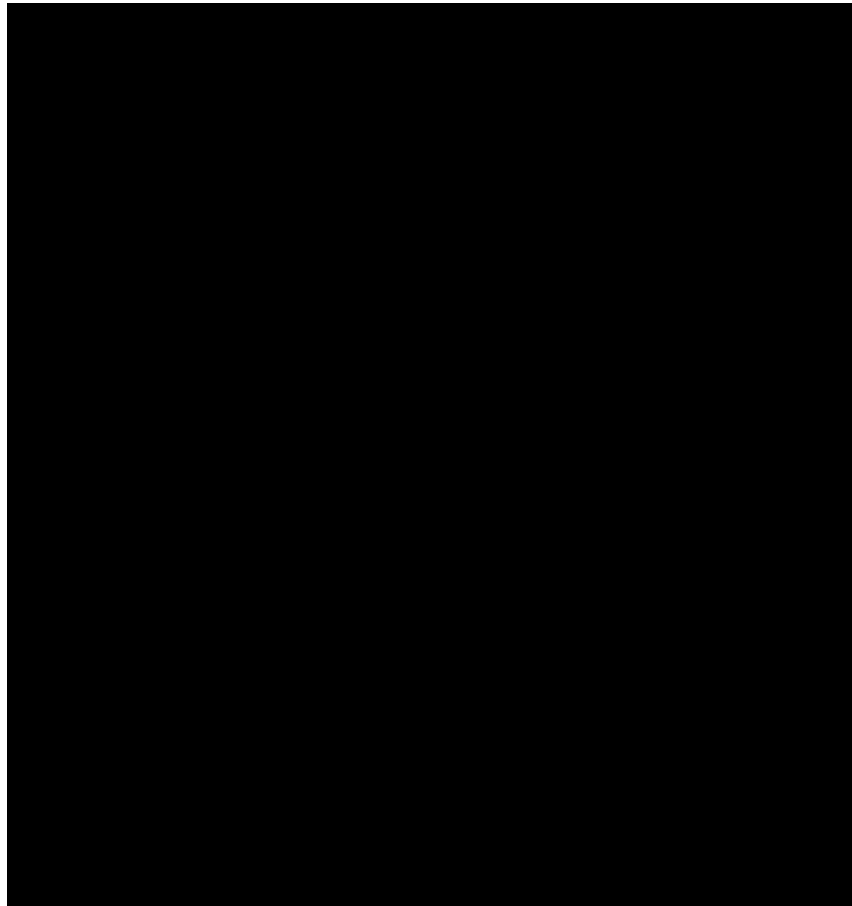


Figure 1.1: Location of Za'tari within Jordan.⁴¹

The signs to Syria and its border crossings provoked for me a sense of physical proximity: they made Za'tari 'feel' close to Syria.⁴² Indeed, it is only about ten kilometres, in a straight line, from the camp to the Jordanian-Syrian border. The vast majority of Za'tari residents, about 90 percent, come from the governorate of Dar'a, which lies directly on the other side of that same border.⁴³ Despite the tensions that the large-scale arrival of Syrians has caused, the populations of southern Syria and northern Jordan have long been linked by personal, familial, 'tribal,' and economic ties.⁴⁴ Despite the geographical proximity of Za'tari and Dar'a, Syrians in Za'tari regularly compare the camp negatively to Syria in terms of its geographical and meteorological features. The quality and quantity of water in northern Jordan are deemed inferior, its environment more desert than the green countryside of Dar'a, and its weather less moderate: both too cold in the winter, and too hot in the summer.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Screenshot from Google Maps. Taken by the author on 16 February 2018.

⁴² I am grateful to Ali Hamdan for his thought-provoking discussion of a similar phenomenon linking Gaziantep and Aleppo.

⁴³ Alison Ledwith, *Za'atari: The Instant City* (Boston: Affordable Housing Institution, 2014).

⁴⁴ MercyCorps, "Mapping of Host Community-Refugee Tensions in Mafraq and Ramtha, Jordan," May 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=2962>.

⁴⁵ Conversations with Syrian refugee men and women, Za'tari, 13.10.2015 and 21.12.2015.

The entrance to the camp lies at the eastern edges of Za'tari village, the small settlement from which the camp takes its name. The village has one main thoroughfare lined with shops and small-scale factories, with multiple streets leading off from it to residential areas. It is home to roughly 12,000 Jordanians and, it is reported, an approximately equal number of Syrians.⁴⁶ Three quarters of a kilometre from the north-west edge of the camp stands a military checkpoint, which marks the beginning of the camp's entrance. Jordanian soldiers check, at both this checkpoint and a second one, that the vehicles and their occupants have the requisite permission from the government to enter the camp.

The first military checkpoint, always staffed by multiple soldiers, is flanked by a military anti-improvised explosive device Humvee. The Humvee, upon which an armed soldier is stationed, sits under the shade of a metal covering donated by "the people of Japan." With 'legs' about seven feet tall, the shelter ensures that the soldier on top of the vehicle is shaded from the sun, but the vehicle remains visible from all sides.⁴⁷ While it is the first military vehicle that most visitors to Za'tari will encounter, it is but one of many that encircles the camp.⁴⁸ There are typically Syrians present among the soldiers and military vehicles at this checkpoint. Some are arranging their belongings for the buses that will take them back to Syria. Others are taking advantage of being granted permits to temporarily leave the camp to visit friends and family, to seek medical treatment, or to go shopping.⁴⁹ Children hang around, trying to earn the smallest amounts of money by carrying returning Syrians' goods into the camp. One morning, one such Syrian boy, of no more than 12, sat smoking at the entrance to the camp. With his legs set wide apart, one elbow propped upon his knee, cigarette in hand, his masculinised pose was striking when set by a body so young.⁵⁰ This has become the 'everyday' scene for visitors to the camp, as they drive past in their cars, readying their permits for inspection.

The Permit System: Entering Za'tari

The establishment of spaces such as Za'tari, in the context of Jordanian history and politics, creates, from the perspective of state authorities, the need to impose and

⁴⁶ E.g. see Raed Omari, "Syrians Build Houses on Donated Land in Zaatari Village," Jordan Times, August 21, 2014, <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/syrians-build-houses-donated-land-zaatari-village>.

⁴⁷ Author observation, Za'tari, 10.12.2015.

⁴⁸ Author observation, Za'tari, 10.11.2015, 25.11.2015, and 10.12.2015.

⁴⁹ Conversations with Syrian refugees and INGO workers, Za'tari, 13.10.2015.

⁵⁰ Author observation, Za'tari, 01.08.2016.

perform sovereignty in and over the camp. The system of permits and checkpoints is one way of doing this. The checkpoint, as Rashid Khalidi has argued in the context of Palestinians, constitutes “one of those many modern barriers where identities are checked and verified,”⁵¹ and thus one of the quintessential experiences of refugeehood and statelessness. Reflecting these dynamics, the permits for Za‘tari are issued by and inspected by police and military officers, working under the auspices of the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD), an entity within the Ministry of Interior (MoI). NGO staff must apply in advance for daily or monthly permits to enter the camp. Officially, permits can be issued on the day if applied for within the camp, and within a week if applied for from Amman, but numerous stories from interlocutors belied this claim. Permits for non-Jordanian staff can take weeks longer than those for their Jordanian colleagues, and are often received on the very last day before an event takes place or a project begins. Numerous NGO officials, including Country Directors of organisations working in Jordan, have even had their requests to visit the camp declined by Jordanian authorities, without explanation.⁵² NGOs must also apply for permits for any vehicles that they drive into the camp, which are regularly (although far from always) checked by the soldiers. Permits should also be obtained to bring substances such as petroleum (for electricity generators) into the camp for use at NGO centres.

Demand for these permits extended beyond those wishing to undertake work and research in the camp. Donors, volunteers, journalists, students, politicians, and delegations visiting NGOs are often very eager to visit Za‘tari in particular,⁵³ despite it hosting only around twelve percent of registered Syrian refugees in Jordan. One of the police officers who accompanied me in the camp said that he, one of a team doing the same role, was typically assigned between ten and twenty delegations to the camp each month.⁵⁴ As the largest camp in the country, Za‘tari is a space where refugees are known to live, and thus, on a practical level, believed to be easier to find for those in search of interactions, interviews, and observations. According to one senior INGO worker,

⁵¹ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 1.

⁵² Conversations with humanitarian and (I)NGO workers, Amman, 06.10.2015, 09.10.2015, and 30.11.2015.

⁵³ Meeting with INGO, Amman, 12.11.2015.

⁵⁴ Conversation with Jordanian police officer, Za‘tari, 21.07.2016.

visitors want to meet Syrian refugees, but do not want to have to make much effort to do so.⁵⁵

In this respect, Za'tari is part of a wider trend whereby refugee camps, in particular, attract disproportionate levels of attention, media coverage, and funding, relative to the size of the populations they host.⁵⁶ To my horror, I noticed that this also took the form of some of my colleagues 'checking in' to Za'tari on Facebook when they arrived for a day's work, announcing their presence in the camp to their online friends and followers.⁵⁷ The widespread fascination with Za'tari, however, can also be understood within the context of long-standing but rapidly proliferating varieties of 'poverty tourism'⁵⁸ across the South, one of the "spectacles of suffering" that play a prominent role in Western cultures.⁵⁹ Within Za'tari specifically, as is explored in Chapter 7, this takes the form of a fetishisation and instrumentalisation of Syrians' 'entrepreneurship' in the camp.

Yet those who desire to visit are often unaware of the existence of, let alone the political and practical considerations surrounding, the permit system. When they discover that they need one, they will often seek sponsorship from an NGO, to which they may be able to offer very little. Many organisations are understandably wary of those seeking an organisation to sponsor permits to enter Za'tari. Running NGO programmes can "sometimes feel like you're running a tour company," said the same person who above derided the lack of effort people were willing to make to meet refugees.⁶⁰ People visiting or volunteering for programmes have been known to be inadequately prepared for their visits, culturally and politically insensitive, or simply to have feigned an interest in, or commitment to, volunteering for an organisation in order to gain a permit to visit the camp.⁶¹ One senior NGO officer who had arranged for me to visit his organisation's work, told me he was grateful for the email I sent thanking him and giving him feedback

⁵⁵ Conversation with INGO worker, Amman, 10.03.2016.

⁵⁶ See Alexander Betts, Louise Bloom, and Nina Weaver, "Refugee Innovation: Humanitarian Innovation That Starts with Communities" (Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre, 2015); Barbara Harrell-Bond, "Camps: Literature Review," *Forced Migration Review* 2 (1998): 22–23.

⁵⁷ Fieldnotes, Za'tari, 27.07.2016.

⁵⁸ See Malte Steinbrink, "'We Did the Slum!' – Urban Poverty Tourism in Historical Perspective," *Tourism Geographies* 14, no. 2 (2012): 213–34.

⁵⁹ Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 26.

⁶⁰ Conversation with INGO worker, Amman, 10.03.2016.

⁶¹ Conversations with INGO workers, Amman, 29.10.2015 and 13.02.2016.

on the visit, saying this is only the second time he could remember receiving this kind of follow-up in the many years he had been in the role.⁶²

The problem of visitors asking inappropriate questions is not limited to junior staff or volunteers. When Antonio Guterres, then UN High Commissioner for Refugees, visited Za'tari on World Refugee Day in 2013, he was filmed being introduced to a Syrian man, and promptly asked, through a translator, whether any members of the man's family had been killed in the conflict. The man replies, again through a translator, that his brother had been killed, and then begins to cry. Guterres responds by saying that his interlocutor is safe now in Jordan and he hopes there will be peace in Syria so the man can eventually return, adding a perfunctory "*shukran*" (thank you) to close the interaction.⁶³ This interaction is included as part of an episode of 'A Day in the Life: Za'atari,' a series of short videos produced by UNHCR and Yahoo. The episode in which this incident appears is called 'The Human Touch.'

NGOs are also hesitant to provide permits for visitors out of concern for the consequences that the visit might have for the NGO's relationship with the GoJ, were there to be a (perceived) violation of the letter or spirit of the government's rules. Many NGOs see their work, even their presence in Jordan, to be constantly precarious, and thus attempt to minimise any potential disagreements with the authorities about sensitive issues, such as access to camps.⁶⁴ This was most clearly demonstrated to me when I acquired my research permit from the MoI. I approached friends and contacts who worked regularly in the camps, to see if they may be able to provide me with transportation. To my surprise, some of those I spoke to were very nervous about the possibility of allowing me to travel with them, even though I had an independent permit, and would not be with them or their organisation while in the camp itself. One friend said that there had recently been an (unspecified) incident in his organisation regarding camp permits, and so everyone was being "cautious" and did not want to get "caught up" in the review of permit procedures being conducted by senior managers.⁶⁵ Some helped despite their reservations, especially if reassured, on multiple occasions, that they would in no way be sponsoring my permit.

⁶² Conversation with NGO manager, Amman, 08.08.2016.

⁶³ UNHCR, *A Day in the Life: Za'atari - Episode 12 The Human Touch*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1EL0jmY2d4>.

⁶⁴ Conversations with (I)NGO workers, Amman, 13.09.2015, 10.01.2016.

⁶⁵ Conversation with INGO worker, Amman, 24.07.2016.

The desire to visit Za‘tari also extends to high-level political delegations. Even if politicians are visiting Jordan for only one day, they will often want to visit Za‘tari.⁶⁶ The camp therefore became a space of high-level briefings, negotiations, and the central experience of many politicians who wish to see the ‘refugee crisis’ first-hand.⁶⁷ In my penultimate fieldwork visit to Za‘tari, I was an inadvertent beneficiary of this disproportionate focus on the camp. Priti Patel, then UK Secretary of State for International Development, made Jordan her first overseas trip in her new role. On the first day of that first trip, she visited Za‘tari.⁶⁸ On that same day, I was conducting one of my research visits, and had gone to the main police office to sign in and register my presence, and to be allocated a police officer to supervise my visit. Speaking within my earshot (although presumably assuming I did not speak Arabic), officers discussed, with a little concern, that they had run out of police officers to allocate me due to the Minister’s visit. I waited for around 15 minutes in the office, while discussions were held, phone calls were made, and superiors consulted. It was eventually decided (perhaps because I had already visited the camp twice in the past ten days with police officers supervising me), that for this day I could be sent to meet my Syrian UNHCR guide without a police officer in tow.⁶⁹

Za‘tari also regularly received celebrities and other high-profile visitors. To name but a few, Prince Charles played football with the children of Za‘tari,⁷⁰ Janet Jackson visited schools run by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF),⁷¹ and now-disgraced film producer Harvey Weinstein visited in 2014, subsequently writing about the “heartbreak and hope” he found there.⁷² In 2016, Bono visited Za‘tari. A UNHCR employee posted a

⁶⁶ Conversation with UNHCR official, Amman, 13.10.2015.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ See Gov.uk, “Priti Patel Calls for Fresh International Push on Education and Jobs for Syrian Refugees on Visits to Jordan and Lebanon - Press Releases - GOV.UK,” August 4, 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/priti-patel-calls-for-fresh-international-push-on-education-and-jobs-for-syrian-refugees-on-visits-to-jordan-and-lebanon>.

⁶⁹ Fieldnotes, Za‘tari, 01.08.2016.

⁷⁰ Al Arabiya News, “Prince Charles Plays Footie on Trip to Zaatari Camp,” Al Arabiya, February 9, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/features/2015/02/09/Prince-Charles-plays-footie-on-trip-to-Zaatari-Camp.html>.

⁷¹ Janetbr.com, “PHOTOS - Janet Jackson and Wissam Al Mana visiting UNICEF’s Journey at Zaatari Camp (2014),” *JANET Vault | Janet Jackson Photo Gallery* (blog), 2014, <http://www.janetbr.com/gallery/portfolio/unicefs-journey-zaatari-camp-2014/>.

⁷² Harvey Weinstein, “Witnessing Heartbreak and Hope at a Syrian Refugee Camp in Jordan | The Independent,” The Independent, September 24, 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/witnessing-heartbreak-and-hope-at-a-syrian-refugee-camp-in-jordan-9757846.html>.

short video of him on Twitter singing “for” Syrian refugees. In the clip, Bono is sitting next to a beaming UNHCR camp manager, Hovig Etyemezian. Two Syrian men are also in view, looking on apparently nonplussed as Bono informs his audience that he still hasn’t found what he’s looking for. Nasser Touaibia, the UNHCR communications officer who posted the clip, described it as a “heartwarming moment as #Bono sings for @Refugees in #Zaatari #camp. I feel so privileged to be part of this.”⁷³

These visits to Za‘tari are part of a much wider trend of ‘celebrity humanitarians.’ While bringing attention and at times resources to humanitarian crises, critical scholars such as Alexandra Budabin, Lisa Ann Richey, and Lilie Chouliaraki, have documented the problematic dynamics and consequences of celebrities’ engagement with the humanitarian sector.⁷⁴ Chouliaraki, reflecting on the nature of contemporary humanitarianism under neoliberalism, has examined how celebrity humanitarians can be understood as an instance of ‘post-humanitarianism,’ which relies on pity rather than solidarity, and “limit[s] our resources for reflecting upon human vulnerability as a political problem of injustice.”⁷⁵ Examining the materiality of celebrity humanitarian interventions, Budabin has highlighted how celebrities choose their own ‘causes,’ how celebrities can divert resources from existing organisations on the ground, and how they foreground their own voices over those of people affected by humanitarian crises.⁷⁶

The checkpoint at Za‘tari’s entrance sees these different kinds of workers and visitors on a daily basis. As long as all the relevant permits are in order, the Jordanian soldiers who staff the checkpoint will invite you through. However, one is faced immediately not with the camp itself, but a narrow tarmacked road known among NGO workers as ‘the service road’. About 750 metres long, it connects the first and second security checkpoints that regulate access to the camp. Pickup trucks, driven by Jordanians, operate a group ‘taxi service’ for Syrians going into the camp, although few can afford to pay the 1 JOD (\$1.4 US) charged for such a short journey. The power differentials could

⁷³ Nasser Touaibia, “A Heartwarming Moment as #Bono Sings for @Refugees in #Zaatari #camp. I Feel so Privileged to Be Part of This,” *Twitter* (blog), April 12, 2016, <https://twitter.com/NasserTouaibia/status/719814783600566272>.

⁷⁴ E.g. see Alexandra Cosima Budabin, “Do Celebrity Humanitarians Matter?,” *Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs*, December 11, 2014, https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/ethics_online/0100; Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator*; Lisa Ann Richey, ed., *Celebrity Humanitarianism and North-South Relations: Politics, Place and Power*, 1 edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁷⁵ Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator*, 187.

⁷⁶ Budabin, “Do Celebrity Humanitarians Matter?”

scarcely be clearer: Syrians walk, humanitarians drive. Indeed, often, are driven. At the second checkpoint, at the end of the service road, and thus at the entrance of the camp, the same permit checks are performed as at the first checkpoint. Upon being waved through this second checkpoint, you have entered Za'tari.

Base Camp: The Service Providers of Za'tari

Straight ahead lies one of the most common scenes of Za'tari. Surrounded by dry mud, dust, or puddles, depending of the time of year, is a large group of 'caravans' (*karafanat* in Arabic) in which Syrians live. These 'caravans' do not have wheels, but are cuboid "prefabricated container units"⁷⁷ While initially Syrians in Za'tari lived in tents, these were gradually replaced by the caravans, with over 17,000 caravans being provided in the first 18 months of the camp's existence.⁷⁸ Costing a little over \$3,000 per caravan, they were mostly built in and donated by Saudi Arabia, but also by other Gulf States including Kuwait and Qatar.⁷⁹ Presumably in an attempt to demonstrate their generosity, many of these states would put their insignia on the side of the caravans, making Gulf state flags a very common sight on the streets of Za'tari.⁸⁰ In January 2015, a new design of caravan was introduced to the camp, which included concrete flooring, a built-in toilet, and a small kitchenette.⁸¹

Yet most of the vehicles entering the camp turn almost immediately left, along the 'ring road' that encircles the camp, past the registration centres of UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration, and towards the area of the camp known as 'Base Camp.' Base Camp is the hub of humanitarian activity, containing the offices and meeting rooms of UNHCR and many of its main partners, which are mostly organised into two lines of caravans with a sheltered seating area running through the middle. At the western edge of Base Camp are the security checkpoints through which staff and visitors enter, and a canteen. At the eastern end of the two rows of offices a small path takes one to a further set of NGO offices, the Family Protection Department (FPD) of

⁷⁷ Shelter Working Group - Jordan, "Shelter and Settlement Strategy for Jordan Syrian Refugee Crisis," March 2015, 3.

⁷⁸ Ledwith, *Zaatari*, 20.

⁷⁹ Ledwith, 32.

⁸⁰ Author observation, Za'tari, 13.10.2015 and 09.02.2016.

⁸¹ UNHCR, "Site Planning and Shelter Camp Restructure Project," April 2016, 6, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

the Jordanian police, and the *shari'a* court, which deals with matters such as marriages and divorces taking place in the camp.

Adjacent to Base Camp are the Za'tari headquarters of the SRAD, which was created by the MoI in 2014 to oversee the country's refugee response (originally with the name Syrian Refugee Camps Directorate). In Za'tari, its premises also include those of the Jordanian police, and the offices where Syrians can apply for temporary permission to leave the camp.⁸² While it works in close coordination with UNHCR, SRAD is the body to which the GoJ has given responsibility for security and camp management, not UNHCR itself.⁸³ An office in SRAD's headquarters bears the title of 'camp manager,' even though colloquially that title is often used by both NGO workers and Syrians to refer to UNHCR's Senior Field Coordinator, the most senior official from the agency in the camp.⁸⁴

A myriad of actors is involved in the provision of services to the population of Za'tari, the vast majority of which are international, as opposed to Jordanian, humanitarian organisations and NGOs. UNHCR's monthly factsheets about the camp contain a list of the more than 30 organisations with a 'presence' in Za'tari (including different sections of the Jordanian police).⁸⁵ This number is lower, however, than the figures often discussed by NGO workers, and does not include some organisations that are regularly present in the camp carrying out on-going work, even if they do not have a permanent office in Base Camp.⁸⁶ Many of these projects, in line with the analysis of humanitarianism outlined in Chapter 2, focus on providing spaces and services for women and children, and furthering their 'empowerment.' While some organisations are in Za'tari to implement specific, time-limited projects, others have responsibilities on a more stable basis. For example, UNICEF oversees the schools, NRC runs a large distribution centre, ACTED is the main actor for water, sanitation and hygiene, and ARDD provides free legal advice and representation for refugees living in the camp.

⁸² See Chapter 6.

⁸³ UNHCR, "Zaatari Governance Plan," 2013, <http://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/zaatari-governance-plan-june-2013>.

⁸⁴ Author observation, Za'tari, 31.07.2016 and 01.08.2016.

⁸⁵ UNHCR, "Zaatari Refugee Camp Factsheet November 2016," November 2016, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

⁸⁶ Conversations with humanitarian and NGO workers, Za'tari, 27.07.2016.

Each of the main sectors, such as health, education, food, shelter, and protection, has a working group, attended by the relevant humanitarian actors involved in work in that sector, and co-chaired by UNHCR and one other relevant agency or NGO. Some of these sector working groups also have sub-working groups, for example the SGBV Sub-Working Group falls under the purview of the Protection Working Group. Camp-wide coordination happens through the multi-sector camp management and coordination meetings. This structure within Za'tari replicates, on a smaller scale, the wider coordination of the refugee response in Jordan, and staff from Za'tari attend the Jordan-wide sector coordination meetings.⁸⁷

As in many other contexts where refugees are hosted both in camp and non-camp environments,⁸⁸ Za'tari received a disproportionate amount of attention and funding from humanitarian actors. According to one humanitarian worker who was there when the camp opened, Za'tari, with its definable, available and widely-publicised population,⁸⁹ became “overloaded” with programmes, to the extent that NGOs appeared to be “in competition” with one another to get beneficiaries for projects for which they had already secured funding.⁹⁰ Despite this funding for specific projects, the overall cost of Za'tari was a challenge for UNHCR. Although the agency does not consistently release detailed figures for the amount of money spent in the camp, in 2014 it was reported that the overall running costs of the camp were around \$500,000 per day.⁹¹

A comparatively tiny area at the edge of the camp, Base Camp is spatially and imaginatively separated from the rest of the camp, yet is anything but peripheral. The area is not open to Syrians living in the camp except for specific purposes (it is also very rare for Syrians living outside of the camp to work or volunteer in Za'tari). A few Syrians undertake CfW as cleaners,⁹² and some NGOs receive Syrians for appointments in their offices (for example for those receiving legal advice). This restricted mobility between the two areas is regulated by security personnel, who check identity badges and permits at the entrances to Base Camp. Fencing of over 7 feet, with coiled barbed wire atop it, surrounds the whole of the area. The fencing is covered in black tarpaulin sheets, which

⁸⁷ UNHCR, “Zaatari Camp Coordination Structure,” n.d., <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

⁸⁸ See Harrell-Bond, “Camps: Literature Review”; Peteet, “Cartographic Violence.”

⁸⁹ Betts, Bloom, and Weaver, “Refugee Innovation.”

⁹⁰ Interview with former employee of international organisation in Za'tari, Amman, 13.11.2015.

⁹¹ Ledwith, *Zaatari*, 10.

⁹² See Chapter 6.

dramatically reduce the visibility into the area from outside it (and of course vice versa), further reinforcing the sense of division. Those visiting the camp sometimes peer out of small holes in the tarpaulin into the main camp, observing the daily life on the other side of the fence:⁹³ a close up, yet still asymmetrical, “spectacle of suffering.”⁹⁴

The spatial segregation of Base Camp from the world of the refugees demonstrates the centrality of spatial practices to the power and organisation of humanitarianism. As Henri Lefebvre has argued, space “is not simply ‘there,’ a neutral container waiting to be filled, but is a dynamic, humanly constructed means of control, and hence of domination, of power.”⁹⁵ Or, in the words of Michel Foucault, “space is fundamental in any exercise of power.”⁹⁶ Yet the spatial practices of humanitarianism have often been overlooked in scholarship.⁹⁷ In recent years, however, the work of scholars such as Mark Duffield, Marsha Henry, Paul Higate, and especially Lisa Smirl, has demonstrated its centrality, and has encouraged and enabled new understandings of the practices and hierarchies of humanitarianism.⁹⁸

In the same vein, in his work about post-invasion Kabul in the 2000s, Charles Montgomery argued that looking at buildings in (post-)conflict settings is crucial, because they “offer cues suggesting how people should act. They tell us about our relationships with one another.”⁹⁹ The cues, to use Montgomery’s term, that Za’tari Base Camp provides speak to recurring features of humanitarianism in camps, which have been elucidated by scholarship: refugees are at the bottom of a hierarchy, being ‘managed’ by ideologically-distant humanitarian authorities.¹⁰⁰ In the context of Za’tari, while most of the humanitarian workers are themselves Jordanian (someone has to be able to communicate with the refugees), the management is disproportionately white and western.¹⁰¹ Base Camp spatialises these hierarchies, and makes them tangible. It has a

⁹³ Author observation, Za’tari, 03.12.2015.

⁹⁴ Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator*, 26.

⁹⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Blackwell, 1991), 24.

⁹⁶ Michel Foucault, *Power: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984: Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984 v. 3*, ed. James D. Faubion, 3 edition (London: Penguin, 2002), 361.

⁹⁷ Smirl, “Building the Other, Constructing Ourselves.”

⁹⁸ See Duffield, “Risk-Management and the Fortified Aid Compound”; Higate and Henry, “Space, Performance and Everyday Security in the Peacekeeping Context”; Smirl, “Building the Other, Constructing Ourselves”; Smirl, “Plain Tales from the Reconstruction Site.”

⁹⁹ Charles Montgomery, “The Archipelago of Fear,” *Thewalrus.ca*, 2009, <https://thewalrus.ca/the-archipelago-of-fear/>.

¹⁰⁰ see Agier, *Managing the Undesirables*; Harrell-Bond, “Can Humanitarian Work with Refugees Be Humane?”; Hyndman, *Managing Displacement*.

¹⁰¹ Interview with NGO worker in Za’tari.

continual electricity supply, while electricity is typically supplied to Syrians for 7 or 8 hours a day. In Base Camp, wifi routers provide reliable internet access, while internet access for Syrians is strongly restricted.¹⁰² Perhaps most glaringly the humanitarian workers in Base Camp have the ability to come and go with relative ease, a mobility that “fundamentally distinguishes the international community from its intended beneficiaries.”¹⁰³ NGO centres in different areas of the camp are similarly organised in spatially exclusionary ways: with fences, guards, padlocks, wifi, electricity, and opening times that suit humanitarian workers, rather than Syrian refugees.¹⁰⁴

As Mark Duffield has demonstrated, spatial practices also influence the subjectivities of those who navigate and exist within them, and these subjectivities “reshape the perceptions, interactions and exchanges that link aid workers and host societies.”¹⁰⁵ The division between Base Camp and the rest of the camp has the effect of isolating humanitarian staff from their environment. During my fieldwork, I heard several humanitarian workers remark that they spend their days inside caravans sending emails, to the extent that they can almost forget they are in a refugee camp.¹⁰⁶

I even encountered humanitarian staff who would refer to work within the camp itself, as opposed to Base Camp, as ‘the field,’ even though staff working anywhere in Za‘tari would be considered in ‘the field’ relative to Amman. As Jennifer Hyndman noted in the context of Kenya, the very idea of “the field” as working with refugees in-person, is “predicated on geographical distance from a perceived centre,” which is at “the top of the spatial hierarchy.”¹⁰⁷ The hierarchies of humanitarianism, expressed through its spatial practices on the ground, and designated by (non-)proximity to ‘the field,’ also run along the lines of race and nationality. As noted above, staff working in the field were overwhelmingly Jordanian, while managers and office-based staff were sometimes Jordanian, but often white and/or western. This meant that non-Jordanians were overall significantly less likely to leave Base Camp than Jordanian staff.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² See Chapter 7.

¹⁰³ Smirl, “Building the Other, Constructing Ourselves,” 239.

¹⁰⁴ Author observation, Za‘tari, 13.10.2015; see Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁵ Duffield, “Risk-Management and the Fortified Aid Compound,” 461.

¹⁰⁶ Conversation with NGO workers, Amman, 29.11.2015; public discussion event with NGO workers as panel members, Amman, 08.12.2015.

¹⁰⁷ Hyndman, *Managing Displacement*, 89.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with former NGO worker in Za‘tari.

When Syrians do have personal interactions with non-Arab staff, they usually communicate through translators, typically Jordanian staff members of humanitarian organisations. Some of the Syrian men I met in Za‘tari were suspicious of those who translated for them, believing, on the basis of the English they did know, and the reactions of the non-Arabic speaking staff, that their opinions were being ‘softened’ in translation.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps, as in Frantz Fanon’s Bida clinic, the translators were understood by Syrians to “embod[y] the link between them and colonial authority,” with which the translator had an “inclination to be complicit.”¹¹⁰ Reflecting the power dynamics between humanitarian staff and Syrians in the camp, attempts to bridge this linguistic divide have largely been undertaken by the latter, through English classes that some NGOs offer to camp residents. One of the reasons for their popularity, multiple Syrians explained to me, is refugees’ desire to be able to better communicate with those managing the camp and humanitarian programmes.¹¹¹

Za‘tari and its Residents

Beyond Base Camp are the areas where Syrian refugees live. The GoJ had initially opposed the large-scale encampment of Syrian refugees on its territory, opening only transit centres and ‘camps’ hosting a few hundred refugees, one in a block formerly inhabited by migrant workers, and about which relatively little information is publicly available.¹¹² In the face of rising numbers of Syrians fleeing to Jordan, however, and following negotiations with northern ‘tribal’ leaders, the government decided to open Za‘tari in July 2012.¹¹³ The establishment of the camp came against the background of a declining use of refugee encampment at the global level, driven in part by substantial shifts in UNHCR policy.¹¹⁴ Za‘tari helped the GoJ to raise the profile of, and secure funding for, its refugee hosting, and furthermore, as I have argued elsewhere, Za‘tari has

¹⁰⁹ Conversation with Syrian men, Za‘tari, 24.11.2015.

¹¹⁰ Cherki, *Frantz Fanon*, 70.

¹¹¹ Conversations with Syrian men and women, Za‘tari, 03.12.2015 and 27.07.2016.

¹¹² See Neil Sammonds, “‘A Dog Has More Freedom’ – Palestinians at Cyber City Camp for Refugees from Syria,” Amnesty International, July 29, 2013, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2013/07/a-dog-has-more-freedom-palestinians-at-cyber-city-camp-for-refugees-from-syria/>; UNHCR, “Factsheet, Field Office - Irbid,” June 2015, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

¹¹³ Crisp, “Finding Space for Protection”; Guglielmo Verdirame and Jason Pobjoy, “A Rejoinder,” *Urban Refugees Debate* (blog), 2013, <http://urban-refugees.org/debate/rejoinder/>.

¹¹⁴ See Crisp, “Finding Space for Protection”; Verdirame and Pobjoy, “The End of Refugee Camps?”

functioned as a device through which Syrians' access to the Jordanian labour market could be regulated.¹¹⁵

Throughout the period of my fieldwork, the camp housed around 80,000 Syrians, which is roughly the same number it has hosted since the summer of 2014. Prior to that, in the first two years of its existence, at many points over 100,000 Syrians, and briefly slightly over 200,000, had been registered as living in Za'tari. The official figures, while now generally regarded by staff on the ground as accurate at around 80,000, have at times dramatically over-represented the population of the camp. For example, in 2013, UNHCR discovered that the number of Syrians registered as living in the camp exceeded the camp population by approximately 50,000. This, I was told by a former UNHCR worker, was due to "classic aid world scams" through which Syrians attempted to maximise the resources they were able to obtain from the humanitarian sector.¹¹⁶

In part because of the pre-existing networks between the residents of southern Syria and northern Jordan, the roughly 80,000 inhabitants of Za'tari are overwhelmingly (85-90 percent, depending on the time period in question) from Dar'a Governorate.¹¹⁷ This contrasts with the overall Syrian population in Jordan, of whom just over 40 percent hail from Dar'a Governorate.¹¹⁸ The demographics of Za'tari also differ compared to the non-camp Syrian population in Jordan in terms of the rural origins of the camp's population, and in their levels of education. According to the ILO and Fafo, 87 percent of Syrians living in the camp were from rural backgrounds, in comparison to only 58 percent of Syrian or non-camp refugees.¹¹⁹ According to the same study, and for reasons explored more below, Za'tari residents were also less likely, compared to Syrian refugees living outside of camps, to have completed secondary or higher education.¹²⁰

That the vast majority of Za'tari residents are from the same region of Syria has provided some continuity of networks, with many having both immediate and extended family members in the camp, as well as friends and neighbours from their villages or towns in Syria. Therefore, despite the performances of Jordanian sovereignty in the camp, for

¹¹⁵ Turner, "Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees."

¹¹⁶ Interview with former UNHCR worker in Za'tari.

¹¹⁷ ILO and Fafo, "Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Jordanian Labour Market" (Jordan: ILO and Fafo, 2015); Ledwith, *Zaatari*.

¹¹⁸ UNHCR, "Registered Syrians in Jordan" (UNHCR Jordan, December 31, 2016).

¹¹⁹ ILO and Fafo, "Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Jordanian Labour Market."

¹²⁰ ILO and Fafo, 39.

many Syrians in the camp, being in Za'tari, with its Syrian, and somewhat familiar, population, is differentiated from being 'in Jordan.' In one workshop I was attending in the summer of 2016, in the context of discussing cultural differences around gender, one participant said he had only ever been in Syria. He paused for a moment, chuckled, and said "and Jordan?" with a questioning intonation. "Is this Jordan?"¹²¹ As was noted in the earlier discussion of sovereignty, the policies and practices of Jordanian state actors simultaneously set Za'tari apart from 'Jordan,' even while, necessitated by this separation, they attempt to demonstrate its presence 'in Jordan.'

According to focus group discussions conducted by NRC with young men and women in Za'tari in 2013, almost all men were involved with agriculture, in some capacity, in their hometowns in Syria. They did not typically consider this to be their profession, however, but rather a typical part of the daily life and 'home economy' of families in Dar'a. The level of men's economic activity in the paid labour market was also high, with 70 percent of even those aged 15-19 reporting that they economically active, typically in 'blue-collar' and vocational professions. Young women were also often involved in agricultural and food-production activities with their families, as part of their daily lives and domestic responsibilities, although very rarely entered the waged labour market.¹²² According to the ILO and Fafo, the proportion of Za'tari residents employed in different sectors prior to March 2011 broadly mirrored that of the overall Syrian population in Jordan, although Za'tari residents were less likely to have been craft workers, and more likely to have an 'elementary occupation.'¹²³

Once Za'tari was opened, all Syrian refugees who arrived at the northern Jordanian border were taken there, although many left after a period of days, weeks, or months, through the 'bailout' system. This system enabled Syrians to leave the camp if they had a Jordanian sponsor who, on paper, needed to be "over 35 years of age, married, with a stable job, no police record, and in a direct family relation with the applicant."¹²⁴ In 2012 and 2013 it was relatively easy to obtain such paperwork, even if the Jordanian sponsor did not meet all the criteria, and was often facilitated by Syrians paying unknown Jordanians to act as sponsors for them. According to a UNHCR assessment, some

¹²¹ Fieldnotes, Za'tari, 31.07.2016.

¹²² Norwegian Refugee Council, "Syrian Refugees Youth Needs Assessment Study" ([unpublished], 2013).

¹²³ ILO and Fafo, "Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Jordanian Labour Market," 56.

¹²⁴ Luigi Achilli, "Syrian Refugees in Jordan: A Reality Check," Policy Brief (Florence: European University Institute, 2015), 6.

Syrians paid as much as \$500 in this way to enable them to leave the camp.¹²⁵ The MoI estimated that a further 54,000 people left the camp informally, by being ‘smuggled’ out, which could cost \$300 for a family, but did not provide the legal paperwork that a bailout did, leaving Syrians legally precarious when living outside of the camp. Unknown numbers of Jordanian security personnel have been disciplined for taking part in, and profiting from, these operations.¹²⁶

By 2014, however, SRAD was applying the bailout criteria much more stringently, often refusing Syrians’ applications. The Syrians who remained in Za‘tari were therefore more likely to have been refugees who had fewer connections and networks in Jordan, and fewer financial resources at their disposal. When Azraq camp was opened in April 2014, new arrivals to Jordan were often sent there, rather than Za‘tari.¹²⁷ These changes in regulations meant that over time Za‘tari essentially transformed from a transit camp, in which people often arrived and left within days or weeks, to a more settled camp, with a relatively stable population. By the end of 2015, 99.3 percent of the residents of Za‘tari had been in the camp for over a year, and 80.7 percent for more than two years.¹²⁸

The demographic breakdown of Syrians in Za‘tari, and indeed in Jordan as a whole, is almost exactly half men and boys and half women and girls.¹²⁹ The population, again both inside and outside of camp, is very young, with slightly over 50 percent of registered Syrians in Jordan being under the age of 18.¹³⁰ Although Syria contains a large number and range of religious minorities, the demographic data on Za‘tari produced by humanitarian actors typically does not include any information on religious affiliations,¹³¹ presumably reflecting an assumption, which in my experience was accurate, that camp residents were (at least almost) exclusively Sunni Muslims. In the work in which I took

¹²⁵ Jeff Crisp et al., “From Slow Boil to Breaking Point: A Real-Time Evaluation of UNHCR’s Response to the Syrian Refugee Emergency” (Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service, July 2013), 10.

¹²⁶ Hanan Khandaji and Musab Shawabkeh, “Jordan: 54,000 Syrians Smuggled out of Zaatari Camp through Bribery and Black Market,” *Arab Reporters for Investigate Journalism*, January 7, 2014, <http://en.arij.net/report/54000-syrians-smuggled-out-of-zaatari-camp-through-bribery-and-black-market/>.

¹²⁷ Achilli, “Syrian Refugees in Jordan.”

¹²⁸ UNICEF and REACH, “Zaatari Camp Population Count Summary of Findings” (Amman: UNICEF and REACH, December 2015), <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

¹²⁹ Syrian refugees are recorded as either ‘male’ or ‘female,’ in accordance with their assignment at birth. Transgender Syrians are also obliged to use such documentation, even if it does not correspond with their gender identity: interview with LGBTI activist working with refugees, Amman, 26.01.2016.

¹³⁰ UNHCR, “Registered Syrians in Jordan”; ILO and Fafo, “Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Jordanian Labour Market.”

¹³¹ UNICEF and REACH, “Zaatari Camp Population Count Summary of Findings.”

part, when the topic of religion in the community was discussed, no refugees raised the point of religious diversity or plurality within Za'tari.¹³²

Refugee camps are sometimes imagined as “rows upon rows of tents,”¹³³ implying a uniformity of layout and population density, and authorities attempted to achieve this in Za'tari.¹³⁴ Because of the actions of its Syrian inhabitants, however, Za'tari is internally far from uniform. Often ignoring the patch of land that they were allocated, Syrians have moved thousands of caravans around the camp to create living spaces that better reflect their needs and vision for the camp, and through which they have staked a claim to its space. This was often achieved by appropriating fence posts from the edge of the camp, welding wheels to them, and transporting the caravans balanced on the fence posts.¹³⁵

At times this was done to create extended family homes, rather than the nuclear family living envisaged by the criteria used for caravan distribution. The spatial living arrangements that have resulted are extremely varied. In some cases they reflect the kinds of housing that Za'tari residents had in Syria, which were themselves varied; in other cases new housing arrangements emerged.¹³⁶ Although some camp residents still live in only one caravan, many others live in formations of two caravans either side-by-side, opposite each other, or at right angles. Some live in three or more caravans, sometimes in a ‘U-Shape,’ with each of the three caravans taking on a different function (for example, one can be set aside as a room to receive guests and/or spend time during the day).¹³⁷ Others still live in formations of 4 or more caravans.¹³⁸ On average, between 5 and 6 Syrians live in a household.¹³⁹ Motivations for moving caravans included wanting to live near to others from their villages, neighbourhoods, or towns of origin. As was recorded by Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) in 2013, residents of the camp from particular districts of Dar'a Governorate often clustered in particular

¹³² Author observation, Za'tari, 03.11.2015, 15.12.2015, and 22.12.2015

¹³³ Lisa Hoashi, “Life in Za'atari: An Inside Look,” April 19, 2013, <https://www.mercycorps.org.uk/photoessays/jordan-syria/life-zaatari-inside-look>; the maps of camps in Hyndman, *Managing Displacement* conjure the same image.

¹³⁴ Ayham Dalal, “Uncovering Culture and Identity in Refugee Camps,” *Humanities* 6, no. 3 (2017): 61–64; UNHCR, *A Day in the Life: Za'atari - Episode 2: Theft or Privatization?*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6or4ws-tmoo>.

¹³⁵ UNHCR, *A Day in the Life 2*.

¹³⁶ Dalal, “Uncovering Culture and Identity in Refugee Camps.”

¹³⁷ Author observation, Za'tari, 13.10.2015 and 05.12.2015.

¹³⁸ Ayham Dalal, “Camp Cities Between Planning and Practice: Mapping the Urbanisation of Zaatari Camp” (University of Stuttgart, 2014).

¹³⁹ REACH, “Key Findings of REACH Camp Sweep Assessment in Za'atari,” November 19, 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

areas of the camp.¹⁴⁰ Syrians have also adapted UNHCR tents, corrugated zinc sheets, tarpaulins, and blankets, to name but a few examples, to increase their privacy, create shelter from the harsh extremes of climate, and increase the amount of living space available to them.¹⁴¹

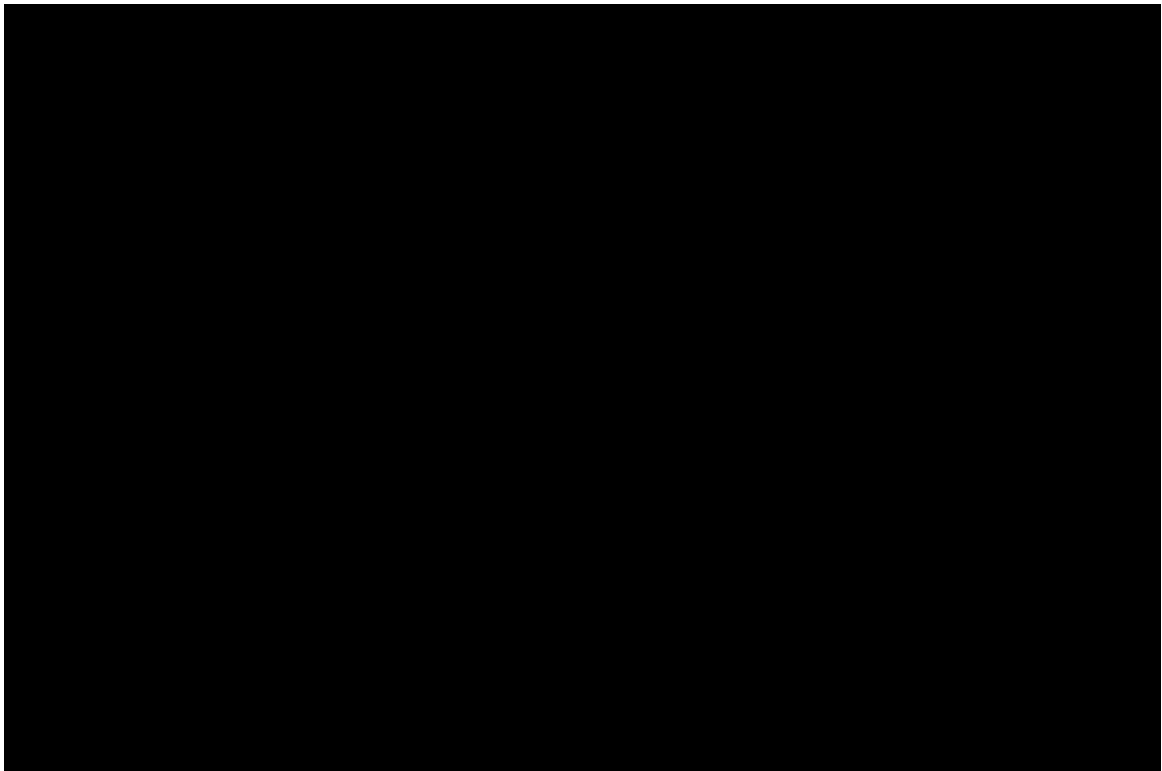


Figure 1.2 Population Density in Za'tari – December 2015.¹⁴²

Syrians rearranging their caravans has resulted in the population density being very uneven across the camp, as is demonstrated on the map above. The map shows the 12 districts into which Za'tari was divided by UNHCR as part of its 2013 *Governance Plan*. This was devised partly with the intention to “decongest” the western parts of the camp¹⁴³ (those nearest Base Camp and thus nearest service providers) and to decentralise administration and services. Put another way, it was an attempt to regain control over the planning and use of the camp space from Syrian refugees. The differences among the districts can easily be observed and felt when in different areas of the camp. District 2, consists of narrow streets between caravans, at times with little more than two feet between them. District 7, on the eastern end of the camp, has roads on which two cars

¹⁴⁰ Denis Sullivan and Sarah Tobin, “Security and Resilience Among Syrian Refugees in Jordan,” Middle East Research and Information Project, October 14, 2014, <http://merip.org/mero/mero101414>.

¹⁴¹ Author observation, Za'tari, 21.07.2016, 25.07.2016, and 01.08.2016.

¹⁴² UNICEF, “Jordan - Al Za'atari Refugee Camp, Population Density - December 2015,” February 25, 2016.

¹⁴³ UNHCR, “Zaatari Governance Plan,” 5.

can pass, and caravans with space on all four sides, leaving room often for Syrians to create small gardens at the entrance to their caravan(s).¹⁴⁴ The districts numbered 1-4 were populated first when the camp opened. The former camp manager, Killian Kleinschmidt, referred to Districts 1 and 2, the most populated areas of the camp, as “the downtown, the slum.”¹⁴⁵ UNHCR’s approach to governing Za’tari, however, did not only involve a spatial re-organisation of the camp. As I will now explore, it included clamping down on protest, and new and more extensive forms of policing.

“Stop this demonstrating business”¹⁴⁶: Za’tari and its Troublemaking Men

Za’tari was initially put under the control of the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO), an officially non-governmental, but in practice “semi-official agency” of the state.¹⁴⁷ Yet by the start of 2013, six months after the camp was opened, it had become clear that this situation was untenable, due to the scale of the crisis unfolding in Syria (and thereby Jordan) and the inexperience of the JHCO in managing an operation anything like Za’tari.¹⁴⁸ To tackle this, the GoJ created the Syrian Refugee Camps Directorate, which would become the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate mentioned above. Even though the UN system was also struggling to respond quickly and dynamically to the emerging situation,¹⁴⁹ in early 2013 the GoJ also gave a larger role to UNHCR, which essentially took over large swathes of non-security related governance of the camp from JHCO.¹⁵⁰ New UNHCR personnel, working under the direction of Kilian Kleinschmidt, a white, male, German veteran of humanitarian crises in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Pakistan, were brought in to, in the words of a former UNHCR worker, “get it back under control.”¹⁵¹ Kleinschmidt ran UNHCR’s operations in the camp until November 2014, during which time the camp changed extensively.

¹⁴⁴ Author observation, Za’tari, 10.11.2015 and 05.12.2015.

¹⁴⁵ UNHCR, *A Day in the Life: Za’atari - Episode 1: Welcome to Za’atari*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4OIVW0waEo&list=PLtPw-Y91GlmWQ442W6zA-oeXxYI1W3HF>.

¹⁴⁶ Kilian Kleinschmidt, UNHCR Senior Field Coordinator in Za’tari, in UNHCR, *A Day in the Life: Za’atari - Episode 13: A Home, at Last*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osa0WEVL2QM>.

¹⁴⁷ Sean Healy and Sandrine Tiller, “A Review of the Humanitarian Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan 2012-13” (Médecins Sans Frontières, October 2013), 7.

¹⁴⁸ Interviews with former employee of international organisation in Za’tari; and former UNHCR worker in Za’tari.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with former employee of international organisation in Za’tari .

¹⁵⁰ See UNHCR, “Za’atari Governance Plan.”

¹⁵¹ Interview with former UNHCR worker in Za’tari.

During the earlier part of its existence – 2012 and 2013 – the camp was much less ‘orderly’ than it was during the time of my fieldwork. Tens, hundreds or even thousands of new refugees were arriving each day,¹⁵² the bailout system enabled many people to leave after days or weeks, service provision was still being conducted somewhat haphazardly and partly through ‘street leaders’ (see below), and the market and neighbourhoods of Syrians’ choice were still being created through them moving tents, caravans, and other materials around the camp. The camp was the site of multiple instantiations of violence and conflict. These included of course the violence inherent in restricting Syrians’ freedom of movement, but also interpersonal violence among Syrians, violent clashes between refugees and security forces, and sometimes between refugees and humanitarian workers.

In a large-scale survey of over 3,000 residents conducted by SIREN, part of the camp’s community policing team (discussed below) in 2013, 40 percent of Syrians surveyed believed that there was no law enforcement in the camp, almost half of residents could not lock their abodes, over fifteen percent had experienced theft in the camp, and over one third reported that they felt unsafe walking alone in Za’tari during the daytime, a number that increased at night time. Distribution sites, in particular, were considered to be unsafe, with 90 percent of respondents identifying non-food distribution sites as unsafe, and over 75 percent considered food distribution sites as unsafe. In the qualitative focus group discussions, overcrowding of public spaces, gatherings of male youths, fighting and harassment were all considered to be significant problems.¹⁵³ As well as harassment, the camp experienced very high levels of other forms of SGBV, in particular domestic violence.¹⁵⁴

In addition to these forms of violence and perceived lack of safety, there were extensive reports of what has been termed ‘riots’ and ‘criminality’ in the camp.¹⁵⁵ These

¹⁵² UNHCR, *A Day in the Life: Za’atari - Episode 10: Out of the Darkness*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhrpPqL2ZSw>.

¹⁵³ Policing Support Team, British Embassy Amman, “Safety Perceptions Survey: Za’atari Syrian Refugee Camp,” 2015.

¹⁵⁴ CPGBV Sub-Working Group, “Findings from the Inter-Agency Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Assessment in the Za’atari Refugee Camp” (Amman, 2013).

¹⁵⁵ E.g. see Al Jazeera, “Report Exposes Syria Refugee Camp Conditions - Al Jazeera English,” Al Jazeera, August 5, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/08/20138520329121269.html>; Tom Blackwell, “Syrians Grappling with Persistent Crime Problem,” *National Post* (blog), May 17, 2013, <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/syrians-grapple-with-persistent-crime-problem-in-refugee-camp-in-jordan>; Takis Würger, “Chaos and Crime: The Trials of Running a Syrian Refugee Camp,” *Der Spiegel*

designations fail to recognise the politics of the underlying disputes over distribution, and further demonstrate the ways in which, as Sophia Hoffman has argued, humanitarianism simultaneously defines populations as *at risk* and *a risk*.¹⁵⁶ As has been documented above, Syrians would use the resources they found in the camp for their own purposes, whether that was to build homes, create shops, move caravans, or other reasons. An infamous incident occurred in early 2013, in which Syrian youths dismantled and took a pre-fabricated police station. One version of this story is that the station was unguarded due to a communication mix-up between different units.¹⁵⁷ Another version, which I was told personally, is that the Jordanian police officers watched, worried for their safety if they tried to intervene.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, so-called street leaders, who were largely self-appointed members of the community who took on responsibility for their neighbourhoods, were rumoured to be taking a proportion of the resources they helped to distribute as ‘payment’ for their services.¹⁵⁹

Za‘tari was also the scene of violent demonstrations and clashes between refugees and Jordanian security forces, which on at least one occasion resulted in the death of a Syrian refugee.¹⁶⁰ In response to this incident, UNHCR released a statement that included an “appeal to Syrian refugees to respect Jordanian law,” and emphasised that “tremendous efforts have been made over the past months to create an atmosphere of civility in the camp.”¹⁶¹ While incidents such as this would make international headlines, much less widely reported were smaller-scale, but much more regular instances of protest and stone-throwing, towards both security forces and humanitarian workers.¹⁶² One of the effects of this history of the camp was that even at the time of my fieldwork some humanitarian workers would think of Za‘tari as a place of ‘violence’ and ‘chaos.’¹⁶³ During my fieldwork I was consistently surprised that some NGO workers would

Online, June 30, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/kilian-kleinschmidt-profile-running-a-syrian-refugee-camp-a-908146.html>.

¹⁵⁶ Sophia Hoffmann, “Humanitarian Security in Jordan’s Azraq Camp,” *Security Dialogue* 48, no. 2 (2017): 97–112.

¹⁵⁷ UNHCR, *A Day in the Life: Za‘atari - Episode 7: The Trouble with Kids*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgLSzcEcrUI>.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with former UNHCR worker in Za‘tari.

¹⁵⁹ Sullivan and Tobin, “Security and Resilience.”

¹⁶⁰ Associated Press, “Syrian Refugee Killed in Riot at Camp in Jordan,” *The Guardian*, April 6, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/06/damascus-opera-house-syrian-rebels-shelling>.

¹⁶¹ UNHCR, “UNHCR Dismayed at Violent Demonstration at Za‘atari Refugee Camp in Jordan,” UNHCR, April 6, 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/534156726.html>.

¹⁶² See UNHCR, “Za‘atari Refugee Camp - Safety and Security Report (2013)” (Jordan: UNHCR, March 2014).

¹⁶³ Conversations with NGO workers, Za‘tari, 10.11.2015.

question whether it was, for example, safe to walk through the camp on foot, which jarred with my experience of the camp.¹⁶⁴

The political nature of these incidents and protests, and the violence that sometimes resulted from them, was rarely explicitly recognised when I discussed that period of the camp with my interlocutors. One interviewee, for example, who was stationed in Za'tari for most of 2013, introduced his time in the camp during an interview by describing scenes of chaos and disorder. Upon detailed questioning, however, he revealed that when violent incidents occurred, they were often around distribution centres, or in disputes over registration (and thus the allocation of resources).¹⁶⁵ Rather than indiscriminate or random acts of violence, another interviewee explained, protests in the camp were often “quite small and quite targeted: they’re directed at the UN or security services.”¹⁶⁶ Protests, and the stoning of vehicles, similarly greeted a September 2012 visit to the camp by Lakhdar Brahimi, the then UN and Arab League Special Envoy for Syria.¹⁶⁷

Participants in protests, demonstrations, stone throwings, and those who positioned themselves, or were positioned by others, as street and community leaders, were overwhelmingly men and boys. Street leaders simultaneously exercised power over others in Za'tari, and resisted the power of humanitarian and state authorities.¹⁶⁸ In Za'tari, as in other contexts,¹⁶⁹ many men were keen to (re)gain masculinised roles of leadership and responsibility in the community, which conflict and exile had disrupted.¹⁷⁰ It was the male population of Za'tari in particular, therefore, that appeared in the eyes of the governing authorities to need to be brought under control. For example, the idea that disturbances in the camp were caused by the young and/or single men of Za'tari (two categories that overlap significantly in the context of Za'tari), appeared in both the international press¹⁷¹ and UNHCR and NGO reports.¹⁷² This created (or perhaps

¹⁶⁴ Conversations with NGO workers, Za'tari, 25.11.2015.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with former UNHCR worker in Za'tari.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with former NGO worker in Za'tari.

¹⁶⁷ AP Archive, *Protests as Syria Envoy Visits Refugee Camp in Jordan*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liUSawQ2yGU>.

¹⁶⁸ Dalal, “Camp Cities Between Planning and Practice,” 121–24.

¹⁶⁹ E.g. see Martin Timothy Rowe, *The Experience of Protest: Masculinity and Agency Among Sudanese Refugees in Cairo*, Cairo Papers in Social Science (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010); Turner, “Angry Young Men in a Tanzanian Refugee Camp.”

¹⁷⁰ Interview with former UNHCR worker in Za'tari.

¹⁷¹ eg IRIN, “Security Concerns Rise at Syrian Refugee Camp despite Police Presence,” *The Guardian*, April 6, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/apr/06/security-concerns-syrian-refugee-camp>.

reinforced) a perception of the young men in the camp as “trouble makers,”¹⁷³ or, in the words of the Kleinschmidt to the *New York Times*, “naughty, naughty kids – the best stone throwers on earth.”¹⁷⁴ In August 2012, according to an article in the *Jordan Times*, which is no longer available on their website, Jordanian authorities even threatened to “separate single men from families in Zaatari” in response to “violent riots” taking place there.¹⁷⁵ Such a separation has been undertaken by humanitarian actors in other contexts, for example in camps in Greece where refugees from Syria and elsewhere live. This arrangement left many men, especially younger men, facing isolation, violence, and oppressive levels of police surveillance.¹⁷⁶

According to some of my interviewees, the perception of young men in the camp as dangerous also extended to NGO employees in their interactions with the Syrian population. For some NGO employees, fear was created by the actions that young men in the camp took to protect and defend themselves. For example, some young men carry small-scale weapons with them in the camp, fashioned out of items such as pieces of aluminium, which the vast majority of NGOs would not allow within their centres or spaces.¹⁷⁷ But “by not recognising that [young men’s] fear is driving them, then our fear drives us [and] we don’t recognise it either.”¹⁷⁸ Young men in Za’tari were keenly aware of the widespread negative perceptions that circulate about them locally and internationally,¹⁷⁹ which articulated with broader negative portrayals of Arab men as violent and dangerous.¹⁸⁰ These protesting young men do not match the vision of the ‘vulnerable’ refugee with whom humanitarians imagine they should be working, nor are camp environments, according to humanitarian logics, meant to be ‘political’ spaces. While the emphasis on refugee men’s ‘riots’ and ‘violence’ hypermasculinises them, the perceived need to bring protests under control in the camp can be understood as part of

¹⁷² International Medical Corps and UNICEF, “Mental Health/Psychosocial and Child Protection Assessment for Syrian Refugee Adolescents in Za’tari Refugee Camp, Jordan” (Amman: IMC & UNICEF, July 2013), 5; UNHCR, “Za’atari Refugee Camp - Safety and Security Report (2013).”

¹⁷³ Interview with former NGO worker in Za’tari.

¹⁷⁴ Jodi Rudoren, “Kilian Kleinschmidt: Calm Boss Overseeing a Syrian Refugee Camp’s Chaos,” *The New York Times*, May 24, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/25/world/middleeast/kilian-kleinschmidt-calm-boss-at-center-of-a-syrian-refugee-camps-chaos.html>.

¹⁷⁵ Luck, “Authorities to Separate Single Men from Families at Zaatari.”

¹⁷⁶ CARE and Promundo, “Men and Boys in Displacement: Assistance and Protection Challenges for Unaccompanied Boys and Men in Refugee Contexts,” 11.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Curt Rhodes.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with former NGO worker in Za’tari; conversation with Syrian refugee man, Za’tari, 05.12.2015.

¹⁸⁰ Inhorn, *The New Arab Man*.

humanitarian actors' attempts to bring the refugee population of Za'tari more in line with the vision of refugees in the South as passive, feminised, and depoliticised.

There were multiple attempts to respond to this mixture of protest, violence, and the 'privatisation' of humanitarian resources, and to create a depoliticised and pliant population. Kleinschmidt relied on the deployment of a masculinised, authoritarian personal style in order to gain the 'respect' of the population, while simultaneously trying to reduce the power of the street leaders through a much more widespread, but 'softer,' police presence in the camp. Backing up this system was a little discussed, but widely known, policy whereby Syrians were at risk of arbitrary deportation from the camp to Syria. These three features of governance, centred around Kleinschmidt, 'softer' policing, and deportations, will now be explored in turn.

The authoritarian aspects of camp governance were, in part, centred around Kleinschmidt himself. The subject of sympathetic, even sycophantic, portrayals in news articles and film documentaries,¹⁸¹ Kleinschmidt is a deeply polarising figure in the humanitarian sector in Jordan because of how he approached the governance of Za'tari.¹⁸² He deliberately attempted to maintain a 'strong man' image, as he "understands the refugees only accept him if he behaves like a mayor in their presence."¹⁸³ It appeared, from footage of the time, to be a role he enjoyed. In the opening episode of the video series "A Day in the Life: Za'atari" he explains, set to tense music in the background, that he is "the manager of Za'tari camp, they call me the mayor of Za'tari," and with a slight smile, "but I'm also simply the boss."¹⁸⁴ This 'macho' vision of authority and power is recognisable as, to use Cynthia Weber's phrase, one of the "masculine forms of white authoritarian leadership."¹⁸⁵ Humanitarianism is embodied in gendered and racialised ways.

Kleinschmidt took an intolerant attitude towards refugees' protests. He wanted Syrians to respect the physical installations of humanitarian agencies, and for refugees and

¹⁸¹ E.g. see Ellen Martinez and Steph Ching, *After Spring*, 2016; Rudoren, "Kilian Kleinschmidt"; UNHCR, *A Day in the Life 1*.

¹⁸² Interview with former NGO worker in Za'tari.

¹⁸³ Würger, "Chaos and Crime: The Trials of Running a Syrian Refugee Camp."

¹⁸⁴ UNHCR, *A Day in the Life 1*, 1.

¹⁸⁵ Weber, "The Trump Presidency, Episode 1," 132.

authorities to be “working together.”¹⁸⁶ There was simply no room for protests. As one Syrian man told me in the summer of 2016, in contrast to the early months of the camp, protests are now “not allowed.”¹⁸⁷ The aforementioned short films document an incident when Kleinschmidt is informed by telephone of a protest because a new transformer for the electricity supply had not yet arrived, and he tells a colleague over the phone:

if they don't stop demonstrating there is no transformer. They can burn the camp if they wish. They can burn it all it's their camp. The police has to tell them to go back and stop this demonstrating business.¹⁸⁸

This shows that particular sorts of ‘politics’ within refugee camps are deemed inappropriate, and incompatible with humanitarianism, and demonstrates one of the ways in which, as Sophia Hoffman has argued, humanitarian agencies are increasingly reliant on national police forces. This reliance contrasts with humanitarians’ prior insistence that a clear separation between the two should exist. The increasing levels of humanitarian-state security cooperation, she argues, risk eroding both trust in humanitarianism and the perception that humanitarians are ‘independent.’¹⁸⁹

In another episode, Kleinschmidt is filmed in a verbal altercation with protesting Syrians, telling them to “stop this nonsense here. No demonstrations anymore.”¹⁹⁰ Speaking later to the camera, he explains that this is part of a continued dispute about the new transformer. He returned to Base Camp to find that the main entrance had been blocked:

and this is something I simply cannot stand. If everything...I mean...opinion is expressed through basically a violent act of reducing our freedom of movement or something like that it's not acceptable.

There is no apparent irony in his suggestion that it is unacceptable for humanitarians’ freedom of movement to be limited by refugees, when the camp is designed to facilitate exactly the reverse. While one individual, Kleinschmidt’s behaviours articulate with others’ observations of the gendered dynamics of humanitarianism. As Cynthia Enloe has noted, among Oxfam’s staff the Emergency Aid Department, which for example

¹⁸⁶ UNHCR, *A Day in the Life: Za'atari - Episode 6: Complications*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4unMXSem2rQ>.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with married Syrian man living in Za'tari (3), Za'tari, 01.08.2016.

¹⁸⁸ UNHCR, *A Day in the Life 13*.

¹⁸⁹ See Hoffmann, “Humanitarian Security in Jordan’s Azraq Camp.”

¹⁹⁰ UNHCR, *A Day in the Life: Za'atari - Episode 14: Boiling Over*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbuBmYu1edI>.

went to refugee camps, was seen as the most masculinised of its departments, “surrounded by an aura of urgency,” requiring expertise and “heavy lifting.”¹⁹¹

In addition to a hostility to Syrians’ protests, humanitarian and governmental actors also attempted to depoliticise Za’tari through the banning the Syrian rebel flag (with green, white and black stripes with red stars),¹⁹² which I would only very occasionally see in public spaces during my fieldwork, but which used to be much more numerous, especially along the market streets.¹⁹³ Coffee shops and shisha bars are also banned, which remove from Syrian men some of the main spaces in which they might otherwise socialise.¹⁹⁴ In my voluntary activities offering English teaching with an INGO in the camp, I was required to sign a form acknowledging my awareness and adherence to the “safety golden rules,” which included “avoid any religious or political views.”¹⁹⁵ This depoliticisation of refugees’ lives is central to humanitarian work in contexts of displacement,¹⁹⁶ and Za’tari was no exception.¹⁹⁷ In a particularly interesting choice of words given the links between the feminisation and depoliticisation of refugees,¹⁹⁸ an NGO Director I interviewed, who was very critical of the way humanitarians functioned in the camp, argued that the population of Za’tari has been “domesticated.”¹⁹⁹

Kleinschmidt’s approach also had implications for the competition to exercise sovereign power over Za’tari. Positioning himself publicly as the mayor of a segment of Jordanian territory and carrying out plans without consultation with SRAD in the camp did little to endear him to Jordanian authorities, or to the UNHCR hierarchy in the country.²⁰⁰ A Jordanian police officer who had worked in Za’tari for over two years understood Kleinschmidt’s attitude as based on his experience of working on humanitarian crises in ‘Africa.’ Humanitarian agencies “can do whatever they want [in Africa]...there is no control or order,” he explained. Jordan, by contrast, is a sovereign actor in control of,

¹⁹¹ Carol Cohn and Cynthia Enloe, “A Conversation with Cynthia Enloe: Feminists Look at Masculinity and the Men Who Wage War,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 4 (2003): 1189.

¹⁹² Melissa Gatter, “Remaking Childhood: Humanitarianism and Growing Up Syrian in Za’atari Refugee Camp” (University of Cambridge, 2016).

¹⁹³ E.g. see footage in Martinez and Ching, *After Spring*; UNHCR, *A Day in the Life* 6.

¹⁹⁴ See Chapter 4.

¹⁹⁵ Fieldnotes, Za’tari, 03.12.2015.

¹⁹⁶ Malkki, *Purity and Exile*; Omata, “Unwelcome Participation, Undesirable Agency?”

¹⁹⁷ For a discussion of this, see Gatter, “Remaking Childhood.”

¹⁹⁸ Johnson, “Click to Donate.”

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Curt Rhodes.

²⁰⁰ Conversation with Jordanian police officer formerly stationed in Za’tari, Emirati Jordanian Camp, 25.07.2016; interviews with Jared Kohler, photographer formerly contracted to UNHCR Jordan, Amman, 28.03.2016; and former UNHCR worker in Za’tari.

and present throughout, its territory, and is thereby deserving of deference: “[y]ou are in Jordan! We have a system that should be respected.”²⁰¹

Agents of the Jordanian state were, however, also part of Kleinschmidt’s plans for the camp, and in early 2014 it was reported that 800 public security personnel were employed in the camp.²⁰² Kleinschmidt wished to replace the street leaders, whom were often the leaders or instigators of protests, with whom he regularly had to negotiate, and on whom the Jordanian police relied for information, with community police officers.²⁰³ This would also, it was hoped, stop situations where UNHCR were approached by members of security services, who would ask them to prioritise particular individuals in the camp for resource distribution, on the basis, it appeared, that they had supplied, or promised to supply, the security services with information.²⁰⁴ It would simultaneously reduce the power of the street leaders and tackle the unwillingness and/or inability of the Jordanian security services to police the camp in anything but the most reactive sense. Patrolling inside the camp, police officers believed, would potentially put their lives at risk.²⁰⁵ At the same time, Kleinschmidt engaged in meetings and consultations with street leaders, and tried to encourage them to work together with him to ensure the smooth running of the camp.²⁰⁶

The project to implement community policing in the camp was funded by the British Embassy in Amman, and was overseen by SIREN Associates. SIREN, an organisation that works on policing and security sector reform, is staffed primarily by former or retired British (and in particular often Northern Irish) police officers, who form part of a long line of foreign ‘experts’ who have helped shape policing in the Middle East.²⁰⁷ SIREN staff members do not undertake policing themselves, but rather act as “mentors” for those undertaking the ‘community policing.’²⁰⁸ This policing does not involve members of the Syrian community taking the roles of police officers, or assistants, or even formal community liaison roles, but rather in Za’tari ‘community policing’ refers to

²⁰¹ Conversation with Jordanian police officer formerly stationed in Za’tari, Emirati Jordanian Refugee Camp, 25.07.2016.

²⁰² Khandaji and Shawabkeh, “Jordan.”

²⁰³ See Ledwith, *Zaatari*; Sullivan and Tobin, “Security and Resilience.”

²⁰⁴ Interview with former UNHCR worker in Za’tari.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Stephen Boddy.

²⁰⁶ Ledwith, *Zaatari*; UNHCR, *A Day in the Life* 6.

²⁰⁷ Laleh Khalili and Jillian Schwedler, “Introduction,” in *Policing and Prisons in the Middle East: Formations of Coercion* (London: C Hurst & Co, 2010), 3–4.

²⁰⁸ Interview with Stephen Boddy.

the style of policing undertaken. As Susan Miller has argued in the context of the United States, this involves a re-definition of ‘softer’ skills, which are often coded as feminine, to be masculine traits and part of ‘real’ police work.²⁰⁹ While states will often attempt to portray community policing as a “gentler and kinder way of policing,” it is “a crucial piece of police jargon for what is in reality an aggressively proactive style of policing,” and resembles a milder version of counterinsurgency.²¹⁰

The community police, who are Jordanian police officers, and their assistants, who are retired Jordanian police officers, are trained to act as problem-solvers in the camp, and have developed “a very good empathy for the Syrians” according to a SIREN project manager.²¹¹ On a visit to the community police station in July 2016, I was told by community police officers that the biggest problems they dealt with were not criminal incidents, but were about supplies of electricity or water, or disputes between neighbours.²¹² Increasing the everyday presence of the police in the camp, and making everyday problems and non-criminal disputes part of their purview, has also had the effect of increasing Syrians’ perceptions that Jordanian law is both the official law in the camp, and that it is actually implemented. This was deemed, by SIREN, a success.²¹³ While “Jordan” may remain separate from “Za’tari” in some Syrians’ minds, as discussed above, this performance of Jordanian sovereignty and authority was nonetheless having an impact on Syrians’ (reported) perceptions of the camp.

I asked a community police officer how else their work differed from the work of other police units stationed in and around the camp. He explained that it was about their approach and the way they do their work: “[w]e are respectful, humanitarian, and have good relations with the community.” This comment prompted a response from the (non-community) police officer who was accompanying me around the camp. He turned to the community police officer and asked “are we not humanitarian?” The community police officer attempted, slightly frantically, to explain that of course he hadn’t meant to imply that any other branch of the Jordanian police was not humanitarian, they all were. While their discussion continued, the third police officer present started a different

²⁰⁹ See Susan L. Miller, *Gender and Community Policing: Walking the Talk* (UPNE, 1999), especially Chapter 3.

²¹⁰ Mark Neocleous and Maria Kastrinou, “The EU Hotspot: Police War against the Migrant,” *Radical Philosophy: Journal of Socialist Feminist Philosophy* 200 (2016): 6.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Conversation with Community Police Officer, Za’tari, 21.07.2016.

²¹³ Policing Support Team, British Embassy Amman, “Safety Perceptions Survey,” 4, 34–35.

conversation with me, perhaps in an effort to distract me from the disagreement taking place, which remained friendly, but which nonetheless appeared important to its participants.²¹⁴

Even if community policing is not a gentler, but rather a different, way of exerting control over a population, more ‘traditional’ and draconian elements of policing continued to be used in Za‘tari, and played an important role in the creation of ‘order.’ There is an ever-present awareness among Syrians living in the camp that they are potentially subject to deportation back to Syria - *refoulement* in the language of international refugee law.²¹⁵ According to my Syrian and humanitarian interlocutors, deportations take place largely on the basis of (suspected) security concerns, in particular where Syrians are suspected of being affiliated to groups such as *Da‘ish* or *Jabhat al-Nusra*.²¹⁶ Given the situations in Syria and Iraq, and the threat that the GoJ believes that radicalisation poses to Jordan, the Jordanian security services feel “empowered” to act upon security concerns, which are perceived to trump any humanitarian considerations.²¹⁷ In another article that has since been removed from the *Jordan Times* website, the then-Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh is quoted as stating that those responsible for “rioting” will also be “repatriated” to “where they came from.” The policy of deportation applies across the whole of Jordan.²¹⁸ According to Human Rights Watch, numbers of deportations of Syrians from Jordan spiked in mid-2016 and early 2017, with the latter period witnessing the deportation of around 400 registered refugees per month.²¹⁹

In the camp context, however, threats of deportation (whether explicit or subtle) extend beyond the security services. They are used by individual Jordanians, including those working for NGOs in the camp, to stop individual objections or protests, for example about the distribution of resources, or even to extract resources from refugees themselves.²²⁰ Allusions to relatives in the *mukhabarat* (intelligence services) have a very

²¹⁴ Fieldnotes, Za‘tari, 21.07.2016.

²¹⁵ Interview with NGO worker in Za‘tari.

²¹⁶ Interviews with NGO worker in Za‘tari; and Jared Kohler; conversations with Syrian refugees, Za‘tari, 01.08.2016. Human Rights Watch, “‘I Have No Idea Why They Sent Us Back’ Jordanian Deportations and Expulsions of Syrian Refugees” (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2017).

²¹⁷ Interview with Jared Kohler.

²¹⁸ Jordan Times, “Police Disperse Rioting Syrians at Zaatari Camp,” archive.is, November 18, 2015, <http://archive.is/y46uV>.

²¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, “‘I Have No Idea Why They Sent Us Back.’”

²²⁰ Interview with NGO worker in Za‘tari.

clear meaning to a Syrian living in a context where deportations are known to occur regularly. Those slated for deportation, furthermore, have no due process or ability to appeal or challenge the decision.²²¹ In this context, the widespread threat of this measure contributes to the depoliticisation of the camp, strongly disincentivising not only overt political activity, but also gatherings that may be deemed, or construed, to be ‘political’ or in some sense threatening to the Jordanian authorities.

It is widely known, among both camp residents and NGO workers, that deportations are a feature of life for Syrians in Jordan. Yet there is also a widespread perception in the humanitarian sector that this is one of the most sensitive issues in governmental-humanitarian relations, and one in which it is perceived that the sector has little influence over Jordanian decisions.²²² Andrew Harper, then UNHCR’s representative to Jordan, is quoted as stating that “if the government believes there is a security concern with some refugees, it is very difficult for us to intervene successfully,” and that “we understand the government’s legitimate security concerns.”²²³ Or, as one NGO project manager told me, reflecting the aforementioned increasing levels of cooperation between humanitarian and state security agencies “you cannot win in a discussion with the police or with the camp management because they work, erm, together.”²²⁴ The relative public silences from UNHCR on the question of *refoulement* from Jordan – not only in the case of Syrians, but also notably in the case of many hundred Sudanese in December 2015²²⁵ – is one of many sources of disquiet among many working in the humanitarian sector about the relationship between GoJ and UNHCR.²²⁶

Others in the camp, in particular NGO workers and police officers, would offer a different, or at least further, cause of the change in the camp environment – a change in the “mentality” of the Syrian refugees in the camp. Syrians, I was told, began to recognise the (semi-) permanence of their situation, and thus began to make their homes in Za’tari (especially as service provision improved over time), and to relate to the environment and authorities differently.²²⁷ This narrative is also used by humanitarian workers in the

²²¹ Human Rights Watch, “I Have No Idea Why They Sent Us Back.”

²²² Interview with Jared Kohler.

²²³ al-Hamwi and Shawabkeh, “Jordan.”

²²⁴ Interview with INGO programme manager in Za’tari (2), Amman, August 2016.

²²⁵ al-Hamwi and Shawabkeh, “Jordan.”

²²⁶ Conversations with humanitarian and (I)NGO workers, Amman, 07.11.2015, 10.01.2016 and 20.02.2016.

²²⁷ Conversation with Jordanian police officer, Za’tari, 21.07.2016.

press, who blamed the “difficult mentality” of the refugees for many of the problems that were facing the camp.²²⁸ A Jordanian policeman, while giving me a tour of Za‘tari, explained that as time had gone on, Syrians had realised that the Jordanian police were not like their counterparts in Syria, but were rather on the side of the population, a dichotomous juxtaposition that is untenable in the context of widespread deportations to a war-torn country. He relayed to me an incident in which he and colleagues had been praying, when a Syrian man rushed up to them to ‘warn’ them that the colonel was coming, and so they should stop. The Jordanian policemen explained that, in Jordan, unlike Syria, it was not considered problematic for those in uniform to offer overt displays of their religiosity. This, he told me, was one of the many individual turning points in Syrians’ understanding of their relationship with Jordanian authorities.²²⁹ While Syrians’ relationships to the space of the camp may have changed over time, particularly as they lived in Za‘tari for longer periods, and as service provision improved, blaming the “mentality” of Syrians curiously makes humanitarian and security actors invisible in processes of change in the camp. It obscures the role their interactions with refugees have in creating particular relationships between humanitarian actors and Syrians.²³⁰

In November 2014, Kleinschmidt was replaced as the most senior UNHCR official in the camp by Hovig Etyemezian, an official who had previously worked for UNHCR in Iraq, Tunisia and Mauritania. Etyemezian brought to the role a distinctly different style. As a fluent Arabic speaker, he was able to more comfortably and directly communicate with Syrians and Jordanians, and was known to attend important events in the camp, such as weddings and funerals to which he was invited.²³¹ According to a Jordanian official who was stationed in Za‘tari at the time, Etyemezian emphasised, from the beginning of his tenure, that any problems in the camp should be solved cooperatively by UNHCR and the Jordanian authorities, and that he understood them as working as a team all aiming to serve the people of the camp.²³² As my interviewee quoted above stated, the police and the camp management “work, erm, together.”²³³

²²⁸ Blackwell, “Syrians Grappling with Persistent Crime Problem.”

²²⁹ Conversation with Jordanian police officer, Za‘tari, 21.07.2016.

²³⁰ See Chapter 4.

²³¹ Interview with former NGO worker in Za‘tari.

²³² Conversation with Jordanian police officer formerly stationed in Za‘tari, Emirati Jordanian Refugee Camp, 25.07.2016.

²³³ Interview with INGO programme manager in Za‘tari (2).

By the time of my fieldwork, which began in September 2015, the attempts to reform and depoliticise the camp space appeared to have had considerable success. For example, the street leaders, with whom Kleinschmidt had repeatedly clashed, had a much-diminished role in the camp, according to my Syrian interlocutors, in part because service provision had become more centralised and controlled. While there was some disagreement about the precise level of their influence with authorities, their role in the distribution of resources, I was told, had become marginal.²³⁴ Camp authorities were also able to exercise significantly more control over the organisation of space in the camp. In April 2015, a ‘site planning and camp shelter restructure project’ began. This included reorganising the location of Syrians’ caravans in order to move caravans that were in “irregular house-hold locations,”²³⁵ to allow for the installation of a sewage system, and to develop a masterplan for the camp where streets would have names, and each caravan an address. The goals of this project appear very similar to some of the key goals of Kleinschmidt’s 2013 *Governance Plan*, which aimed to reorganise and regularise space within the camp. In February 2016, I observed part of this plan being put into action. While chatting to a group of Syrians in between workshops, I pointed out the caravans being moved by cranes and winches, and asked them what it was for. This was the “tanzim [organisation]” they replied. Years ago, they told me, it was possible to move your own caravan and select a location for it, but it wasn’t like that anymore.²³⁶

Conclusion

By the time of my fieldwork, Za’tari, which had been hastily put together in the summer of 2012, and through which hundreds of thousands of Syrians had passed, was a settlement of approximately 80,000 Syrians, most of whom had lived there for years, not weeks or months. This chapter has located Za’tari within a particular Jordanian context, while simultaneously drawing on broader theories of sovereignty, neoliberalism, and space, to understand its location and meaning within that context. Za’tari is a site for the performance of Jordanian sovereignty, which is unevenly exercised across Jordanian territory, and the site of a humanitarian ethical project that seeks to intervene upon, and reform, the bodies immobilised by encampment. The projects of both Jordanian and

²³⁴ Interviews with Syrian shop-holder in Za’tari, man (2), Za’tari, 01.08.2016; and with married Syrian man living in Za’tari (3), Za’tari, 01.08.2016.

²³⁵ UNHCR, “Site Planning and Shelter Camp Restructure Project,” 18.

²³⁶ Conversation with Syrian men, Za’tari, 02.20.2016.

state actors have been challenged, contested, and resisted by Syrian refugees living in the camp.

The ‘stability’ that had been ‘achieved’ in the camp by the beginning of my fieldwork was the result of the efforts humanitarian and state actors’ attempts to render the camp more ‘governable,’ in response to Syrians’ insistence that they be able to exercise agency in the camp, and express themselves politically. Through expansive and extensive forms of policing, through the clampdown on protest, the use of deportation, and improved service provision, governing authorities have created a depoliticised space, in line with humanitarian visions of refugee camps, and a space where the performance of Jordanian sovereignty is less contested. In the depoliticisation of the camp, humanitarian agencies were also creating a role for themselves as service providers, rather than political actors involved in overt contestations of governing, and creating the kind of overtly depoliticised and pliant population with which they understand they should be working.

Within these struggles over the camp, refugee men appeared primarily as ‘troublemakers’ – as too political, too agential, and too disruptive of humanitarian and state visions of refugee camps. Yet while refugee men, in the years subsequent to the establishment of the camp, were rendered governable, this did not resolve the complexities, outlined in Chapter 2, about their position within humanitarian operations under such ‘normal’ humanitarian circumstances. On the contrary, once overt political protest and contestation had subsided in Za‘tari, humanitarian agencies did not appear to know what their responsibilities to refugee men were. Men became something of an invisible presence, as I will now explore in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Care, Control and a Lack of Interest: Humanitarian Relations with Syrian Men and Women

One warm evening in May, I was sitting on the large terrace of a friend's apartment in an expensive district of Amman, having dinner with her and her friends, all of whom worked for UN agencies in Jordan. As was often the case, my 'unusual' research topic was the subject of interest and conversation among the other guests. On this particular occasion, though, one of my interlocutors appeared somewhat confused at the notion that the humanitarian sector was not responding to the needs of refugee men. I gave the example of psychosocial support, and the relative lack of provision of it for refugee men, compared to refugee women and children. Across the dinner table, almost with incredulity, she replied "what would [psychosocial support] be for men, anyway, getting them to play basketball?"¹ The idea that men might be 'vulnerable,' as the humanitarian sector understands that term, and in need of support, therapy, or counselling, clearly jarred with her understandings of (Syrian) men, and the role and work of the humanitarian sector in Jordan.

By exploring how the notion of 'vulnerability' was understood and deployed in Za'tari, this chapter analyses relations between humanitarian actors and Syrian men and women in the camp. It demonstrates that Syrian men were largely assumed to be agential and independent, rather than 'vulnerable,' and many humanitarian actors demonstrated a lack of interest in working with them. Yet it was Syrian men themselves who were deemed to be uninterested in work that was not designed with them in mind, and to be unavailable for activities planned according to others' schedules. At the same time, this chapter explores and critiques humanitarian relationships with Syrian refugee women, and argues that women's designation as 'the most vulnerable' renders their lives and bodies as sites for humanitarian care and control. Despite the rhetoric of women's empowerment, when women make decisions that are contrary to the priorities of humanitarian actors, 'global standards' on gender override and remove Syrian women's decisions and agency.

¹ Fieldnotes, Amman, 17.06.2016.

The Power of ‘Vulnerability’: Syrian Refugee Women and the Female-Headed Household

Given the analysis presented in Chapter 2, it is unsurprising that Syrian women were understood by humanitarians to be uncontroversial objects of humanitarian care. As feminist scholars have convincingly demonstrated, ‘women’ are regularly infantilised in contexts of humanitarianism and conflict through being consistently grouped with ‘children,’ creating, in Cynthia Enloe’s terminology, the undifferentiated category of ‘womenandchildren’ who require care and intervention.² Both women and children, as Liisa Malkki has observed, embody “a special kind of powerlessness” in western imaginaries.³ Within the specific context of the Syria response, this was manifested by humanitarian actors’ widespread designation of ‘womenandchildren’ as ‘vulnerable,’ or often as ‘the most vulnerable.’ That ‘womenandchildren’ were the most vulnerable, or at least always vulnerable, was rarely questioned, rarely explained, and rarely reflected on.

UNHCR in Jordan defined vulnerability as:

the risk of exposure of Syrian refugee households to harm, primarily in relation to protection threats, the inability to meet basic needs, limited access to basic services, and food insecurity, and the inability of the population to cope with the consequences of this harm.⁴

Within everyday interactions with humanitarian workers, however, the perceived obviousness of women and children’s ‘vulnerability’ rendered in-depth discussion of its meaning redundant. Vulnerability appeared to be attached to, or a feature of, women and children, rather than, as Judith Butler has argued, vulnerability being understood as “part of bodily life...[which] becomes highly exacerbated under certain social and political conditions.”⁵

This assumption of womenandchildren’s ‘vulnerability’ articulates with prevailing presentations and understandings of refugees in the South, and is another means through which refugee women are depoliticised, because of the focus on their perceived ‘vulnerability,’ rather than how particular circumstances mean they can be in situations

² Enloe, *The Morning After*; see also R. Charli Carpenter, “*Innocent Women and Children*”: Gender, Norms and the Protection of Civilians (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006).

³ Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 11.

⁴ UNHCR, “Vulnerability Assessment Framework Baseline Survey” (Amman: UNHCR Jordan, 2015), 65.

⁵ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), 29; for an exploration of this idea with regard to humanitarians, see Malkki, *The Need to Help*.

with complex needs. It simultaneously speaks to globalised understandings of Muslim women. Perceived to be victims of backward, oppressive and misogynistic ‘Arab culture,’ and oppressed by their religion, the Muslim woman, like the refugee woman, “invites special remedial attention.”⁶ She is understood to be, as Lila Abu-Lughod has argued, in need of saving.⁷ In accordance with such understandings, within international English and Arabic media, Syrian refugee women have been portrayed as “a homogenous group of powerless, victimized women.”⁸ While in some contexts this has been accompanied by a discourse of empowered women as the builders of a future democracy,⁹ this was notably absent on the ground in Za‘tari, despite the focus on women’s ‘empowerment.’¹⁰

The understanding of women as ‘vulnerable’ therefore operates as an incitement to external intervention, and constitutes a form of power that disciplines the women it ostensibly aims to assist. As Wendy Brown has argued, attempts to express, and achieve recognition and codification of the experiences of women (and others) can:

tacitly silence those who do not share the experience of those whose suffering is most marked (or whom the discourse produces as suffering markedly)...[and] also condemn those whose sufferings they record to a permanent identification with that suffering.¹¹

Deploying Foucauldian analysis, Brown explains that “confessing injury” comes to “constitute a regulatory truth about the identity group.”¹² The ‘vulnerability’ of Syrian women has become one such regulatory truth. It encourages performances of powerlessness on the part of refugee women, “reinforce[s] gendered constructions of women’s powerlessness and lack of agency...[and] diminish[es] the understanding of the differences in their positioning dependent on class, ethnicity, age and other factors.”¹³

⁶ Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*, Public Square (Princeton, N.J.) (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 6; see also Al-Ali and Pratt, *What Kind of Liberation?* Chapter 5.

⁷ Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*

⁸ Katty Alhayek, “Double Marginalization: The Invisibility of Syrian Refugee Women’s Perspectives in Mainstream Online Activism and Global Media,” *Feminist Media Studies* 14, no. 4 (2014): 698; for an exploration of the deployment of (a vision of) gender equality among a refugee community as a strategy to attract aid and political support, see Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, *The Ideal Refugees: Gender, Islam, and the Sahrawi Politics of Survival*, Gender, Culture, and Politics in the Middle East (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014).

⁹ Al-Ali and Pratt, *What Kind of Liberation?* Chapter 1.

¹⁰ See Chapter 2.

¹¹ Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays On Knowledge And Politics* (Princeton, NJ Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 79.

¹² Brown, 78.

¹³ Freedman, “Mainstreaming Gender in Refugee Protection,” 600.

Yet simultaneously, women's 'vulnerability,' while regulating, disciplining, and disempowering, can, it is believed, mobilise resources, sympathy and visibility.

This can be seen in UNHCR's visual depictions of Syrian refugees, and in the allocation of resources and services to them. Photographer Jared Kohler, who was contracted to UNHCR Jordan in 2014, told me that:

there is a huge interest [in] both visually and statistically emphasising the female and youth and elderly components and to really try to downplay and not focus on the fighting age male...unless you can read vulnerability in the image directly, it's going to be considered less strong.¹⁴

Within this schema, the bodies of women and children can be read as vulnerable "directly," and thereby generate sympathy, whereas the bodies of men cannot. In one of the documents for which his photographs were used, the *Vulnerability Assessment Framework Baseline Survey* discussed below,¹⁵ there are photographs of or including twenty people. There are eleven women and teenage girls pictured, eight young children (mostly girls), and one man, very elderly and lying under a blanket. As Kohler explained, "I was told at times really we need pictures of women and children, and as a photographer you learn to shoot what is wanted and published." Knowing that it was very unlikely pictures of refugee men would be used, he would often not even send in the pictures of men that he had taken.¹⁶

The question of who is 'vulnerable' is central to the allocation of resources to the refugee population. In the early months and years of the Syrian refugee presence in Jordan, the 'vulnerability' of refugees was assessed using the standard methodology that UNHCR employs: the Specific Needs Code.¹⁷ According to UNHCR's handbook for emergencies:

[t]he following are groups generally considered to have specific needs: girls and boys at risk, including unaccompanied and separated children, persons with serious health conditions, persons with special legal or physical protection needs, single women, women-headed households, older persons, persons with disabilities, and persons with a diverse [sic]

¹⁴ Interview with Jared Kohler.

¹⁵ See UNHCR, "Vulnerability Assessment Framework Baseline Survey."

¹⁶ Interview with Jared Kohler.

¹⁷ Hisham Khogali et al., "Aid Effectiveness and Vulnerability Assessment Framework: Determining Vulnerability among Syrian Refugees in Jordan," *Field Exchange Emergency Nutrition Network*, November 2014, 78–81.

sexual orientation or gender identity.¹⁸

As will be explored in more detail in Chapter 6, in their allocation of work opportunities, humanitarian actors are instructed by UNHCR to “[pay] special consideration to vulnerable groups.”¹⁹

As this definition demonstrates, one demographic entity that humanitarian organisations and workers consistently deemed to be particularly ‘vulnerable’ was the ‘female-headed household.’ While Erin Baines, writing in the early 2000s, called for a reduction in the focus on refugee women as vulnerable, and a simultaneous recognition that not all households were ‘male-headed,’ this latter recognition has in fact been accompanied by a perceived hypervulnerability of the category of the ‘female-headed household.’²⁰ In the everyday language of humanitarian and NGO workers, a ‘female-headed household’ is a nuclear family in which an adult woman lives with children, but not with a male partner. This designation is the same regardless of whether the woman does not have a partner, had a partner who died, is divorced or separated from a partner, or has a partner who is not currently (registered as) living in Jordan. In this schema, when a woman is living with an adult male partner, the household is automatically understood to be non ‘female-headed;’ that is, problematically, women only ‘head’ their households in the absence of a male partner. As Susie Jolly has argued, this is a deeply heteronormative designation; it ignores “the possibility that [the household] could be female headed by choice,” run by a lesbian couple, for example, or by a woman who prefers to live without a husband.²¹

In Oxfam’s “vulnerability scoring system” for Syrian refugees, which is discussed in more detail below, this logic is extended even further: a female-headed household is one in which there is “no able bodied male in 18-59 age group in the household.” The adult male children of a woman living without a male partner, it appears, even if they are only aged 18, would automatically be considered to be the ‘head of household,’ or at the very least, would prevent the woman from being considered to be the ‘head of household.’ In UNHCR reports, however, the person who heads a household is defined by who is the

¹⁸ UNHCR, “Identifying Persons with Specific Needs (PWSN),” UNHCR Emergency Handbook, 2015, <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/64324/identifying-persons-with-specific-needs-pwsn>.

¹⁹ UNHCR, “Cash For Work - Standard Operating Procedures: Zaatari Camp,” July 28, 2015, 1, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

²⁰ Baines, *Vulnerable Bodies*.

²¹ Susie Jolly, “Why Is Development Work so Straight? Heteronormativity in the International Development Industry,” *Development in Practice* 21, no. 1 (2011): 24.

‘principal applicant’ in the documents that register the family with UNHCR in the country,²² leaving open the possibility that a woman living with her male partner could be the ‘head of household,’ even if this is not how the term is used in the vernacular. The proportion of households in Za’tari headed by women according to UNHCR is one in five,²³ slightly lower than the figure Syrian refugees living in the Middle East overall.²⁴

‘Female-headed household’ is challenging to render straightforwardly into Arabic. When asked how to express the term in Arabic, one interviewee, a gender specialist and native Arabic speaker, paused for a few seconds, and then offered ‘*rabbat usra*’ as the translation, which is the linguistically feminine version of the typical phrase used to describe a man’s position as head of a family. Our mutual friend, who was hosting the interview at her house, pointed out that this term meant ‘housewife’ rather than ‘head of household.’ My interviewee responded, after further reflection, that the two terms are the same, but that context and emphasis would differentiate a housewife from a woman with financial responsibility for her family.²⁵

Being a ‘female-headed household,’ one NGO programme manager told me, is one of the “standard indicators” of ‘vulnerability’ that his organisation looks for when deciding with whom to work.²⁶ When you encounter a woman raising her children without a husband, he explained, “you get really, I don’t know, emotional.”²⁷ Another interviewee, who had accompanied teams doing vulnerability assessments, reported similar dynamics, but he lamented that “as soon as you saw a working age male in the household, you just knew how their assessment was going to turn out.”²⁸ I even encountered stories of the parents of families registering separately, such as to appear to be a ‘female-headed household’ on paper.²⁹ These schema are replicated in other humanitarian organisations, even if they do not use the same systems for assessing vulnerability, in particular humanitarian organisations and charities from, and/or funded by, Arab Gulf states. These charities often operate in parallel to the structures erected by UNHCR and the GoJ, but nonetheless have a huge presence on the ground, especially in Jordanian host

²² E.g. see UNHCR, “Living in the Shadows: Jordan Home Visits Report 2014” (Amman: UNHCR Jordan, 2014); UNHCR, “Vulnerability Assessment Framework Baseline Survey.”

²³ UNHCR, “Zaatari Refugee Camp Factsheet May 2017” (UNHCR Jordan, May 2017).

²⁴ UNHCR, “Woman Alone: The Fight for Survival by Syria’s Refugee Women” (Geneva: UNHCR, 2014).

²⁵ Interview with humanitarian worker with focus on LGBTI rights, Amman, 01.06.2016.

²⁶ Interview with INGO programme manager in Za’tari (2).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Interview with Jared Kohler.

²⁹ Conversation with NGO workers and Syrian refugees, Amman, 06.10.2015.

communities. According to Elizabeth Dickinson, for these charities “orphans, widows, [and] the elderly” are “the categories of needy at the front of the line,” for aid that is distributed to the wider community.³⁰

Some western organisations have designed their own tools to assess refugee ‘vulnerability’ through quantifying the circumstances of a household, and being ‘female-headed’ is one important criteria. For Oxfam, for example, being a ‘female-headed household’ gets one six ‘vulnerability points,’ whereas being a ‘single-parent family’ only carries two ‘vulnerability points.’ This would leave a single-parent family with a woman as the parent with eight ‘vulnerability points,’ in comparison to a single-parent family with a man, who would have two ‘vulnerability points.’ A family needs to get ten ‘points’ to reach the threshold for ‘high vulnerability,’ and thereby inclusion in Oxfam’s programmes. Women are infantilised and rendered ‘vulnerable,’ in this schema, by the absence of men, and thereby constituted as objects of sympathy and charity. Where there is an adult male son in the household, these criteria can also place enormous pressure on him to provide for the family.

The assumption that women will be particularly ‘vulnerable’ in the absence of a male partner appeared to be shared by many of the Syrian men I worked with and interviewed during my fieldwork.³¹ One colleague who had been working with men in Za’tari told me that in her experience, men in the camp did not appear to support women’s rights in general, but they did seem to genuinely agree with arguments for the prioritisation of, and particular assistance for, female-headed households.³² Despite the humanitarian sector assuming itself to be supporting Syrian women, in the face of oppression they face from men in the community, their stance reinforces the importance of the male breadwinner and its concomitant patriarchal relations,³³ assumes a heteronormative family unit, and is undergirded by patriarchal assumptions about women’s lack of agency.

Despite its use, both formally and informally, of a group approach to ‘vulnerability’ that allocates aid according to categories, UNHCR also recognised the weaknesses of this system. In an article on the development of a new framework for vulnerability

³⁰ Elizabeth Dickinson, “Shadow Aid to Syrian Refugees,” *Middle East Report* 272 (2014), <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer272/shadow-aid-syrian-refugees>.

³¹ Conversation with NGO worker and Syrian refugees, Za’tari, 02.02.2016.

³² Conversation with NGO worker, Za’tari, 02.02.2016.

³³ Achilli, “Becoming a Man in Al-Wihdat.”

assessments, UNHCR staff noted that the ‘category’ approach uses generalisations, does not ask why people are in need of assistance, and does not recognise the situations of those who have multiple disadvantages.³⁴ In response to these drawbacks, UNHCR designed what was termed a Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) over the course of 2013 and 2014.³⁵ The VAF was meant to enable the monitoring of ‘vulnerability’ across time, target assistance more efficiently, and improve coordination between humanitarian actors.³⁶ It has been used with refugees living in host communities, i.e. non-camp populations, where there is a wider variation in the level of assistance received by refugees. The VAF works through carrying out a vulnerability assessment, or, as it is often referred to by NGO workers, refugees are ‘vaffed.’ This ‘vaffing’ takes into account issues including shelter, health, dependency ratio, sanitation and hygiene, documentation status, and food. Based on the collected data, a refugee ‘case’ (i.e. those registered together, typically a nuclear family) is designated as one of four categories: low, medium, high or severe (or 1, 2, 3, and 4). Many organisations worked primarily or exclusively with refugees in categories ‘3 and 4,’ i.e. those who were classified as being highly or severely vulnerable. Some organisations working in Za’tari, while not using the VAF in the camp, have based parts of their own vulnerability assessments on the VAF.³⁷

The VAF takes into account whether a household is single-headed (rather than female-headed), and does so in conjunction with assessing the number of dependents in that household.³⁸ The much more thorough assessments that the VAF provides, compared to the group approach, offer results that contrast sharply with humanitarian actors’ assumptions about vulnerability, in particular the economic vulnerability of male- and female-headed households. The VAF Baseline Survey of June 2015 found that:

89% of Male [sic] headed households are resorting to crisis or emergency coping strategies, compared to 73% of female headed households. 92% of Male [sic] headed households are highly or severely vulnerable, compared to 83% of female headed households.³⁹

While economic vulnerabilities are only one subset of specific challenges that Syrians

³⁴ Khogali et al., “Aid Effectiveness and Vulnerability Assessment Framework,” 79; For an exploration of similar critiques, see Clark, “Understanding Vulnerability.”

³⁵ Khogali et al., “Aid Effectiveness and Vulnerability Assessment Framework.”

³⁶ UNHCR, “Vulnerability Assessment Framework Baseline Survey,” 9.

³⁷ Interviews with livelihood programme manager, Amman, 27.06.2016; protection programme manager, Amman, 27.06.2016; and INGO programme manager in Za’tari (2).

³⁸ UNHCR, “Vulnerability Assessment Framework Baseline Survey,” 89.

³⁹ UNHCR, “Vulnerability Assessment Framework Key Findings” (UNHCR, June 2015), 2, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

may face, the results are nonetheless striking. Reports published by the World Bank and CARE provide further evidence that supports the findings of the VAF. The World Bank documented that, although the difference was slight, male-headed households were more likely to be living in poverty than female-headed households.⁴⁰ CARE's report demonstrated that some forms of 'vulnerabilities' were more likely to be present in female-headed households, and some in male-headed households. Male-headed households, this report notes, were significantly more likely (by almost 20 percentage points) to not be receiving organisational assistance when they registered with CARE.⁴¹ Yet despite this publicly-available data, the status of women in general, and of female-headed households in particular, as especially 'vulnerable,' appeared to go typically unquestioned. Similarly rarely discussed, despite this data, was the question of whether Syrian men can also be 'vulnerable.'

Can Syrian Men be 'Vulnerable' Too?

In contrast to Syrian women (or womenandchildren), Syrian men were rarely considered to be the kinds of people, the kinds of bodies, that could be 'vulnerable.' When I would bring up the notion of refugee men being potentially 'vulnerable,' a term I would use to replicate prevailing humanitarian language, it would often generate curiosity, intrigue, or confusion among my humanitarian and NGO interlocutors, even among those who I found to be generally questioning of humanitarianism's shibboleths.⁴² The assumption of men's non-vulnerability is repeated in even critical scholarship on Za'tari. In Sullivan and Tobin's 2014 account of different security actors in the camp, they state that "more than 80 percent of Zaatari residents could be classified as 'vulnerable': 56 percent are children (boys and girls under 17) and 25 percent are women aged 18 and older." Men do not even appear in this as a category of the population who *could* be considered 'vulnerable.'⁴³

There is a concomitant lack of humanitarian materials and reports dedicated to the specific needs and circumstances of refugee men, or the specific gendered threats they

⁴⁰ Paolo Verme et al., *The Welfare of Syrian Refugees: Evidence from Jordan and Lebanon* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2015).

⁴¹ Care International, "Lives Unseen: Urban Syrian Refugees and Jordanian Host Communities Three Years Into the Syria Crisis" (Amman: Care International, April 2014), 21.

⁴² Conversation with humanitarian worker, Amman, 21.03.2016.

⁴³ Sullivan and Tobin, "Security and Resilience."

face.⁴⁴ One notable exception was a 2016 report by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which conducted a vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugee men in Lebanon. This report clearly demonstrated the difficult, particular, and gendered circumstances that Syrian men face. It found that 88 percent of single Syrian men in Lebanon limited their movements in order to try and stay safe, often citing fears of arrest or police harassment, fewer than 10 percent of men had received assistance in the previous 30 days, 21 percent had not had enough food to eat, and 53 percent of single men were not registered with UNHCR. Of this group, 30 percent believed that single men were automatically ineligible to register.⁴⁵

In some reports, the challenges men face are mentioned, as is their potential exclusion from ‘traditional’ approaches to ‘vulnerability.’ Yet in some of these same reports, while the circumstances of refugee men are recognised in the main body of the text, these observations and analyses are not translated into recommendations for action. For example, the Women’s Refugee Commission report *Unpacking Gender*, which focuses on the humanitarian response in Jordan, notes that “reproductive health services are not commonly provided for men,”⁴⁶ that many organisations have a “lack of expertise and skills in programming psychosocial and mental health support for men,”⁴⁷ and that fewer organisations are working on psychosocial and mental health questions with men.⁴⁸ Yet none of these issues appear in the report’s recommendations. The report’s summary of its good practices and recommendations includes sections on empowering women and girls, supporting host communities, engaging refugees, and advancing gender mainstreaming.⁴⁹

Within work on the Syria refugee response, there have been important, although exceptional, discussions of the situation of refugee men. The rarity of these discussions reflects the fact that discussions of refugee men’s specific and gendered needs are also few and far between within wider academic literatures on humanitarianism and development. Jennifer Allsopp has explored differing understandings of masculinities

⁴⁴ See Dorothea Hilhorst, “The Other Half of Gender: Are Humanitarians Blind to the Vulnerabilities of Male Refugees?,” ALNAP, May 20, 2016, <https://www.alnap.org/blogs/the-other-half-of-gender-are-humanitarians-blind-to-the-vulnerabilities-of-male-refugees>.

⁴⁵ International Rescue Committee, “Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugee Men in Lebanon” (New York: IRC, 2016).

⁴⁶ Women’s Refugee Commission, “Unpacking Gender,” 8.

⁴⁷ Women’s Refugee Commission, 13.

⁴⁸ Women’s Refugee Commission, 9.

⁴⁹ Women’s Refugee Commission, 1–2, 16–22.

that are found among men who came to Europe during the ‘migration crisis.’ She problematises understandings of militarised masculinities, the role of the father figure, and the threat of the young male, and argues that vulnerability is central to many men’s experiences of refugeehood.⁵⁰ Also focused on Europe’s ‘crisis,’ Pruitt et al. examine how understandings of refugee youth are gendered, how young refugee men (Syrians and others) are constructed as a threat in the media, and the difficulties they experience accessing services.⁵¹ In a Masters thesis, Marjolein Quist has examined how Syrian men in Lebanon are unable to fulfil the gendered expectations that they and others in the community have of them, particularly in their inability to provide for their families financially.⁵² There is also an important, although still small, literature emerging on the specific situations, vulnerabilities, and needs, of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex LGBTI Syrian refugees.⁵³

In line with the findings of these literatures, Syrian refugee men in Za‘tari and other areas in Jordan, face a series of gendered challenges. Men who have been working outside of camps have been particularly liable to be arrested, subject to forced encampment, or *refouled* to Syria as a punishment for working without a permit.⁵⁴ Men living both inside and outside of camps are also more likely to be read as security threats, and liable to police harassment, or even deportation, because of this perception.⁵⁵ The fear of being securitised and arrested meant that many men were reluctant to gather, even with relatively small groups of friends, for fear of how such gatherings might be perceived by the authorities in the camp.⁵⁶ Men also faced psychological difficulties resulting from their inability to work and to play the gendered role of provider that they expected of themselves, and that others in the community expected of them.⁵⁷ They also faced trauma and mental health difficulties because of the violence they had experienced,

⁵⁰ Allsopp, “Agent, Victim, Soldier, Son: Intersecting Masculinities in the European ‘Refugee Crisis.’”

⁵¹ Pruitt, Berents, and Munro, “Gender and Age in the Construction of Male Youth in the European Migration ‘Crisis.’”

⁵² Quist, “Traumatic Masculinities.”

⁵³ Myrntinen and Daigle, “When Merely Existing Is a Risk”; Henri Myrntinen, Lana Khattab, and Charbel Maydaa, “‘Trust No One, Beware of Everyone.’ Vulnerabilities of LGBTI Refugees in Lebanon,” in *A Gendered Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*, ed. Jane Freedman, Zeynep Kivilcim, and Nurcan Özgür Baklacioglu (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2017), 61–76.

⁵⁴ Catherine Bellamy et al., “The Lives and Livelihoods of Syrian Refugees: A Study of Refugee Perspectives and Their Institutional Environment in Turkey and Jordan” (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2017).

⁵⁵ Interviews with INGO resettlement officer, Amman, 11.04.2016; women’s protection and empowerment programme manager; and Curt Rhodes.

⁵⁶ Conversation with Syrian refugee men, Za‘tari, 09.02.2016. See also Human Rights Watch, “I Have No Idea Why They Sent Us Back.”

⁵⁷ See Chapter 6.

whether that be in Syria, on the journey to Jordan, or since arriving in Jordan.⁵⁸ ‘Male-headed households’ were statistically just as likely, if not more so, to be economically ‘vulnerable’ as ‘female-headed households,’ and single men were one of the groups of refugees in Jordan most likely to be food insecure.⁵⁹ Single men have even been barred from entering Jordan since 2013, denying them the ability to reach (relative) safety.⁶⁰

The labour market plays an important, and paradoxical role, in understandings of refugee men’s needs. As noted above, Syrian men in Jordan (whether living in Za‘tari or elsewhere) have often accessed the labour market in Jordan at the risk of police harassment, arrest, forced encampment in Azraq, or deportation to Syria. The assumption of the ‘vulnerability’ of the female-headed household is grounded in the understanding that if a man were to be present in the house, he would provide an income through the labour market. In an era of neoliberal economic transformations and rising informality and precarity, this assumption is in any case questionable.⁶¹ Yet it is even more problematic in the context of Syrian refugees in Jordan, for whom access to the labour market was illegalised, and for refugees in Za‘tari, who would often only be able to reach it by leaving the camp informally. Yet it was this labour market access that was deemed to render Syrian men independent, in contrast to women. As one interviewee told me, many humanitarian workers “still have in the back of their minds that Arab men can work easily.”⁶² Perceived access to the labour market was therefore understood to reinforce men’s agency, in contrast to women’s vulnerability, an approach that erases both the challenges men face and women’s independence and agency.

As I have explored elsewhere at greater length,⁶³ some Syrian men, especially single Syrian men, faced difficulties obtaining resettlement to a third country because humanitarians struggle to recognise them as ‘vulnerable.’ Many resettlement states also

⁵⁸ See Chapter 5.

⁵⁹ UNHCR, “Vulnerability Assessment Framework Key Findings”; World Food Programme and REACH, “Comprehensive Food Security Monitoring Exercise (CFSME): Syrian Refugees in Jordan” (Amman: WFP Jordan, July 2015).

⁶⁰ Bill Frelick, “Blocking Syrian Refugees Isn’t the Way,” *The New York Times*, April 23, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/24/opinion/global/blocking-syrian-refugees-isnt-the-way.html>.

⁶¹ Sara Ababneh, “Troubling the Political: Women in the Jordanian Day-Waged Labor Movement,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48, no. 1 (2016): 87–112; Raewyn Connell, “Margin Becoming Centre: For a World-Centred Rethinking of Masculinities,” *NORMA: Nordic Journal For Masculinity Studies* 9, no. 4 (2014): 217–31; Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011).

⁶² Interview with humanitarian worker with focus on LGBTI rights. This sentiment was repeated in interview with Lina Darras, Psychosocial Support Unit Manager, ARDD, Amman, 09.06.2016.

⁶³ Turner, “Who Will Resettle Single Syrian Men?”

often reject or deprioritise applications from single men in particular, especially Arab/Muslim men, on the grounds of ‘security.’ Within Za‘tari, it was very common for Syrian men and women to ask me about resettlement – what I knew about it and whether I could help them access it, although it was not something all Syrians in the camp desired to obtain.⁶⁴ Due to another designation of ‘vulnerability,’ however, there were, at the start of my fieldwork, very few opportunities for resettlement for Za‘tari residents. This was due to a perception on the part of humanitarian workers that refugees living in camps had the services they needed, unlike those in host communities, who in this context were deemed the (potentially) ‘vulnerable.’ Za‘tari’s earlier reputation for violence and disorder had also made many states reluctant to consider resettling refugees from the camp. This did change somewhat in late 2015 and early 2016, in large part because Canada offered to take an unusually high number of refugees with specific medical needs, many of whom lived in Za‘tari and other camps, as well as because the UK began to offer small numbers of resettlement places to those in camps in the Middle East.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, resettlement was a much less prominent part of humanitarian interactions with, and governance of, refugees in Za‘tari than I had anticipated.

The provision of psychosocial support to refugees provides a pertinent example of how designations of ‘vulnerability’ within Za‘tari affect service provision. While it should not be assumed, as at times appeared common, that all refugees, as refugees, were necessarily ‘traumatised’ by their experiences,⁶⁶ the data collected in a series of surveys and assessments by humanitarian actors working in different areas of Jordan demonstrated the need for psychosocial support services.⁶⁷ One of these assessments, which was conducted in both Za‘tari and non-camp settings in Jordan, demonstrated that levels of mental illness and psychological distress among Syrians in Jordan are “substantially higher” in Za‘tari than in non-camp settings.⁶⁸ This lack of programming was, in a small environment from which it is difficult to leave, also itself the source of boredom,

⁶⁴ Conversations with Syrian men and women, Za‘tari, 03.12.2015, 10.12.2015, 15.12.2015 and 19.01.2016.

⁶⁵ Interview with INGO resettlement officer.

⁶⁶ Conversations with humanitarian and NGO workers, Amman, 15.05.2016 and 11.08.2016; see Clark, “Understanding Vulnerability.”

⁶⁷ E.g. see Care Jordan, “Baseline Assessment of Community Identified Vulnerabilities among Syrian Refugees Living in Amman” (Amman: Care Jordan, October 2012); International Medical Corps and Sisterhood is Global Institute, “MHPSS Needs Assessment”; Jordan Health Aid Society and International Medical Corps, “Displaced Syrians in Jordan: A Mental Health and Psychosocial Information Gathering Exercise” (Amman: Jordan Health Aid Society, February 2012).

⁶⁸ International Medical Corps and Sisterhood is Global Institute, “MHPSS Needs Assessment,” 25.

frustration, and psychological distress, and reinforced many of the difficulties that men in the community were facing.⁶⁹

On the ground, the number of organisations claiming to offer various forms of psychosocial support is huge.⁷⁰ There appears, however, to be a low threshold for what can ‘count’ as a form of psychosocial support; some organisations “put 100 kids in a room, put music on, tell them to dance, and then they call it psychosocial support work.”⁷¹ Some fieldworkers found their work being defined as psychosocial support even though they themselves had no training in it, and did not consider themselves to be doing it.⁷² It is furthermore claimed, by humanitarian sector actors, that these extensive services are targeting at all sectors of the population. The 2015/2016 mental health and psychosocial support mapping exercise for Jordan, including its refugee camps, completed by the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Working Group, appears to show that women, girls, boys, and men are all being targeted almost equally by service providers.⁷³ This data, however, records the services that are technically open to particular demographics, not the actual numbers of people using their services, and not which groups of people these providers are actively targeting and encouraging to use their services.

When it comes to the presentation of such work, and the targeted promotion of it, however, the situation appears different. Humanitarian workers typically imagine that psychosocial support is required by refugee women and children, and target and promote it accordingly. Refugee men are imagined to not require, or at least not be interested in, psychosocial support.⁷⁴ On an institutional level, psychosocial support was often understood to be a subset of ‘gender’ and ‘protection’ work, the former of which, in particular, is not imagined to be relevant to Syrian men. For example, the Terms of Reference of the Gender Focal Points Network lists, in brackets, three main areas that

⁶⁹ Interview with NGO worker in Za’tari.

⁷⁰ Conversations with (I)NGO workers, Amman, 12.06.2016 and 11.08.2016; interview with former NGO worker in Za’tari.

⁷¹ Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 11.08.2016.

⁷² Conversation with NGO worker, Za’tari, 27.07.2016.

⁷³ Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Working Group, “Who Is Doing What, Where and When (4Ws) in Mental Health & Psychosocial Support in Jordan: 2016 Interventions Mapping Exercise,” February 2016, 20–22, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

⁷⁴ Interviews with former NGO worker in Za’tari; SGBV specialist (2); and Lina Darras.

are included in protection: child protection, SGBV, and mental health/psychosocial.⁷⁵ Until January 2016, the IRC in Jordan classified its psychosocial support work as part of its 'Women's Protection' efforts, when it was reclassified to be jointly run by the Women's Protection and Health teams.⁷⁶ Furthermore, these services were often provided by, or through, centres that were primarily targeted towards and attended by women, such as reproductive health centres.⁷⁷

These assumptions about who needs psychosocial support are also reflected in other reports about the provision of psychosocial support to refugees in Jordan. UNICEF's evaluation of its psychosocial support for Syrian children in Jordan, for example, explicitly recognises that an "emphasis on women and children as the most vulnerable categories may inadvertently lead to other acute needs or less visible groups being overlooked."⁷⁸ Yet the same report, without citing any evidence or data, claims that "[w]omen, boys and girls in particular have been affected physically, psychologically and socially" by the Syria conflict and subsequent displacement.⁷⁹

Some people working within the NGO sector were critical of the ways that psychosocial support was allocated, and the lack of emphasis on services for men. One interviewee reported that branching out into working with men was not especially controversial among field staff, who were more readily exposed to the needs of Syrian men, but it was more of a source of controversy among senior managers.⁸⁰ It was also easier, a different NGO worker told me, to find mental health support for boys than men. When it was available for men, it was often framed as support for torture victims, a category more easily recognised as 'vulnerable.'⁸¹

In a further demonstration that evidence and knowledge from within the Syrian community is produced, but often ignored by humanitarian actors, the need for psychosocial support for men was clearly understood by Syrian men and women that I

⁷⁵ Inter-Agency Task Force Jordan, "Terms of Reference for the Sector Gender Focal Points Network," 2017, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

⁷⁶ MHPSS Sub Working Group, "MHPSS Sub Working Group Jordan Meeting Minutes 20th Of January 2016," January 20, 2016, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

⁷⁷ Interview with Ruba Abu-Taleb.

⁷⁸ UNICEF, "Evaluation of UNICEF's Psychosocial Support Response for Syrian Children in Jordan" (Amman: UNICEF Jordan, 2015), 5.

⁷⁹ UNICEF, 21.

⁸⁰ Interview with women's protection and empowerment programme manager.

⁸¹ Interview with former NGO worker in Za'tari.

spoke to. In my discussions with young Syrian adults at Questscope, I raised the issue of psychosocial support. Of the group I was speaking to, 9 of the 12 were men, and most of them were under 30. I asked whether my perception that there was very little psychosocial support for men in the camp was accurate, in their view. There was widespread agreement that this was the case.

One even asked me if I could name an organisation in the camp that was providing psychosocial support to men, because he couldn't name one. I offered the name of the Noor Hussein Foundation, a staff member of which I had previously interviewed, and who had confirmed that they did offer psychosocial support to women, men and children in the camp. This prompted a discussion among the group of whether what Noor Hussein provided was accurately thought of as psychosocial support, and how much they actually worked with, or wanted to work with, men. The discussion appeared to reach a consensus that they did offer men some psychosocial support, but that this was entirely inadequate to meet the needs of the camp.⁸²

One female participant in the discussion said that she felt this was in part due to the perception that what men in the camp really want and need is vocational training, and so many organisations focused their efforts on that instead. At this point, as in several other moments in our discussion, someone else interjected with a mixture of bafflement and anger at the sentiments being attributed to humanitarian actors:

But how can they say that men do not need this? Look at all the men who are smoking now, but were not smoking before! Look at all the problems they have now! Do they think that men don't feel the effects of war and everything that has been going on?

In what could be described as a cruel circular logic, the lack of activities for men, both psychosocial-related and otherwise, was understood by many of my interlocutors to be one of the causes of men's psychological difficulties, which then cannot adequately be addressed because of the lack of service provision.⁸³

My interlocutors were not the only people living in the camp who thought that men's psychosocial needs were not being taken into account by humanitarian actors. Colleagues

⁸² Fieldnotes, Za'tari, 27.07.2016.

⁸³ Interviews with NGO worker in Za'tari; and Areej Sumreen, Clinical Psychologist, Institute of Family Health, Noor al-Hussein Foundation, Amman, 22.06.2016; conversations with NGO workers and Syrian refugees, Za'tari, 01.12.2015 and 27.07.2016.

from ARDD told me that they had encountered men living in the camp who claimed that they wanted to, but were unable to, access psychosocial support⁸⁴ Another interviewee, a former NGO worker in Za'tari, told me that he had attended focus group discussions with both male and female refugees in Za'tari as part of the planning process for the refugee response plan for Jordan. The participants in both the male and female focus group discussions had the same first priority: increased psychosocial support for men aged 18-25 in the camp.⁸⁵ In an early assessment of the camp focused on child protection and GBV, focus group discussions “revealed that many men believe that ‘the majority have nothing to do,’ in the camp and the same is believed to be true for adolescent boys.”⁸⁶ Yet ‘local’ knowledge remains marginalised within the development of humanitarian priorities.

Outside of the contexts in which I explicitly raised, with humanitarian workers, the topics of the threats refugee men face, and the specific needs and challenges they have, I found that they were rarely discussed. Furthermore, even though there was a widespread understanding that women and children were ‘the most vulnerable,’ a perceived lack of ‘vulnerability’ on the part of men was often not even always the primary reason explicitly offered by humanitarian actors for a lack of work with men. Rather, responsibility appeared to be transferred to Syrian men themselves, who were deemed to be not interested in, or not available for, the work of the humanitarian sector.

‘Uninterested’ Syrian Men

The result of understanding Syrian men, as a category, to be non-‘vulnerable’ was that many humanitarian organisations and workers appeared to have little interest in pursuing certain types of work or activities with men. This was particularly pronounced in terms of psychosocial support, as discussed above, but extended to other areas of ‘softer’ humanitarian work, such as creating ‘safe spaces’ and community centres. Attitudes within the sector did vary, and some organisations in the camp, for example Questscope and NRC, ran significant programmes for ‘youth,’ which is one of the ways in which

⁸⁴ Fieldnotes, Za'tari and Amman, 27.10.2015; interview with Lina Darras; ARDD, “ARDD-Legal Aid’s Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys in SGBV Prevention in Zaatari Refugee Camp” (Amman: ARDD-Legal Aid, August 2016), 6, http://ardd-jo.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/ardd-legal_aids_four_pillars_for_engaging_men_and_boys_in_sgbv_prevention_in_zaatari_refugee_camp_f_2.pdf.

⁸⁵ Interview with former NGO worker in Za'tari.

⁸⁶ CPGBV Sub-Working Group, “Findings from the Inter-Agency CPGBV Assessment,” 17.

some Syrian men could access a wider range of services, opportunities, and training.⁸⁷ Yet nevertheless, a clear pattern was detectable: humanitarian organisations and NGOs very rarely ran programmes for ‘men’ as a category of ‘beneficiary,’ they typically did not consider ‘men’ to be a target group for their programmes, and they did not understand men’s (relative or absolute) lack of participation in their programmes to be a problem in need of correction. Yet despite this lack of focus on men from the humanitarian sector, according to many of my interviewees and interlocutors, the responsibility for this lack of interaction lay with Syrian men themselves. Specifically, I was regularly told that Syrian men were not interested in the work that humanitarian organisations and NGOs offered.

A variant of this idea was repeated to me by colleagues, in interviews with field workers, and in conversations with humanitarian and NGO employees who had heard it from their own field staff.⁸⁸ My interviewees and interlocutors explained this purported lack of interest in a variety of ways. Prominent among their explanations was the idea that men did not have time to take part in NGO programmes, because they were too busy to do so, either because of work or other (often unspecified) commitments.⁸⁹ As is discussed in more depth below, men were often also deemed unavailable during the time slots in which NGO programmes took place. Other justifications centred around men’s lack of emotional capacity to take part in work that involved discussing their feelings and intimate aspects of their lives,⁹⁰ or they were deemed not interested because their masculinity and pride made them unable to come forward to seek, for example, psychosocial support.⁹¹ While these specific explanations were sometimes offered, just as often I would be told, in a general and perhaps even dismissive sense, that Syrian men were simply “not interested” in the work being done by NGOs.

Within these explanations and narratives there was often little, if any, acknowledgement that men’s (perceived) lack of interest in the programmes provided by NGOs might be a consequence of their interactions with the humanitarian sector. In my experience, Syrian men in Za’tari were unequivocal in their understanding that NGOs were not interested

⁸⁷ Interviews with former NGO worker in Za’tari; and INGO programme manager in Za’tari (1), Amman, 30.06.2016; conversation with INGO programme manager, 18.04.2016.

⁸⁸ Interviews with Lina Darras; Suhail Abualsameed, consultant and SGBV specialist, Amman, 18.05.2016; and Jordanian women’s rights activist; conversations with humanitarian and NGO workers, Amman, 08.11.2015 and 28.01.2016.

⁸⁹ Conversations with NGO workers, Amman, 07.10.2015 and 11.08.2016.

⁹⁰ See Chapter 5.

⁹¹ Conversation with humanitarian and NGO workers, Amman, 16.12.2015.

in their lives or in working with them.⁹² As noted in Chapter 2, according to one Syrian man, being surrounded by NGOs focusing only on women and children is simply “our life.”⁹³ Some of my Syrian interlocutors, keen for an explanation, would ask me why I thought this was, and asked me to share how humanitarian workers justified their priorities in conversations with me.⁹⁴ But whether or not NGOs were interested in Syrian men did not appear, for my Syrian interlocutors, to be a point of contention – it was obvious. Although, as I will shortly discuss, I do not believe it is accurate to straightforwardly state that Syrian men were “not interested” in the work being done by humanitarian actors, to the extent that they might have appeared uninterested, this was because the activities in which they were not interested were often not targeted at them, or designed for them. Indeed, they were often explicitly not for men, but for women and children. Their ‘lack of interest,’ therefore, should hardly be surprising.

At an evening social event in Amman in April 2016, I was presented with a clear example of the lack of reflection on the dynamics that create Syrian men’s ‘lack of interest.’ I met a Jordanian INGO worker who had been working at a community centre for refugees (in Jordan but not in Za’tari) and I told him a little about the subject of my research. He replied that I would find a visit to the community centre interesting because men, as well as women, were among those using the centre, although the presence of men was a fairly new development. I asked if that had been difficult to get men to come to the centre, because I often heard that Syrian men were not interested in the work of the humanitarian sector. This was a problem they had experienced too, he said. He recounted to me that his former boss had come to him saying that he wanted more men to come, but that after having “tried everything” without success, he didn’t know what to do. With the help of my interlocutor, the manager eventually managed to attract some men to the community centre by offering new and different activities, for example backgammon and chess, which some Syrian men in the local community now attended keenly and regularly. Yet putting on activities that might specifically be of interest to men was an idea that had not occurred to the centre’s manager in the course of “trying everything” to get men to come.⁹⁵

⁹² E.g. interviews with Syrian shop-holder in Za’tari, man (3), Syrian man working in Za’tari (2), Syrian man working in Za’tari (3), married Syrian man living in Za’tari (3), Za’tari, 01.08.2016.

⁹³ Conversation with Syrian man, Za’tari, 21.07.2016.

⁹⁴ Conversation with Syrian men and women, Za’tari, 27.07.2016; conversation with Syrian man, Mafraq, 26.05.2016.

⁹⁵ Conversation with INGO worker, Amman, 07.04.2016.

When refugee men did come to humanitarian work that was reflective of the priorities of the humanitarian sector, for example the attempts to ‘engage men and boys’ in SGBV prevention, which is the focus of Chapter 5, their attendance was not necessarily reflective of an interest in the sessions they were attending. The fact that many men had to be persuaded to come, with multiple telephone calls to remind and encourage them to come, demonstrated that these meetings were hardly reflective of the priorities of the Syrians in attendance.⁹⁶ When they did come to these events, many were clearly far more interested in seeing whether they could leverage their attendance into CfW opportunities, or to build relationships with NGOs and their employees, which might, for example, help to facilitate access to services or information.⁹⁷ One of my interviewees commented that she believes some of the Syrians who attend programmes do so more for the refreshments that are provided, and in the hope of finding useful information and connections, rather than for the official content of the work.⁹⁸

Conversely, when humanitarian organisations undertake work with Syrian men that men actually want, such as psychosocial support as was discussed above, the notion that Syrian men are ‘uninterested’ in the work is shattered, often to the surprise of the humanitarian workers involved. I interviewed two programme managers from INGOs working with Syrian refugees in non-camp settings about the ways in which they had recently begun to provide psychosocial support for men. One had done so as part of its SGBV prevention work, and the other had done so after encountering male victims of torture in its broader refugee response work. One of these managers commented how surprised and pleased she was that the men would return to the programme week after week. The other organisation, which provided counselling services, found that their programmes had been so popular that they were struggling to cope with the level of demand from Syrian men. This INGO had 14 female counsellors providing services to women, and 1 male counsellor providing services to men.⁹⁹ Men’s apparent lack of interest in humanitarian work should therefore be understood in the context of the broader contestations around whose priorities and needs have a central role in determining what humanitarian work is done, and with whom. Unsurprisingly, many

⁹⁶ Author observation, Za’tari, 27.10.2015; Amman, 04.11.2015, 10.02.2016 and 28.02.2016.

⁹⁷ See ARDD, “ARDD’s Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys.”

⁹⁸ Interview with NGO worker in Za’tari.

⁹⁹ Interviews with protection programme manager; livelihood specialist, Amman, 27.06.2016; and women’s protection and empowerment programme manager.

Syrian men show little interest in work that is not designed with them in mind, or that is not reflective of their priorities, but are enthusiastic participants in work that responds to their needs, as they themselves understand them.

‘Unavailable’ Syrian Men

Along with their purported lack of interest came a purported lack of availability. According to multiple NGO workers, Syrian men in Za‘tari were often not available during the day, when NGOs were running programmes, because they had other commitments, primarily work.¹⁰⁰ As will be discussed in Chapter 6, however, there was in fact a large shortage of work opportunities in the camp. They were often distributed by NGOs at very short notice, and given the dire economic circumstances in the camp, Syrian men would typically prioritise them over any other commitments, for example their attendance at NGO programmes.¹⁰¹ Some who did not have work in Za‘tari did attempt to leave the camp, with or without permission from the authorities, to seek work. So while it was the case that work was a greater priority for Syrian men, it does not follow that they were always ‘busy working.’ In fact, as has already been noted in this Chapter, there was a *lack* of activities for men in the camp, which was understood by many NGO workers in the camp to be have a detrimental effect on the mental health of many Syrian men living there.

The proposition that Syrian men could not participate in NGO programmes because they were ‘busy working,’ was notable for a second reason. Just as there appeared to be little critical reflection on whether men’s ‘lack of interest’ was created by the humanitarian sector’s lack of interest in them, there appeared to be little critical reflection about whether Syrian men’s ‘lack of availability’ was simply a consequence of when humanitarian actors choose to run their programmes. To the extent that men were busy with work opportunities, they were usually working only until 3pm or 4pm, which typically constituted the ‘end of the day’ for humanitarian workers in Za‘tari. At this time, NGO centres in the camp would be closed up, and the gates locked until the next day.

¹⁰⁰ Conversation with NGO workers, Amman, 09.10.2015. On other occasions, this same idea was repeated to me about attempts to work with Syrian men living in non-camp contexts in Jordan: conversation with NGO workers, Amman, 11.08.2016.

¹⁰¹ Author observations and conversations with Syrian men, Za‘tari, 03.11.2015, 01.08.2016 and Amman, 10.08.2016; see also ARDD, “ARDD’s Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys.”

Despite Syrians requesting that more activities be put on after this time,¹⁰² very few organisations opened their centres beyond the hours of 9am to 4pm.

Questscope's Youth Centre, under the control of its Syrian volunteers, does open until 6pm, a fact of which the volunteers appeared very proud.¹⁰³ Yet in the vast majority of cases, the schedules of humanitarian and NGO workers are prioritised above the schedules of Syrians, even if this has an impact on 'the beneficiaries,' and on who is even able to become a 'beneficiary.' "The fact is," one former NGO worker told me, "if you're sixteen and male and working until 3 no-one in the camp gives a shit about you."¹⁰⁴ He described his frustration listening to NGO workers express puzzlement about "why aren't working kids coming to the youth centre?" when the centre was only open until 3 o'clock, the time at which they wish to return to Amman.¹⁰⁵

At the 'end of the (humanitarian) day' there was a great sense of urgency and impatience in Base Camp. On one cold December afternoon I was doing voluntary English teaching in the camp, and the other volunteers and myself were transported from the classrooms back to Base Camp by minibus, arriving at 3.45. This was 15 minutes before the organisation's buses were scheduled to leave back to Amman, yet to my surprise I found a large number of their staff already standing outside, in the narrow lane between their offices and the perimeter of Base Camp, waiting in the wind and cold for the transport back to the capital.¹⁰⁶ There was a tangible preoccupation with setting off as quickly as possible, in order to try and minimise delays in the queues that develop daily in the early evening on the roads entering Amman from northern Jordan.¹⁰⁷

Schedules ran according to the needs of humanitarian organisations in a second sense. As detailed in Chapter 3, many organisations experienced difficulties in obtaining permits for their staff, but they also needed to get the requisite permissions from the authorities for a project itself to take place (a requirement that was not specific to refugee-related work).¹⁰⁸ Sometimes, in Za'tari, they also needed the support of the relevant working group if they were, for example, to receive support in finding relevant project

¹⁰² Conversations with NGO workers, Amman, 12.06.2016.

¹⁰³ Conversations with Syrian Cash Workers at Questscope, Za'tari, 27.07.2016.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with former NGO worker in Za'tari.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Author observation, Za'tari, 03.12.2015.

¹⁰⁷ Author observation, Za'tari, 13.10.2015, 27.10.2015, 15.12.2015 and 24.02.2016.

¹⁰⁸ Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 20 January 2016.

participants.¹⁰⁹ The combined result of these political-bureaucratic processes was often that projects were implemented at very short notice, with tight timeframes, and with regular delays and changes to the schedule.¹¹⁰ Refugees, whose presence as ‘the beneficiaries’ is required, are expected to fall into line with the schedules of humanitarian actors, and the structures in which they are embedded.

A further question of availability, on which there appeared to be similarly little reflection, related to space. As the scholarship of Doreen Massey has demonstrated, spaces “both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is understood,” and different bodies and gender performances are included or excluded from different spaces.¹¹¹ Built into humanitarians’ understandings about refugee men’s agency, independence and non-‘vulnerability’ were gendered assumptions about their privileged ability to access space, and to use it in particular ways. A 2015 safety perceptions survey of camp residents, undertaken by the Community Police support team, had results broadly in line with these assumptions. Women were significantly more likely to feel unsafe leaving the house, walking alone in the camp, particularly at night, and leaving their caravans unattended,¹¹² and in a UN Women report women and girls reported extensive sexual harassment in many public areas of the camp.¹¹³ According to the same safety perceptions survey, notable numbers of men also reported fears of walking at night and leaving their caravans unattended, yet nevertheless on the whole men could move through space within the camp more safely and more easily.¹¹⁴

That they can move through space, however, does not tell us anything about to where they can move. While men will, on average, be able to move more easily and more safely to work or to distribution centres, according to interlocutors from the humanitarian sector and the Syrian community, as well as my own participant observation in the camp, there were relatively few spaces in the camp for refugee men to go, or to socialise.¹¹⁵ There are two major reasons for this. Firstly, men in the camp, and their collective

¹⁰⁹ Conversations with NGO workers, Za‘tari, 02.08.2016 and Amman, 04.08.2016.

¹¹⁰ Conversation with NGO workers, Amman, 06.10.2015.

¹¹¹ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Polity, 1994), 179.

¹¹² Policing Support Team, British Embassy Amman, “Safety Perceptions Survey,” 49.

¹¹³ UN Women, “Restoring Dignity and Building Resilience.”

¹¹⁴ Policing Support Team, British Embassy Amman, “Safety Perceptions Survey,” 13.

¹¹⁵ Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 29.09.2015; conversations with Syrian men Za‘tari, 21.07.2016 27.07.2016, and 01.08.2016; interviews with Lina Darras; Suhail Abualsameed; and married Syrian man living in Za‘tari (3); see also SGBV Sub-Working Group, “Workshop: Engaging Men and Boys in SGBV Programming: 13/14 May 2015, Kempinski Hotel, Amman.,” May 2015, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

activities and protests, have been seen as troublesome, political, and disruptive both by humanitarian and state agencies running the camp. In the context of the extensive policing and surveillance that takes place in Za'tari, gatherings of even small numbers of men, I was told by Syrians and NGO workers, would cause suspicion, and could place the men in danger of arrest or harassment by the police.¹¹⁶

There are multiple mosques and prayer spaces in the camp, which can provide spaces for Syrians to go, although meetings in the mosque may also have the potential to arouse the suspicion of the authorities. The other major space in the camp, which one might expect to provide spaces for socialising, is the market. Yet in line with the previously discussed attempts to depoliticise the camp, it barely provides any spaces for extended group gatherings. For example, there are very few restaurants or cafes in the market that have significant seating areas. During one of my visits I was taken to, I was told, the best and most popular falafel restaurant in the camp. Although this restaurant was indeed clearly popular, and of a relatively large size compared to other shops in the market, it still only had about a dozen chairs for customers to sit down on. Rather than this creating a space where people could spend extended amounts of time, when people came to sit down they appeared to eat their purchased items and leave quickly, taking the opportunity, on the day I was there, to rest briefly from the sweltering August heat.¹¹⁷ While there are places that serve tea and coffee, there appear to be no coffee shops in which one can sit down for an extended period.¹¹⁸

Similarly, there are no shisha bars¹¹⁹ at all in the camp, although there are shops selling shisha pipes and equipment. I asked the owner of one of the shisha pipe shops why there were no shisha bars, and he replied that there used to be one but it was closed down after a '*hamsba*.' Not being familiar with this term, I turned to the policeman who was accompanying me, who translated the term as 'quarrel.'¹²⁰ I wondered at the time whether 'quarrel' might be downplaying the incident, and later learned that the word

¹¹⁶ Interview with NGO worker in Za'tari; conversations with Syrians and NGO workers, Za'tari, 19.01.2016 and 02.02.2016.

¹¹⁷ Fieldnotes, Za'tari, 01.08.2016.

¹¹⁸ Author observation, Za'tari, 03.12.2015, 21.07.2016 and 01.08.2016.

¹¹⁹ A 'shisha pipe' is a pipe to smoke (often flavoured) tobacco through a waterpipe, and smoking shisha is a very popular activity in much of the Middle East, especially, but far from exclusively, with men. Although they often double as coffee houses, 'shisha bar' is a common English language term to describe places that serve shisha. See Mitya Underwood, "Shisha: The Middle East's Favourite Toxin," *The National*, October 20, 2013, <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/health/shisha-the-middle-east-favourite-toxin>.

¹²⁰ Interview with Syrian man working in Za'tari market (1), Za'tari, 21.07.2016.

‘*hamsba*’ derives from an Arabic term for ‘mob, rabble, riffraff,’¹²¹ and thus could imply a more dramatic incident or physical altercation, rather than a mere quarrel. I asked both the shop-holder and the policeman if they could remember any other details of the ‘quarrel’ that led to the shisha bar being closed down. Unsurprisingly to me, they both said they could not.¹²² Providing further evidence for this being a deliberate attempt by authorities to create a particular sort of environment in the market, according to Melissa Gatter’s interlocutors, coffee shops, like shisha bars, are banned from the camp.¹²³ What remains therefore, are religious spaces, or private caravans, or some open areas on the edges of the camp, where one can sometimes see football games taking place, often not far from the militarised vehicles patrolling the camp’s borders.¹²⁴

The second reason for the lack of spaces for men to go to, or in which they can socialise in groups, is the policies of humanitarian actors. In line with their understanding of who constituted the ‘vulnerable,’ and that Syrian men were in any case ‘uninterested’ in their work, humanitarian agencies and NGOs typically did not create spaces where men specifically could go. As one of the very few organisations in the camp that more proactively targeted refugee men and male youth, Questscope had found that numerous men over the age of 30 had approached them and asked to be part of their centre, because they did not have alternative venues to pursue activities or to have social spaces. Committed to the vision of the space as a youth centre, this was typically not possible, although Questscope staff and volunteers did try to visit these people in their homes instead.¹²⁵ Humanitarian actors, conversely, did create ‘safe spaces’ for women in the camp, who, in line with their presumed ‘vulnerability,’ are assumed to need such spaces.¹²⁶

In one of the reports that I, in my role as an intern, drafted for ARDD, I included an observation that refugee men need, and a recommendation that humanitarian actors provide, “more spaces [for men] to discuss the pressures they are facing.” One senior colleague, supportive of my proposal, suggested that we add the words ‘safe’ before spaces, and ‘openly’ before discuss, but warned me that in doing so, we would “kind of

¹²¹ Hans Wehr, *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic: Arabic-English*, ed. J. M. Cowan, 4th Revised edition (Urbana, IL: Spoken Language Services, 1994), 249.

¹²² Fieldnotes, Za’tari, 21.07.2016.

¹²³ Gatter, “Remaking Childhood,” 43.

¹²⁴ Author observation, Za’tari, 21.07.2016.

¹²⁵ Conversation with Questscope Cash Workers, Za’tari, 27.07.2016.

¹²⁶ Women’s Refugee Commission, “Unpacking Gender.”

[be] breaking a taboo.” ‘Safe spaces,’ she explained, are generally considered by humanitarian actors to be a resource for women.¹²⁷ While there are multiple plausible understandings of the phrase ‘safe space,’ the ‘safe spaces’ being provided for women in Za’tari were not refuges in which women could reside, but were spaces for gatherings, workshops, service provision, socialising, leisure, and confidential, non-judgmental discussions among peers. That facilitating men’s access to such spaces would be deemed ‘taboo-breaking,’ was a striking indication of for whom humanitarian actors imagine they should provide space. In a further example of this logic, the Women’s Refugee Commission report on the humanitarian response in Jordan recommends the creation of safe spaces as a means to empower women and girls, the creation of child-friendly spaces, and community spaces for all, but does not discuss a possible need to create safe spaces for men, despite noting men’s safety concerns.¹²⁸

Even if the political environment of the camp had allowed more gatherings of men outside of humanitarian and NGO-sponsored centres, they would still not provide a substitute for the ‘safe spaces’ in which facilitated discussions could occur, and in which services could be provided. The lack of places to go, particularly when combined with the lack of work opportunities,¹²⁹ is perceived by those working in the camp to be one of the causes of the extensive psychological difficulties that many men in the camp are experiencing.¹³⁰ “Sitting at home/in the caravan all day” was a lament I heard regularly from men in Za’tari.¹³¹ In my eyes, the phrase appeared, for those who said it, to encapsulate so much about what was wrong with their current situation.¹³² In a cruel and cyclical dynamic, these psychological difficulties are often untreated, because this lack of service provision both contributes to, but also prevents the treatment of, men’s psychological distress.

Therefore, men’s independent attempts to exert agency and influence over the space of Za’tari are challenged by authorities in their attempts to depoliticise and control the camp,¹³³ while men’s gatherings are viewed as suspicious and potentially necessitating

¹²⁷ Conversation with NGO workers, Amman, 18.01.2016.

¹²⁸ Women’s Refugee Commission, “Unpacking Gender,” 5, 18, 19.

¹²⁹ See Chapters 6 and 7.

¹³⁰ Interviews with NGO worker in Za’tari; and Areej Sumreen; conversation with NGO workers, Za’tari, 01.12.2015.

¹³¹ See ARDD, “ARDD’s Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys.”

¹³² Fieldnotes, Za’tari, 01.12.2015.

¹³³ See Chapter 2.

police intervention. In these logics, men's efforts and activities are understood to be 'political,' and thereby need to be challenged. On the other hand, women's gatherings are depoliticised and sanitised by the humanitarian status of the spaces that are provided for them by NGOs, and legitimised by the empowerment agenda that they are understood to be a part of. As ostensibly non-'vulnerable' and powerful members of the Syrian community, men are not deemed to need such non-political spaces. These binary, gendered understandings of the Syrian community's relationship to politics reinforce a notion that feminists have been challenging since at least the time of Sojourner Truth: that women's experiences are personal and non-political, while men exist in the public, political realm.¹³⁴ These gendered differences in state and humanitarian governance do not, however, mean that women are not subjects of intervention. In fact, as I will now show, women's 'vulnerability' serves as an incitement for humanitarian intervention into their lives, and control over their bodies and choices.

Women's Bodies and 'Global' Standards: The Imposition of Breastfeeding

As Michel Agier has argued, objects of humanitarian care are simultaneously objects of humanitarian control.¹³⁵ Humanitarian actors are able to exercise power over those whom they have defined as weak enough to be their 'beneficiaries.'¹³⁶ In the context of Za'tari, this was perhaps most clearly exemplified by the camp-wide policies on breastfeeding. In the early months of the camp, breast milk substitutes (BMS), such as infant formula, were provided by some donors and INGOs, in particular those from Gulf countries.¹³⁷ This presented multiple challenges to humanitarian agencies: not only did these donors apparently not have a plan for how to provide such items sustainably over a longer period of time,¹³⁸ but more fundamentally, the distribution of BMS by aid agencies contravenes humanitarian actors' 'global standards,' which emphasise the importance of promoting breastfeeding and discouraging the use of alternatives.

¹³⁴ A. Phipps, "Whose Personal Is More Political? Experience in Contemporary Feminist Politics," *Feminist Theory* 17, no. 3 (2016): 303–21.

¹³⁵ Agier, "Humanity as an Identity."

¹³⁶ See Harrell-Bond, Voutira, and Leopold, "Counting the Refugees"; Harrell-Bond, "Can Humanitarian Work with Refugees Be Humane?"

¹³⁷ Gabriele Fänder and Megan Frega, "Responding to the Nutrition Gaps in Jordan in the Syrian Refugee Crisis: Infant and Young Child Feeding Education and Malnutrition Treatment," *Field Exchange Emergency Nutrition Network* 48 (November 2014): 82–84.

¹³⁸ Fänder and Frega.

Humanitarian actors attempt to implement the World Health Organization's (WHO) 1981 *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes*,¹³⁹ which the WHO deems to be "particularly important for controlling donations and distributions" of breast milk substitutes in emergency situations.¹⁴⁰ In the context of the response to the Syria crisis, UNICEF and its partners, including the World Food Programme, International Medical Corps, UNHCR and the WHO, have "strongly urged those involved" to "promot[e] breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding and [to] strongly discourag[e] the uncontrolled distribution and use of breast-milk substitutes."¹⁴¹ According to UNICEF, breastfeeding is "a miracle investment...a universally available, low-tech, high impact, cost-effective solution for saving babies' lives...the closest thing the world has to a magic bullet for child survival."¹⁴²

In late 2012, a group of humanitarian agencies and NGOs including UNHCR, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the WHO and Save the Children Jordan released a guidance note on "appropriate" infant feeding techniques, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the distribution of infant formula in Jordan.¹⁴³ The policy outlined in this guidance note aimed to educate Syrian women on the benefits of breastfeeding, and to limit and regulate the distribution of BMS. Save the Children Jordan, Medair, and Jordan Health Aid Society, and UNICEF have all been involved in the attempts to provide this 'education' in Za'tari. These policies stand in sharp contrast to pre-existing practices in pre-conflict Syria, in which it is believed that more than half of women did not exclusively breastfeed in the first six months,¹⁴⁴ making infant formula "the norm."¹⁴⁵ Similarly, humanitarian workers reported that in Jordan, the idea of controlling infant formula was "a new concept among national health staff and

¹³⁹ World Health Organization, "International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes" (Geneva: World Health Organization, 1981).

¹⁴⁰ World Health Organization, "The International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes Frequently Asked Questions 2017 Update" (World Health Organization, 2017), 17, <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/254911/1/WHO-NMH-NHD-17.1-eng.pdf?ua=1>.

¹⁴¹ UNICEF, "UN Agencies and NGOs Call for Appropriate Feeding of Infants and Young Children in the Syria Emergency," UNICEF, January 28, 2013, https://www.unicef.org/media/media_67658.html.

¹⁴² UNICEF, "Improving Breastfeeding, Complementary Foods and Feeding Practices," UNICEF, March 6, 2017, https://www.unicef.org/nutrition/index_breastfeeding.html.

¹⁴³ see World Health Organization et al., "Guidance Note on Appropriate Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices in the Current Refugee Emergency in Jordan," 2012, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>; World Health Organization et al., "Standard Operating Procedures on Donations, Distribution and Procurement of Infant Formula and Infant Feeding Equipment," April 2014, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

¹⁴⁴ Suzanne Mboya, "Artificial Feeding in Emergencies: Experiences from the Ongoing Syrian Crisis," *Field Exchange Emergency Nutrition Network* 48 (November 2014): 164–66.

¹⁴⁵ Sura Alsamman, "Managing Infant and Young Child Feeding in Refugee Camps in Jordan," *Field Exchange Emergency Nutrition Network* 48 (November 2014): 87.

caregivers.”¹⁴⁶ In programmatic choices and language reminiscent of a wide range of humanitarian activities, Save the Children Jordan conducted rapid assessments, opened safe havens, and recruited community mobilisers to try to encourage, train and support Syrian women in Za‘tari in their breastfeeding.¹⁴⁷ The NGO even operated a “bottle/cup amnesty activity” in the camp, “where mothers are encouraged to exchange any feeding bottle they have for a measured cup which is considered safer, more hygienic and easier to clean.”¹⁴⁸

The effectiveness of the educational activities in increasing breastfeeding appears limited. In a 2014 article by two employees of Medair, which conducted similar work in Jordan, although primarily in host communities rather than camps, the authors noted that while there was a large increase in Syrian mothers’ knowledge about the benefits of breastfeeding, “exclusive breastfeeding practice among the mothers who knew about breastfeeding recommendations showed no change” – only about 25% of women breastfed exclusively.¹⁴⁹ While, as the Medair article detailed, no BMS supplies are issued by health facilities for refugees in host communities, and infant formula was only available through pharmacies,¹⁵⁰ refugees who maintain their freedom of movement within Jordan can in principle continue to access BMS on the open market, if they can afford to do so financially.

In the camp context however, with limited freedom of movement and restrictions on what goods can enter the camp, education is supplemented by strict restrictions on who is able to receive infant formula. Although the Za‘tari policies on breastfeeding were presented to me by one of the Health Sector Gender Focal Points as “advocacy...towards encouraging women to practice early initiation of breast feeding,”¹⁵¹ in fact women in Za‘tari with young children essentially have no choice but to breastfeed, unless they satisfy one of five criteria laid down by humanitarian actors. In order to obtain BMS a woman in Za‘tari must, in the assessment of a midwife: have been separated from the child, infected with a disease that could pass to the child through

¹⁴⁶ Alsamman, 87.

¹⁴⁷ Alsamman, “Managing Infant and Young Child Feeding in Refugee Camps in Jordan.”

¹⁴⁸ Alsamman, 86.

¹⁴⁹ Fänder and Frega, “Responding to the Nutrition Gaps in Jordan,” 83.

¹⁵⁰ Ann Burton, “Postscript: Commentary on Experiences of IYCF Support in the Jordan Response,” *Field Exchange Emergency Nutrition Network* 48 (November 2014): 89; Fänder and Frega, “Responding to the Nutrition Gaps in Jordan.”

¹⁵¹ Interview with Ruba Abu-Taleb.

breastfeeding, be taking medication that could pass to the child through breastfeeding, have a child with a condition such as galactosemia which prohibits safe breastfeeding, or have stopped feeding and subsequent re-lactation efforts have failed. In these instances, or if a rape survivor does not wish to breastfeed,¹⁵² women will be referred to the one place in the camp that is able to provide formula milk for children, which is the Saudi Clinic.¹⁵³

While the 2012 guidance note mentioned above acknowledges that “stress, overcrowding, and lack of privacy may temporarily disrupt breastfeeding or make it difficult to accomplish,”¹⁵⁴ the policy that has been put in place does not appear to take that into account. Women choosing not to breastfeed on these, or any other non-strictly medical grounds (as defined by humanitarian agencies), do not meet the criteria for a referral for infant formula. After all, as two Medair professionals involved in this work explain, “a woman’s body is designed to feed and nurture her child even under difficult circumstances.”¹⁵⁵ To further reinforce this policy, and to reduce the chance that women are able to make a choice not to breastfeed, organisations have been told that they “must NEVER accept unsolicited donations of ANY milk products.”¹⁵⁶ Officials involved in an attempt to set up a kitchen project for women in the camp speculated that the policies on breastfeeding were one of the reasons why their project had been refused permission to open, because it would have involved bringing fresh milk into the camp.¹⁵⁷

Statistics show that in September 2014, only 226 women in Za’tari were able to access infant formula through the aforementioned mechanisms.¹⁵⁸ Detailed population statistics are not available for that month, however data from the first half of the year shows that around 4% of the residents of Za’tari were between 0 and 1 years old,¹⁵⁹ meaning that in September 2014 it would be expected that there were around 3,200 children under the age of one in the camp. Given these statistics, and the prevailing rates of breastfeeding

¹⁵² World Health Organization et al., “Standard Operating Procedures on Donations, Distribution and Procurement of Infant Formula and Infant Feeding Equipment.”

¹⁵³ Interview with Ruba Abu-Taleb; see World Health Organization et al., “Guidance Note on Appropriate Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices.”

¹⁵⁴ World Health Organization et al., 1.

¹⁵⁵ Fänder and Frega, “Responding to the Nutrition Gaps in Jordan,” 82.

¹⁵⁶ World Health Organization et al., “Guidance Note on Appropriate Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices,” 2.

¹⁵⁷ Conversation with humanitarian and NGO workers, Za’tari, 25.11.2015.

¹⁵⁸ Alsamman, “Managing Infant and Young Child Feeding in Refugee Camps in Jordan,” 88.

¹⁵⁹ UNHCR, “Za’atri Detailed Indicator Report 2014 First Half January-June,” June 2014, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

pre-crisis, it is possible that hundreds, if not thousands, of women in Za'tari were essentially be being forced to breastfeed against their wishes. Other data similarly indicates that the policy on BMS has had a tangible impact on the lives of women with children. For example, a 2014 report compared the levels of breastfeeding in camp and non-camp settings.¹⁶⁰ While arguing that infant and young child feeding practices “are generally poor among the refugees,”¹⁶¹ rates of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of a child’s life were ten percentage points higher in the camp than outside it.¹⁶²

According to Ann Burton, Senior Public Health Officer at UNHCR Jordan, “the more restricted access to BMS” in the camp is “no doubt [a] significant factor” in explaining the differential in breastfeeding rates.¹⁶³ “More consideration,” Burton goes on to argue, should be given to whether “humanitarian actors should withhold support for formula feeding in women who have made a truly informed choice.”¹⁶⁴ Despite this call for further “consideration” in 2014, nothing appeared to have changed by the time of my fieldwork in 2015-2016. For example, the 2016 Inter-Agency Task Force Health Sector Gender Analysis repeatedly notes that “females are usually not the decision makers when it comes to breastfeeding,”¹⁶⁵ implying, with reference to “interpersonal relationships between women and men” that it is Syrian men who take these decisions.¹⁶⁶ But it makes no reference to the fact that, for women in Za'tari, this decision is unambiguously taken away from them by the humanitarian agencies running the camp. On paper, there is a commitment to policies on infant feeding being “community led and focused on the needs of poor, vulnerable families,”¹⁶⁷ but ‘vulnerable’ women, it seems to have been decided, need education in ‘global standards’ more than they need choices about their bodies.

When it was implemented, the policy was very controversial among some of the Syrian population, which is unsurprising given that it was, for many, enforcing a change from pre-existing practices in Syria. According to different NGO accounts of the time “angry

¹⁶⁰ UNFPA et al., “Interagency Nutrition Survey on Syrian Refugees in Jordan April-May 2014” (Amman, August 2014).

¹⁶¹ UNFPA et al., 6.

¹⁶² UNFPA et al., 26.

¹⁶³ Burton, “Postscript: Commentary on Experiences of IYCF Support in the Jordan Response.”

¹⁶⁴ Burton.

¹⁶⁵ Groenveld and Abu-Taleb, “IATF Health Sector Gender Analysis,” 7, 17, 23.

¹⁶⁶ Groenveld and Abu-Taleb, 17.

¹⁶⁷ Fänder and Frega, “Responding to the Nutrition Gaps in Jordan,” 84.

men” gathered at the health facilities to protest,¹⁶⁸ and Syrians started “riots and attacks on distribution points.”¹⁶⁹ This language betrays the illegitimacy of refugees’ protests in the eyes of humanitarian actors, and the extent to which humanitarian knowledge and practices are privileged over the knowledge and practices of the Syrian community. The portrayal of men as “angry” also reveals the ease with which political disputes about resource distribution can be delegitimised by humanitarian actors through appeals to widespread gendered and racialised visions of Syrian/Arab men, and how humanitarian actors themselves participate in the perpetuation of those depictions.¹⁷⁰

Humanitarian Responses to ‘Early Marriage’

Questions of gender, agency and bodily autonomy, and the methods and extent of humanitarian control over refugees’ lives, were also central to the controversies surrounding the ‘early marriage’ of Syrians in Za’tari. In this context ‘early marriage’ referred to the marriages of Syrian children, defined as those under 18 years of age. Syrian children who got married were overwhelmingly, although not exclusively, girls, and married either Syrian men or boys in the camp, Syrians living in other areas of Jordan, or men of Jordanian or other nationalities. Early marriage was a subject of particular concern for humanitarian agencies, for whom it was “a human rights issue – with regards to the individual’s consent to enter into such a relationship – and a public health issue. It is also considered a form of GBV.”¹⁷¹ Not only, an SGBV specialist explained to me, was early marriage itself a form of GBV, but “girls who are married early are at...a higher risk of also facing other types of GBV within their marriages.”¹⁷²

Humanitarian actors’ focus on the issue of early marriage, which is reminiscent of the attention given by British colonialists to the question of child marriage in India,¹⁷³ was evident in reports produced by UN agencies,¹⁷⁴ the establishment of an Early and Forced

¹⁶⁸ Alsamman, “Managing Infant and Young Child Feeding in Refugee Camps in Jordan,” 87.

¹⁶⁹ Fänder and Frega, “Responding to the Nutrition Gaps in Jordan,” 64.

¹⁷⁰ See Inhorn, *The New Arab Man*.

¹⁷¹ UN Women, “Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection,” 29.

¹⁷² Interview with SGBV specialist (1); very similar sentiments were echoed in interview with SGBV specialist (2).

¹⁷³ See Andrea Major, “Mediating Modernity: Colonial State, Indian Nationalism and the Renegotiation of the ‘Civilizing Mission’ in the Indian Child Marriage Debate of 1927– 1932,” in *Civilizing Missions in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia: From Improvement to Development*, ed. Carey A. Watt and Michael Mann (London: Anthem Press, 2011), 165–90.

¹⁷⁴ See UNICEF, “A Study on Early Marriage in Jordan 2014” (Amman: UNICEF Jordan, 2014); UN Women, “Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection.”

Marriage Task Force to coordinate humanitarian activities,¹⁷⁵ and poster and brochure campaigns from UNHCR and its partners to discourage the practice.¹⁷⁶ Early marriage also received extensive, and often sensationalised,¹⁷⁷ coverage within international news media.¹⁷⁸ More recently, humanitarian agencies have written profiles of women and girls in Za'tari who are fighting early marriage.¹⁷⁹ So great was the focus on early marriage, that a Jordanian man working for an INGO claimed, at a public discussion event on the topic, that in the early years of the Syria crisis, it felt like early marriage was the only issue they were there to deal with.¹⁸⁰

Many of these marriages were legal under Jordanian law. The legal age for marriage in Jordan is 18, for males and females, although written into the law are exemptions for 15-17 year olds. Marriages can only legally take place between the ages of 15 and 17 if the guardians of the person under 18 consent, and if the persons to be married consent themselves, although as noted above, humanitarian agencies expressed concerns about the ability of under 18 year olds to freely and genuinely consent.¹⁸¹ All marriages between Muslims in Jordan are overseen by the *shari'a* court, a branch of which was established in Za'tari – the first such court in a refugee camp anywhere in the world, I was proudly told by a Jordanian police officer.¹⁸²

In a case where a marriage involves someone under 18, in the assessment of a judge in the *shari'a* court, the marriage must not be a reason to discontinue the child's education, must involve an appropriate age difference, be in the child's best interests, and provide economic, safety or social benefits to them.¹⁸³ That 13.6% of marriages in Jordan in 2013 involved one or more person under the age of 18 demonstrates that these exceptions are

¹⁷⁵ Interview with SGBV specialist (1).

¹⁷⁶ UNHCR et al., "Al-Zawaj Ba'da Thamaniyat Ashara Aslam Ili Wa Ilkum [Marriage After 18 Years Old Is Safer for Me and You]," 2014, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with SGBV specialist (1).

¹⁷⁸ Alhayek, "Double Marginalization."

¹⁷⁹ E.g. see UNFPA, "Refugee Mother and Daughter Fight Rocketing Rates of Child Marriage," September 8, 2016, <http://www.unfpa.org/news/refugee-mother-and-daughter-fight-rocketing-rates-child-marriage>.

¹⁸⁰ Fieldnotes, Amman, 28.11.2015. This public panel discussion was organised by the Italian NGO Un Ponte Per. The event, which was conducted in Arabic, was entitled 'Shining a Light on Early Marriage,' and took place in the framework of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.

¹⁸¹ UN Women, "Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection."

¹⁸² Fieldnotes, Za'tari, 21.07.2016.

¹⁸³ Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "Inter-Agency Emergency Standard Operating Procedures for Prevention of and Response to Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection in Jordan" (Amman, 2014), 47; UNICEF, "A Study on Early Marriage in Jordan 2014."

widely used.¹⁸⁴ Although the law has further provisions for marriages to be authorised, in exceptional circumstances, when one or more of the parties are under 15, these are very rarely granted.¹⁸⁵ In Syria, the standard legal age for marriage in Syria is 18 for males and 17 for females, although, with special approval from a judge, boys may be able to marry from the age of 15, and girls from the age of 13.¹⁸⁶

Given the humanitarian focus on the issue, there was a surprising lack of clarity about the extent of, and changes in levels of, early marriage among Syrians. UN Women's 2013 report on the issue documented Syrians' perceptions of the average age of marriage within their community. Almost half of adult Syrian refugees thought that the average age of marriage for a girl in their community was somewhere under the age of 18,¹⁸⁷ and around 2/3rds of those surveyed believed that the average age of marriage had stayed the same since coming to Jordan, 23% said that it had decreased for males and females, while 10% said it had increased.¹⁸⁸ UNICEF's 2014 study of early marriage in Jordan notes what it calls a "sharp rise" in early marriage among Syrians, citing the fact that "the prevalence of early marriage among all registered marriages for Syrians increase[d] from 25 per cent in 2013 to 31.7 percent in the first quarter of 2014."¹⁸⁹ Yet as the same report notes, these statistics denote registered marriages in Jordan, and there is an unknown number of unregistered marriages in Jordan, whether involving under 18s or not,¹⁹⁰ making accurate statistical trends hard to detect. The report furthermore notes that, within pre-conflict Syria, it was very common for marriages not to be registered until the paperwork was needed, for example for the birth of a child. This practice developed because the law requiring the registration of marriages was not widely enforced, and it could be difficult to obtain all of the necessary paperwork to register the marriage (for example if a man had not completed compulsory military service.)¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁴ UNICEF, "A Study on Early Marriage in Jordan 2014," 18.

¹⁸⁵ Save the Children, "Too Young to Wed: The Growing Problem of Child Marriage Among Syrian Girls in Jordan" (London: Save the Children, 2014), 12; UNICEF, "A Study on Early Marriage in Jordan 2014," 6.

¹⁸⁶ Save the Children, "Too Young to Wed: The Growing Problem of Child Marriage Among Syrian Girls in Jordan," 12; UNICEF, "A Study on Early Marriage in Jordan 2014," 6.

¹⁸⁷ UN Women, "Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection," 30.

¹⁸⁸ UN Women, 32.

¹⁸⁹ UNICEF, "A Study on Early Marriage in Jordan 2014," 8.

¹⁹⁰ UNICEF, 10.

¹⁹¹ UNICEF, 13.

Despite the statistically unclear situation, it was generally perceived, by humanitarians, that the practice of ‘early marriage’ was increasing.¹⁹² Yet simultaneously, there was a widespread acknowledgement that ‘early marriage’ was a practice that pre-dated Syrians’ time and experiences in Jordan. According to UN Women, ‘early marriage’ was “strongly rooted in traditional and primarily rural practices,” and was believed to be increasing as a result of difficult circumstances in exile.¹⁹³ It was also very common to hear the sentiment that ‘early marriage’ was a part of ‘Syrian culture’ both from NGO workers, and from Syrians living in Za‘tari.¹⁹⁴ Marriage under 18 was particularly common in some specific Syrian cities and especially in rural areas, in which the vast majority of Za‘tari residents lived before coming to Jordan.¹⁹⁵

Simultaneously, however, alongside these narratives emphasising the importance of ‘Syrian culture’ to the practice of ‘early marriage,’ there was a widespread understanding, even if it was not always foregrounded, that child marriage was a strategy employed by families in response to their socio-economic circumstances. As Al Akash and Boswell have demonstrated, the marriage of Syrian girls, in some cases, provided economic relief for her family because another family would (at least in theory) then become responsible for her well-being. In other cases, the girl and potentially the wider family would accrue other perceived benefits such as the ability to leave a refugee camp and live in the city.¹⁹⁶ Some of these factors are also noted in humanitarian reports.¹⁹⁷ Yet at the same time, I was told by an SGBV specialist, even though agencies “know, globally speaking as well, economic reasons are the main reasons for child marriage taking place...in the current context we can’t influence this.”¹⁹⁸ Thus economic factors became, according to this

¹⁹² Conversations with humanitarian and (I)NGO workers, Amman, 02.09.2015, 10.10.2015 and 14.11.2015.

¹⁹³ UN Women, “Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection,” 29; see also Lana Khattab and Henri Myrntinen, “‘Most of the Men Want to Leave’ Armed Groups, Displacement and the Gendered Webs of Vulnerability in Syria” (London: International Alert, 2017); UNICEF, “A Study on Early Marriage in Jordan 2014.”

¹⁹⁴ Author observation, Za‘tari, 03.11.2015; and Amman, 02.09.2015 and 24.02.2016.

¹⁹⁵ UN Women, “Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection,” 30.

¹⁹⁶ Al Akash and Boswell, “Listening to the Voices of Syrian Women and Girls Living as Urban Refugees in Northern Jordan: A Narrative Ethnography of Early Marriage”; For analysis in a similar vein, but different context, see Refugee Law Project, “‘Giving out Their Daughters for Their Survival’: Refugee Self-Reliance, ‘vulnerability,’ and the Paradox of Early Marriage” (Kampala: Refugee Law Project, 2007).

¹⁹⁷ E.g. see Care International, “Five Years into Exile: The Challenges Faced by Syrian Refugees Outside Camps in Jordan and How They and Their Host Communities Are Coping” (Amman: Care International, 2015), 6; UN Women, “Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection,” 29–32.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with SGBV specialist (1).

interviewee, “the big disclaimer” on their organisation’s plan of action to tackle early marriage.¹⁹⁹

As in the case of ‘vulnerability,’ a particular group becomes an object of concern and intervention. The circumstances that render ‘early marriage’ a rational, perhaps even unavoidable, strategy for some Syrian families, in this case poverty and encampment, are sidelined. The focus remains on Syrian culture, and the role of humanitarians in ‘helping’ Syrian women and girls by attempting to change their understandings of pre-existing practices. According to a Jordanian women’s rights activist, marriages under the age of 18 were “part of [refugees] lives in Syria, there wasn’t a thing called early marriage, it’s a new category,” she reported with approval.²⁰⁰ Even though many of the Syrian girls in question would have been, if there had not been an uprising in Syria, married at the same age, and in the same way,²⁰¹ under the gaze of humanitarianism, the rural, ‘traditional,’ non-western population of Za’tari appears before them as a ‘culture’ in need of reform.²⁰² Humanitarian crisis presents an opportunity to ‘improve’ the Syrian population.

The discussions and programmes on ‘early marriage’ also further demonstrate both humanitarian understandings of gender and agency, and how humanitarian knowledge is privileged over the knowledge of the Syrian community. In contrast to humanitarian understandings that ‘early marriage’ was a human rights violation, and a cultural practice to be reformed, Tobin and Campbell found that Syrian girls in Za’tari who got married under the age of 18 often:

anticipated that getting married earlier would help, not only to reduce burdens on their natal families, but also to secure their safety around the camp...[they] also indicated that marriage would give them a heightened sense of responsibility and agency in an otherwise debilitating environment.²⁰³

While girls were assumed, potentially often in contrast to their own understandings of their situations, to be victims of early marriage, the notion that boys might be victims of early marriage rarely seemed to be countenanced. Even though the vast majority of those marrying under the age of 18 were girls, there were some cases of two individuals, both

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Interview with Jordanian women’s rights activist.

²⁰¹ Interview with SGBV specialist (1).

²⁰² See Duffield, “The Liberal Way of Development”; Spivak, “Righting Wrongs.”

²⁰³ Sarah A. Tobin and Madeline Otis Campbell, “NGO Governance and Syrian Refugee ‘Subjects’ in Jordan,” *Middle East Report* 278 (2016): 9.

under 18, getting married.²⁰⁴ In this instance, however, many INGOs would argue that such marriages are an instance of GBV against the girl, but not against the boy.²⁰⁵ According to one specialist, there was often an assumption among her colleagues that the boy will have some capacity to influence decisions that might effectively be made by his parents.²⁰⁶ Even when under 18 and living in dire socio-economic circumstances, male refugees were imagined to have a level of agency that was assumed to not exist for girls. Females are assumed to be ‘vulnerable,’ males agential.

Refugee men and boys’ ability to exercise agency, however, is both complex and circumscribed by context. I was told, for example, by multiple informants, of a case in Za’tari where a Syrian man in his early twenties married a girl under 18. He had, I was informed, strongly protested the marriage that was being set up for him by his parents, and attempted to find ways out of it. His father informed him, however, that if he did not go through with the marriage then he would be disowned and disinherited. He was, in effect, left with a choice of going through with the marriage against his will, or being on his own, without the support structures of his family.²⁰⁷ As noted in the above discussions on ‘vulnerability,’ the circumstances of men living without the support of their families are often some of the most difficult and precarious for refugees in Jordan. Other marriages involving children are reported to have taken place in an attempt to circumvent restrictions on entry to Jordan.²⁰⁸ As has been documented by human rights groups, it was considerably more difficult for Syrian men to enter Jordan if they were travelling outside of a family unit or married couple.²⁰⁹ Marrying, even if one would otherwise not have done so, might have presented one way out of that potentially life-threatening situation.

Acknowledging these complexities does not mean that marriage is the ‘correct decision’ in any particular circumstance (if there is indeed such a thing as *the* correct decision), nor does it imply any less concern about the welfare of the girls and boys who are married. But it does offer a sharp contrast to the humanitarian sector’s portrayals and understandings of ‘early marriage’ and gender in Syrian communities more broadly.

²⁰⁴ UNICEF, “A Study on Early Marriage in Jordan 2014,” 17–21.

²⁰⁵ Interview with SGBV specialist (2).

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Conversations with NGO workers, Za’tari, 27.07.2016; and Amman, 08.08.2016.

²⁰⁸ UNICEF, “A Study on Early Marriage in Jordan 2014,” 32–33.

²⁰⁹ Frelick, “Blocking Syrian Refugees Isn’t the Way.”

According to one interlocutor, these kinds of complexities are often missing when cases of early marriage are analysed:

Sometimes it feels like we try to seek out what the problems are...we try to seek more examples of early marriage and condemn it immediately rather than trying to do a more nuanced understanding of [the situation]...I mean people do do evaluations, copious amounts of evaluations, but the image that comes out is this very generalised 'early marriage is bad.'²¹⁰

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that, in the humanitarian sector's interactions with Syrian men, the enactment of the gendered humanitarian frameworks that were explored in Chapter 2 is justified through the behaviour of (or behaviour that is attributed to) Syrian men themselves – in particular their perceived lack of interest in humanitarian work, their inconvenient time schedules, and the priorities these are understood to represent. Syrian women's 'vulnerability,' in line with 'global' standards, not only reinforces the ostensible non-'vulnerability' of Syrian men, but also renders women objects of humanitarian care and control – their bodies are the domain upon which the agendas of the humanitarian sector are carried out.

Both Syrian men's perceived non-'vulnerability,' and Syrian women's perceived 'vulnerability,' can lead to interactions with the humanitarian sector that harm Syrians. Men's agency is often assumed; women's agency is often denied. The analysis presented here has explored the needs and challenges of Syrian refugee men, located them within the specific context of exile in Jordan, and examined how refugee men's needs are often overlooked by humanitarian actors. Rather than attempting to identify a group(s) that is 'the most vulnerable,' humanitarian actors should attempt to understand how different groups of people, along gendered and other lines, experience a variety of context-specific challenges, threats and needs. As this Chapter has demonstrated, some of these challenges are created and perpetuated by the humanitarian sector itself.

²¹⁰ Interview with NGO worker in Za'tari.

Chapter 5: Engaging Syrian Men and Boys in Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Prevention

‘Engaging men and boys’ is a phrase capturing work with men that attempts to reduce the chance of men and boys being perpetrators of SGBV, to make them question and reform their masculinities, and/or to create of them ‘allies’ against SGBV. In contrast to the relative paucity of work with Syrian men in numerous sectors of the refugee response, work with men on SGBV prevention was growing rapidly during the time of my fieldwork. This ‘engagement’ – one might assume – necessitates conversation and exchange. But humanitarian workers expressed severe concern over whether this is a conversation that Syrian men would be willing or able to take part in. As one Jordanian acquaintance said to me, upon hearing that my research involved discussion of Syrian masculinities, “I don’t think anyone’s going to talk to you about that!”¹ I heard this kind of sentiment so often in the first weeks of my fieldwork in particular, that I joked to a friend that “Nobody’s going to talk to you about that,” might be a good working title for my thesis.

This chapter focuses on this SGBV prevention work, and in particular the (perceived) challenges of ‘engaging’ Syrian men. Many of these challenges come from encounters between the ‘global’ frameworks of humanitarianism, which centred human rights and western understandings of gender, and those of the ‘local’ context, which centred Islam and understandings of gender rooted within the camp community. The former were consistently privileged over the latter. After giving an overview of the SGBV response within Za‘tari, this chapter explores how humanitarian actors attempted to undertake work to ‘engage men and boys’ within this ‘local,’ Arab context. It analyses the frameworks chosen for this work, competing understandings of why levels of SGBV in the camp were high, humanitarians’ readings of Syrian men as ‘unemotional,’ contestations over translation and language, and whether Syrian men could be read as ‘victims’ of GBV. In doing so, it calls into question the presumed hierarchies of humanitarianism – did humanitarian actors’ work, as they assumed, act as a progressive influence on local norms and practices?

¹ Fieldnotes, Amman, 15 September 2015.

The SGBV Response and its ‘Engagement’ of Men

SGBV was quickly identified, by humanitarian actors working in Za‘tari, as a widespread problem in the camp, and a similar situation was noted by humanitarian actors working with Syrian communities across Jordan.² The most commonly reported form of SGBV, according to social workers, psychologists and lawyers, was domestic violence, which was believed to account for over 50 percent of all instances of SGBV. Male relatives - husbands, uncles, and brothers - were those most often reported to be perpetrators of this violence.³ Such dynamics, where high levels of SGBV are recorded within contexts of encampment and exile, are far from unique to Za‘tari or Jordan, and have been documented by research in a range of contexts.⁴ Humanitarian actors’ reports on the scale and severity of the SGBV challenges facing the Syrian community concurred with my experiences working among Syrian refugees. Many Syrians I spoke to, both men and women, believed that levels of domestic violence in particular had increased since the uprising in Syria and since seeking exile in Jordan.⁵

Humanitarian actors offer support to survivors of SGBV on a number of levels – case managers offer confidential referrals to multi-sectorial services, women and girls’ safe spaces have been created, capacity building is offered for medical, legal and psychosocial personnel, and campaigns are conducted to raise awareness about SGBV in the Syrian community. The SGBV Sub-Working Group coordinated the prevention and response work of its members, prepared and coordinated inter-agency assessments, and conducted training sessions for SGBV service providers.⁶ The Gender-Based Violence Information Management System, coordinated by UNHCR and UNFPA, was used to “collect, store, analyse, and share data related to reported incidents of SGBV.”⁷ Overall, the response

² See CPGBV Sub-Working Group, “Findings from the Inter-Agency CPGBV Assessment”; Policing Support Team, British Embassy Amman, “Safety Perceptions Survey”; UN Women, “Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection.”

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⁴ Sibylle Rothkegel et al., “Evaluation of UNHCR’s Efforts to Prevent and Respond to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Situations of Forced Displacement” (Geneva: UNHCR, 2008).

⁵ ARDD, “ARDD’s Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys.”; conversations with Syrian men and women, Amman, 02.11.2015 and 15.11.2015; and Za‘tari, 17.11.2015; interviews with Lina Darras; and Ruba Abu-Taleb.

⁶ SGBV Sub-Working Group, “Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: Syrian Refugees in Jordan March 2014,” 2014, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>; SGBV Sub-Working Group, “Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: Refugees in Jordan June 2015,” 2015, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

⁷ SGBV Sub-Working Group, “Gender-Based Violence Information Management System Jordan,” August 2014, 1, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

aimed, one SGBV specialist told me, to ensure that ‘global’ standards for dealing with SGBV were upheld.⁸

The systems put in place to help Syrian survivors of SGBV differed markedly from the sources of support that Syrians themselves sought. According to a report by the Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence (CPGBV) Sub-Working Group, many refugees in Za‘tari who were survivors of SGBV would choose not to approach NGOs or formal support services, but were more likely to seek support from other family members.⁹ Similarly, a UN Women report on GBV among Syrians living in Jordanian host communities found that for both sexual and physical violence, Syrian refugee women were thought to be most likely to turn to family members, followed by the police, with only small proportions of respondents thinking that women would first turn to a health clinic for support. In instances of psychological violence, family members were again thought to be by far the most likely place where women would turn.¹⁰

The Jordanian legal system added complexity to humanitarian actors’ attempts to deal with cases of SGBV in line with their perceptions of ‘global’ standards. According to an SGBV specialist I interviewed, central to these standards was a ‘survivor-centred’ approach, which meant that the survivor should choose which services to access and when, and whether and when to involve the police or other authorities.¹¹ But according to Jordanian law, she continued, the reporting of some forms of SGBV is mandatory, for example if it involves someone under the age of 18, or if it involves sexual violence. This put psychologists and doctors in a very difficult position, because even if the survivor did not want them to, they were legally obliged to report the incident to the police, potentially putting the survivor in danger, for example of so-called ‘honour’-based crimes.¹² The Jordanian Public Security Directorate has a specific division – the FPD – which has a:

⁸ Interview with SGBV specialist (2).

⁹ CPGBV Sub-Working Group, “Findings from the Inter-Agency CPGBV Assessment,” 3.

¹⁰ UN Women, “Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection,” 23.

¹¹ Interview with SGBV specialist (2); see also UNICEF et al., “Handbook for Coordinating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings,” 2010, https://www.unicef.org/ecuador/GBV_Handbook_Long_Version.pdf.

¹² See Adam Coogle, “Recorded ‘Honor’ Killings on the Rise in Jordan,” Human Rights Watch, October 27, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/27/recorded-honor-killings-rise-jordan>.

distinct mandate to investigate and handle cases of family violence and sexual abuse. The department is mandated to carry out investigations, follow up on cases, and provide survivors with specialist services.¹³

A branch of the FPD was set up in Za'tari, close to the *shari'a* court, and ARDD's offices where the NGO provided legal aid.

The increased focus on 'engaging men and boys' as part of the SGBV response in Jordan is part of a global trend, which can also be seen in other contexts of displacement.¹⁴ This can be seen in the work, reports and research of organisations including Promundo, White Ribbon, MenEngage, UN Women, UNFPA, EME/Cultura Salud, Institute of Development Studies, and Sonke Gender Justice among others,¹⁵ and in academic articles in journals including *Men and Masculinities* and *Violence Against Women*.¹⁶ Some organisations have been advocating for this approach for a relatively long time. For example, the Women's Refugee Commission produced a handbook on including men in gender equality work in 2005,¹⁷ and a case study of Promundo's work was included in UNHCR's 2008 evaluation of its efforts to prevent and respond to SGBV.¹⁸

The growing literature, both academic and practitioner-focused, on 'engaging men and boys,' outlines why many believe this work should be undertaken as part of a wider SGBV response. At the centre of the justification is the idea that particular masculinities, learned within patriarchal frameworks, create norms and practices that facilitate and legitimise violence, especially against women and girls. These include, for example:

¹³ UN Women, "Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection," 76.

¹⁴ See Olivius, "Refugee Men as Perpetrators, Allies or Troublemakers?"

¹⁵ Francisco Aguayo et al., "Engaging Men in Public Policies for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls" (Santiago; Washington DC; Panama City: EME/CulturaSalud; Promundo-US; UN Women and UNFPA, 2016); Andrea Cornwall, Jerker Edström, and Alan Greig, eds., *Men and Development: Politicizing Masculinities* (London; New York: Zed Books, 2011); C. Müller and T. Shahrokh, "Engaging Men for Effective Activism against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence," Policy Briefing (Institute of Development Studies, January 2016); Bob Pease, "Men as Allies in Preventing Violence against Women: Principles and Practices for Promoting Accountability," White Ribbon Research Series (Sydney: White Ribbon Australia, 2017).

¹⁶ See Dean Peacock and Gary Barker, "Working with Men and Boys to Prevent Gender-Based Violence Principles, Lessons Learned, and Ways Forward," *Men and Masculinities* 17, no. 5 (2014): 578–99; Heather L. Storer et al., "Primary Prevention Is? A Global Perspective on How Organizations Engaging Men in Preventing Gender-Based Violence Conceptualize and Operationalize Their Work," *Violence against Women* 22, no. 2 (2016): 249–268.

¹⁷ Dana Buscher and Diana Quick, "Masculinities: Male Roles and Male Involvement in the Promotion of Gender Equality : A Resource Packet" (New York: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005).

¹⁸ Rothkegel et al., "Evaluation of UNHCR's Efforts to Prevent and Respond to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Situations of Forced Displacement," 89.

the need to assert power and be in control; an inability to manage anger or frustration...a sense of ownership over women's bodies;...the perception of women as sexual objects; and the idea that male sexual desire is uncontrollable.¹⁹

Since these masculinities represent both a central root cause of SGBV, and can be very damaging to the lives of men themselves,²⁰ they require questioning, deconstructing, and challenging.

Work to 'engage men and boys' is less well developed in the Middle East than in other regions of the world.²¹ Promundo, for example, one of the biggest drivers of this work, published its first survey and report on the Middle East only in 2017.²² Despite this, within Jordan this work had been called for, by at least some humanitarian actors, since the early years of the Syria crisis, for example in a 2013 UN Women report.²³ By 2015, the SGBV Sub-Working Group had identified "engaging with men & boys as one of the priorities for [the year]," and had made it one of the objectives in their annual work plan.²⁴ As a result of this, the working group organised a two-day workshop on the topic for humanitarian actors in Amman in May 2015. This workshop recommended that organisations ensure that, in their messaging, "men and boys are also reflected as agents of positive change and not only as potential perpetrators;" to "[i]nclude men and boys in activity targets for prevention activities, such as awareness-raising campaigns, and training for refugees and asylum-seekers;" and to "sensitize staff to better understand gender equality concepts and how it [sic] impacts masculinity."²⁵ In the same year, UNHCR hired a specialist consultant, Suhail Abualsameed, to undertake training on this issue for their staff and partners in the Jordanian police.²⁶ 'Engaging men and boys' was also an unofficial theme of the '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence' campaign in Jordan, with slogans such as 'my security is your security.'²⁷ Multiple NGOs,

¹⁹ Aguayo et al., "Engaging Men in Public Policies for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls," 11.

²⁰ E.g. see Aguayo et al., 13.

²¹ Interview with SGBV specialist (1).

²² Promundo, "International Men and Gender Equality Survey," Promundo Global, n.d., <http://promundoglobal.org/programs/international-men-and-gender-equality-survey-images/>.

²³ Han:

²⁴ SGBV Sub-Working Group, "Workshop: Engaging Men and Boys in SGBV Programming: 13/14 May 2015, Kempinski Hotel, Amman," 1.

²⁵ SGBV Sub-Working Group, 2.

²⁶ Interview with Suhail Abualsameed.

²⁷ Interview with SGBV specialist (2).

including ARDD, began to undertake their own programmes to ‘engage [Syrian] men and boys.’²⁸

Not having been aware of the rapid growth of this work in Jordan, and having initially planned to focus less on the actions and policies of NGOs in my research, I had not anticipated that I would research or be involved in this kind of work. At the same time, it was an area that I was very familiar with in a different context, from my voluntary work in the UK with a project called Great Men.²⁹ Set up in 2013 by feminist activists Sarah Perry and Genevieve Dawson, Great Men works primarily with teenage boys in schools in the UK, to try to create spaces for them to be able to discuss openly, often for the first time, questions of gender and masculinity, sexuality, pornography, mental health, and violence. From the beginning of my association with Great Men in February 2014, I felt very invested in the work it was doing, and the approach that it was, at that time, pioneering within the UK. The workshops with boys seemed desperately needed, always felt honest, feminist, and politically transformative, and appeared to have a deep impact for many of the people we worked with.

Despite my experience in, and in principle support for, this kind of work, the projects to ‘engage men and boys’ in Za‘tari, including the one on which I worked, made me feel deeply uneasy. In part, I believe, this was a discomfort resulting from the inherent power inequalities involved in working with a marginalised population,³⁰ whose lives, despite these power inequalities, one is unable to improve significantly. But I was also unnerved by the work to ‘engage men and boys’ specifically, because it was the only work with men about which humanitarian actors appeared to be especially enthusiastic. Syrian men would be encouraged, cajoled, persuaded, on occasion I would even say pleaded with, to come to workshops about SGBV, which highlighted, for me, the absence of engagement with other aspects of their lives.³¹

As described in Chapter 2, the Youth Task Force in Za‘tari had given a lukewarm and perplexed reaction to my interviewee’s suggestion that humanitarian actors should be

²⁸ See ARDD, “ARDD’s Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys.”; Interview with protection programme manager.

²⁹ The GREAT Initiative, “Great Men: Engaging Men & Boys, Disrupting Gender Stereotypes,” Great Men, accessed July 27, 2017, <https://www.great-men.org>.

³⁰ Clark-Kazak, “Ethical Considerations.”

³¹ Author observation, Za‘tari, 17.11.2015 and 15.12.2015.

providing more activities for men in the camp. Yet when a different interviewee, in 2015, had presented the idea of a project working to ‘engage men and boys’ in SGBV prevention to the same task force, she described her colleagues’ reactions as “super interested...they thought it was really exciting.”³² Refugee men were the targets of the work, but only because their involvement could be conceptualised as a means to achieve pre-determined humanitarian goals of supporting women and children. My discomfort at these dynamics was only exacerbated by the controversies that surrounded how Syrian men were to be engaged – how grounded in the local religious context should discussions with men be, and what weight should be given to Syrian men’s own understandings of why levels of SGBV were high? Men were to be engaged, it appeared, according to the frameworks of the humanitarian sector.

Can ‘Global’ Frameworks Engage Syrian Men?

The language of ‘engaging men’ had become so ubiquitous that it appeared, for many humanitarian actors, to have become a synonym for ‘working with men,’ as if it were impossible to work with men without in some way ‘engaging them.’³³ It was therefore possible to be in favour of ‘engaging men,’ without exploring exactly what this meant in practice. But in more in-depth discussions with and among donors, practitioners, field workers, and Syrian men themselves, these issues often came to the fore. One of the primary controversies surrounded the use of ‘global’ frameworks of human rights versus the ‘local’ framework of Islam. Dean Peacock and Gary Barker, leading figures in two of the largest organisations involved in this work globally – Sonke Gender Justice and Promundo - argue that “policy and program approaches to involving men in achieving gender equality and gender-based violence prevention *must* be framed within a human and women’s rights agenda” [emphasis added].³⁴ Similarly, the WHO suggests, as one of the “guiding principles” for actors engaging men and boys for gender equality, that organisations should “frame policy and programming with men within an agenda that promotes human rights, including women’s rights.”³⁵

³² Interview with NGO worker in Za’tari.

³³ Author observation, Amman, 15.08.2016.

³⁴ Peacock and Barker, “Working with Men and Boys to Prevent Gender-Based Violence,” 582.

³⁵ World Health Organization, “Policy Approaches to Engaging Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality and Health Equity” (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2010), 15.

A similar emphasis on ‘global’ frameworks and human rights was found in the gender work of many of the organisations working in Za‘tari.³⁶ One interviewee, a European NGO worker who attended a ‘gender awareness’ training organised by UNHCR, described the training as “very sound in terms of international/Western interpretations of the concept of gender,” but relayed how many of the Western-centric examples used by the facilitator from the United States alienated the mostly Jordanian participants.³⁷ Some young Syrian men whom I met in Za‘tari similarly described how they had attended gender workshops run by NGOs in the camp, but said the sessions had mostly consisted of a trainer listing the relevant articles from different UN human rights declarations and documents.³⁸

While they may be understood, by some actors, to be ‘global’ or ‘international,’ the language and ideas of human rights, and women’s rights in particular, have been used in the service of particular Northern agendas. This includes, as discussed in Chapter 4, attempts to ‘save’ Muslim women, but also to justify broader projects of imperialism.³⁹ Simultaneously, there is a widespread ‘backlash’ against human rights and the frameworks and institutions it inspires, particularly, but not exclusively, in post-colonial contexts. This can play out in terms of arguments against human rights on the grounds of cultural difference or cultural relativism,⁴⁰ or the discrediting of campaigns for the rights of women (or other groups) through their campaigns’ associations with Western frameworks and powers.⁴¹ Women and men in post-colonial settings who are subject to contemporary humanitarian interventions on gender can experience them as yet another ‘civilising mission’ from the West.⁴² In contrast to Keck and Sikkink’s ‘boomerang’ theory of norm diffusion, through which oppressive states will find themselves

³⁶ Interview with NGO worker in Za‘tari; conversation with NGO workers, Za‘tari, 27.07.2016.

³⁷ Interview with NGO worker in Za‘tari.

³⁸ Conversation with young Syrian men, Za‘tari, 02.08.2016.

³⁹ Al-Ali and Pratt, *What Kind of Liberation?*, 4–14; Bécquer Segúin, “Imperialists for ‘Human Rights,’” *Jacobin*, December 19, 2014, <http://jacobinmag.com/2014/12/imperialists-for-human-rights>.

⁴⁰ S. R. Harris-Short, “International Human Rights Law : Imperialist, Inept and Ineffective ? Cultural Relativism and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.,” *Human Rights Quarterly*. 25, no. 1 (2003): 130–81.

⁴¹ Rochelle Terman, “The Unintended Consequences of Western Human Rights Intervention,” *Open Democracy*, December 10, 2013, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/rochelle-terman/backlash-unintended-consequences-of-western-human-rights-intervention>.

⁴² Grabska, “Constructing ‘Modern Gendered Civilised’ Women and Men.”

“‘sandwiched’ between domestic and transnational pressure,”⁴³ western interventions in the name of human rights have often resulted in a ‘backlash.’⁴⁴

In the context of the Arab world, as Nicola Pratt has argued, Western powers, despite their self-portrayal as supporters of women’s and human rights, have “as a result of their geopolitical interests...supported regimes that have clamped down on revolutionary and radical popular movements.” The “demise of radical, secular movements,” she argues, and the co-optation of the women’s rights agenda by authoritarian regimes, “has led to a decoupling of secular women’s rights agenda from local popular projects...rendering secular women’s rights activists vulnerable to accusations of representing foreign agendas.”⁴⁵ Within the context of Za’tari specifically, in a community where many feel abandoned and let down by the international community,⁴⁶ framing gender equality and anti-SGBV work in terms of ‘human rights’ did not typically receive a receptive audience. As one senior NGO officer, who had been based in the Middle East for many years, said to me, the Syrians he works with “don’t understand anything the UN says about them.”⁴⁷

In accordance with the emphasis on ‘human rights’ and the ‘global’ standards of humanitarianism, and despite the extensive ‘vernacularisation’ of women’s and human rights in other contexts,⁴⁸ the use of Islam within projects to ‘engage men and boys’ was controversial for many humanitarian actors. According to Suhail Abualsameed, based on his experience working with a range of NGOs and humanitarian agencies, resistance to using Islam came, in particular, from non-Jordanian staff members, the vast majority of whom were westerners. While the Jordanian staff, sometimes requiring a little persuasion, would understand the potential benefits of using religious frameworks, the foreign staff often rejected such suggestions with “arrogance...don’t you – Arab,

⁴³ Thomas Risse, *Domestic Politics and Norm Diffusion in International Relations: Ideas Do Not Float Freely* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2017); see also Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, “Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics,” *International Social Science Journal* 51, no. 159 (1999): 89–101.

⁴⁴ Terman, “The Unintended Consequences of Western Human Rights Intervention.”

⁴⁵ Nicola Pratt, “How the West Undermined Women’s Rights in the Arab World,” *Jadaliyya*, January 25, 2016, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/23693/how-the-west-undermined-women%E2%80%99s-rights-in-the-arab>; see also Nadjie Al-Ali, “The Iraqi Women’s Movement: Past and Contemporary Perspectives,” in *Mapping Arab Women’s Movements: A Century of Transformations Within*, ed. Pernille Arenfeldt and Nawar Golley (Cairo: AUC Press, 2012), 93–110.

⁴⁶ Conversation with Syrian men, Za’tari, 16.02.2016;

⁴⁷ Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 21.10.2015.

⁴⁸ Sally Engle Merry and Peggy Levitt, “The Vernacularization of Women’s Human Rights,” in *Human Rights Futures*, ed. Stephen Hopgood, Jack Snyder, and Leslie Vinjamuri (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 213–36.

Muslim, Suhail - don't tell us what's right and what works, we Spanish and British and Canadians will tell you this will not happen."⁴⁹ These attitudes are part of a broader trend, whereby faith-based actors, particularly from Muslim communities, perceive themselves to be side-lined by their 'secular' counterparts in efforts to combat SGBV.⁵⁰

Where human rights frameworks might be alienating, discussing opposition to SGBV in the language, and context, of Islam, appeared on the ground to garner a better reception.⁵¹ This was an approach that ARDD used in its work with refugees, despite the potential for controversy this might cause. As a Jordanian NGO, with Jordanian staff implementing the work on the ground, ARDD would regularly emphasise, both publicly and privately, the importance of SGBV work with men being grounded in the local cultural, social, and religious context.⁵² As the organisation noted in its report on the project in which I was involved, "many men in [Za'tari] will express their opposition to SGBV with reference to Islam and its teachings."⁵³ To some extent, its willingness to diverge from the approaches of western organisations ameliorated elements of the aforementioned discomfort I felt about the work.

While it may have reduced my discomfort, it heightened the discomfort of others. On a social occasion during my fieldwork, I was explaining the work that ARDD did to a western acquaintance whose organisation was expanding its work into this field. I mentioned that Islam, and discussion of Islam, was an important part of the approach used in the project I was working on. "That must be, er...a challenge," she replied, with an expression that I took to be a mixture of surprise and concern. I countered that it was one of the most productive techniques we had, and that many of the most vocally supportive participants had themselves been local sheikhs or religiously devout individuals from the community. She was very impressed, she told me, (and clearly

⁴⁹ Interview with Suhail Abualsameed.

⁵⁰ Elisabet le Roux and Lizle Loots, "The Unhealthy Divide: How the Secular-Faith Binary Potentially Limits GBV Prevention and Response," *Development in Practice* 27, no. 5 (2017): 733–44; see also Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Chloé Lewis, and Georgia Cole, "'Faithing' Gender and Responses to Violence in Refugee Communities: Insights from the Sahrawi Refugee Camps and the Democratic Republic of Congo," in *Gender, Violence, Refugees*, ed. Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Ulrike Krause (New York: Berghahn, 2017), 127–51.

⁵¹ Author observation, Za'tari, 24.11.2015 and 22.12.2015.

⁵² See ARDD, "What Role Can Faith Play in Psychosocial Support? Bridging the Gap Between Science and Cultural Understanding" (Amman: ARDD, 2014); ARDD, "ARDD's Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys."

⁵³ ARDD, "ARDD's Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys," 11.

surprised) that Islam could be used in the service of an anti-SGBV agenda.⁵⁴ Islam was assumed, by those with little familiarity with the social worlds in which it is important, to be contrary to, and less progressive than, ‘international’ norms and standards.

A second way in which ‘global’ frameworks were seen to sit uncomfortably with ‘local’ norms concerned how men were to be engaged. Was it through the questioning and deconstruction of masculinities, which is central to justifications for involving men in SGBV prevention work, or should ‘local’ understandings of the causes of high levels of SGBV be incorporated into the work? While the reasons for domestic violence are complex and varied, and in contexts of refuge can involve men re-asserting control they have lost in other spheres of life,⁵⁵ in numerous conversations with Syrian interlocutors, both men and women, I encountered a seemingly-widespread perception that high stress levels were behind increased levels of SGBV, in particular domestic violence. The Syrian conflict, exile in Jordan, and particularly economic struggles and unemployment among men, were understood to be one of, and often the primary, reason why there were higher levels of violence in the home compared to pre-conflict Syria.⁵⁶

This idea was also found in humanitarian agencies’ research into SGBV in the camp.⁵⁷ As a 2013 report by the CPGBV Sub-Working Group noted, in previous assessments Syrian women had:

disclosed that their husbands were under immense stress, and they anticipate this to lead to heightened levels of domestic violence...[focus group discussions] confirmed that one of the main justifications given for this violence was stress caused by lack of money and employment.⁵⁸

UN Women’s report into SGBV among Syrians living in host communities found a similar trend, with “Syrian women [reporting] that their husbands are under immense stress and that this increases physical and psychological violence against them and against

⁵⁴ Fieldnotes, Amman, 04.02.2016.

⁵⁵ E.g. see C. Fisher, “Changed and Changing Gender and Family Roles and Domestic Violence in African Refugee Background Communities Post-Settlement in Perth, Australia,” *Violence Against Women* 19, no. 7 (2013): 833–47; Dianna J. Shandy, *Nuer-American Passages: Global Migration in the Twentieth Century*, New World Diasporas (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006); UN Women, “Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection.”

⁵⁶ Author observation and conversations with Syrian men, Za’tari, 27.10.2015, 24.11.2015 and 22.12.2015; and Amman, 16.12.2015; CPGBV Sub-Working Group, “Findings from the Inter-Agency CPGBV Assessment,” 23.

⁵⁷ For an exploration of this issue in another refugee camp context, see Lukunka, “New Big Men.”

⁵⁸ CPGBV Sub-Working Group, “Findings from the Inter-Agency CPGBV Assessment,” 23.

children within the home.”⁵⁹ However, as discussed in Chapter 4, providing psychosocial support to Syrian men was rarely a priority for humanitarian actors. If the Syrian community’s perceptions of why there were high levels of domestic violence were taken more seriously, this might have become a central component of efforts to combat SGBV in the camp. Men in Za’tari reported to myself and colleagues that the number of people who came to the camp wanting to talk to them about violence was significantly higher than the number coming to offer them psychosocial support.⁶⁰

Despite the idea of a connection between stress levels and domestic violence appearing in multiple humanitarian reports, some humanitarians were reluctant to publicly report or emphasise this view. A senior colleague told me, for example, that if we were to acknowledge Syrian men’s understandings of why violence occurred (understandings that were shared by many women in their community), it might create challenges for the organisation because other humanitarian actors might think that we, as an NGO, were saying that increased violence was justified when stress levels were very high.⁶¹ The difference between stress *causing* and stress *justifying* violence was a regular, and uncontroversial, topic of discussion in the workshops with Syrians,⁶² but apparently for some humanitarian actors the boundaries between these two ideas were sufficiently blurred that we had to be very careful in the language we used in public.⁶³ It was politically safer to emphasise the role that masculinities played in the perpetuation of violence. This also conveniently avoided the fact that, for many of the men we worked with in Za’tari, positive coping mechanisms in situations of stress were often found in spirituality and Islam.⁶⁴

To ARDD’s credit, in my view, acknowledging and discussing the stresses that men were living under was an important part of its approach.⁶⁵ While men’s relationships and responses to stress, and resultant manifestations of inter-personal violence are fundamentally related to questions of gender and masculinities, the shorter-term solution to the (at least perceived) relationship between stress and violence, which ARDD

⁵⁹ SGBV Sub-Working Group, “Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: Syrian Refugees in Jordan March 2014,” 1.

⁶⁰ Conversations with Syrian men, Za’tari, 27.10.2015.

⁶¹ Fieldnotes, Amman, 20.01.2016.

⁶² Author observation, Za’tari, 15.12.2015 and 22.12.2015.

⁶³ Fieldnotes, Amman, 20.01.2016.

⁶⁴ ARDD, “ARDD’s Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys.”

⁶⁵ See ARDD.

pursued, was to try to give men better strategies for coping with their stress levels.⁶⁶ Yet if, as I was told, such an approach was too controversial for other agencies, it left me questioning how exactly men were meant to be ‘engaged.’ How are masculinities and practices of violence to be discussed and understood without context, and therefore, without a full understanding of their causes and meanings?

As Alan Greig has argued, work with men on gender and violence “has been slow to make the links between the personal violence of men and the political violence of the state.”⁶⁷ As this thesis has demonstrated, all refugees in Za‘tari continue to be subject to the violence of humanitarian and Jordanian state actors. Absent this broader political context, Greig continues, the “emphasis on violence as a learned behaviour that results from harmful norms of masculinity,” results in violence being framed in terms of culture.⁶⁸ In this rare circumstance in which humanitarian actors express fairly consistent enthusiasm about working with men, the prioritisation of humanitarians’ understandings of the cause of SGBV over those of the Syrian community means that men appear before humanitarians as objects to reform, not people in need of help.

Foregrounding the violence that Syrian men in Za‘tari experience would challenge humanitarian actors for two reasons. Firstly, some of that violence is perpetrated by their humanitarian or state partners. Many organisations perceive their presence in Jordan to be highly precarious, and that precarity to preclude criticism of some of Jordan’s policies towards refugees. Secondly, humanitarian actors would have had to accept that many of the causes of this violence are out of their control. If the violence is largely out of their control, if it is more than a question of a culture to be reformed, and masculinities to be deconstructed, why would donors fund them to combat it? As a field worker on a project funded by an international agency, I found that one of my most important roles was to record evidence of ‘change’ in our ‘beneficiaries.’ We would regularly be asked, by a donor, to provide ‘proof’ that the four hours of workshops each individual man attended were having an impact and changing their views on SGBV, views that one might assume have been built up over years and decades. Some of the instances of men apparently

⁶⁶ ARDD.

⁶⁷ Alan Greig, “Anxious States and Directions for Masculinities Work with Men,” in *Men and Development: Politicizing Masculinities*, ed. Andrea Cornwall, Jerker Edström, and Alan Greig (London; New York: Zed Books, 2011), 225.

⁶⁸ Greig, 221.

reconsidering their views or challenging each other in the workshops were dismissed as ‘anecdotes.’ What was needed was ‘proof.’⁶⁹

Many Syrian men brought humanitarian and state policies into conversation with questions of stress, their changing gendered lives, and gendered violence in the camp. This was especially the case regarding policies that they perceived to be restrictive and violent, such as those that inhibit their ability to leave the camp easily.⁷⁰ In conversations with Syrians, and occasionally with NGO workers, it was common to hear Za‘tari referred to as a ‘prison.’⁷¹ Indeed, although it was rarely discussed as part of the same work, threats of violence were also a mechanism used in the camp to tackle SGBV. The FPD in the camp, as discussed above, is the Jordanian police institution with a specific responsibility for responding to SGBV cases. Yet its policies and actions were understood in radically different ways by humanitarian sector actors and Syrian men in the camp.

For most humanitarian workers with whom I discussed the issue, the FPD was unable and/or unwilling to adequately address the needs of women who were survivors of SGBV. The FPD was understood, for example, to often ask men who had committed violence in the home to sign an oath to promise that they would not do so again, and the FPD would then play a role in assuring the person whom he had been violent towards that he was truly sorry and would not repeat his actions.⁷² According to one Jordanian NGO lawyer, who worked closely with the FPD and other branches of the Jordanian authorities in Za‘tari, the widespread perception in Jordan that the state should not interfere in the ‘private’ affairs of the home, including violence in the home,⁷³ extended to many of the officers working for the FPD. He continued to note, however that, “when [the FPD] believe in the case, when they believe that this woman is [an] SGBV victim, they work very very hard.” I asked, however, whether women who came forward were often not believed by the FPD: “honestly, it happens a lot,” he replied.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Fieldnotes, Amman, 01.02.2016 and 09.03.2016.

⁷⁰ ARDD, “ARDD’s Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys.”

⁷¹ Fieldnotes, Za‘tari, 05.12.2015 and 15.12.2015; interview with former NGO worker in Za‘tari.

⁷² Conversations with (I)NGO workers, Amman, 27.11.2015 and 16.12.2015.

⁷³ See Elizabeth Frantz, “Jordan’s Unfree Workforce: State-Sponsored Bonded Labour in the Arab Region,” *Journal of Development Studies* 49, no. 8 (2013): 1072–87; Lisa Hajjar, “Religion, State Power, and Domestic Violence in Muslim Societies: A Framework for Comparative Analysis,” *Law & Social Inquiry* 29, no. 1 (2004): 1–38; Afaf Jabiri, *Gendered Politics and Law in Jordan: Guardianship over Women* (Springer, 2016).

⁷⁴ Interview with NGO lawyer in Za‘tari, Amman, 14.08.2016.

For many Syrian men, on the other hand, the FPD was a source of great resentment. Syrian interlocutors in Za'tari told myself and colleagues, on multiple occasions, that Jordanian law took the side of women and children, not men. In particular, the legal power of the FPD to separate children from their families, and to send them to live with another family, sometimes in another refugee camp, appeared well known, and deeply resented.⁷⁵ These dynamics, in which increased levels of state intervention in 'domestic' disputes are seen as against, or detrimental to, men have been noted in other contexts of migration and displacement.⁷⁶ Furthermore, Syrian men were often told that if they did not sign that aforementioned 'oaths' to demonstrate their repentance for their violence, they risked being deported to Syria by the authorities.⁷⁷ Therefore not only, as Greig argued, has gender work with men failed to address the links between broader politics and personal violence, but extreme threats of state violence are simultaneously used to try and reduce levels of SGBV in the camp. It was humanitarians who decided what forms of violence, what understandings of its causes, and what topics of discussion, should constitute their attempts to 'engage' Syrian men. Yet even though the humanitarian sector was largely in a position to attempt to implement the work using its own 'global' frameworks, there was another perceived challenge facing them – Syrian men themselves.

Engaging 'unemotional' Arab men

Syrian men themselves were perceived to represent an obstacle to the successful implementation of the work, because they were deemed too 'closed' or too 'unemotional.' Discussing issues such as (gender-based) violence, masculinities, and men's changing lives as refugees in the camp, was perceived by humanitarian actors to necessitate emotional openness on the part of men. These sentiments can be understood within a context in which feminist critics and activists have identified men's 'repression' of emotions as a symptom and perpetuator of patriarchal arrangements, and thus in which greater emotional openness by men is understood to be a means to greater gender

⁷⁵ Conversations with Syrian men and author observation, Za'tari, 10.12.2015 and 01.08.2016; conversation with NGO workers, Amman, 16.12.2015; interview with Ruba Abu-Taleb.

⁷⁶ E.g. see Ndungi Wa Mungaj and Bob Pease, "Rethinking Masculinities in the African Diaspora," in *Migrant Men: Critical Studies of Masculinities and the Migration Experience*, ed. Mike Donaldson et al. (New York; Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 96–114.

⁷⁷ Interviews with NGO lawyer in Za'tari; and SGBV specialist (2); conversation with INGO worker, Amman, 24.01.2016.

equality.⁷⁸ Syrian men's allegedly 'unemotional' nature was understood to be derived from their status as Arab men, and thus embodiments of Arab culture, in which the expression of emotion was perceived to be coded as feminine.⁷⁹ Syrian men's ostensible lack of emotional openness represents yet another way in which humanitarian actors understood Syrian men to be unsuitable for, uninterested in, or unavailable for, the work they were undertaking in the camp.

The idea that Syrian men were insufficiently emotionally open to take part in discussions about gender and SGBV was expressed to me repeatedly. This came not only in discussions about work to 'engage men and boys,' but also more generally in people's responses to hearing about my research topic, which was often imagined to be quite closely centred around SGBV and interventions to prevent it. Interlocutors from the NGO sector and elsewhere, men and women, doubted the feasibility of doing work or research about masculinities with or about Syrian men. Syrian men would not be willing, I was told, to openly discuss masculinity, or to discuss the role that gender played in their lives.⁸⁰ These views came from both Jordanians and Westerners. As scholars have observed, a non-Western positionality in terms of identities does not preclude what has been termed self-orientalism, or self-stereotyping, of groups of people from regions such as the Middle East.⁸¹

One of the most notable aspects of the designation of Syrian men as insufficiently emotionally open is how such images of 'Arab men' contrast with long-standing orientalist and colonial depictions of men in the region. Both historically and contemporaneously, men have been portrayed in ways that simultaneously hypermasculinise and feminise their bodies and behaviours – they have been characterised as simultaneously "supermasculine" and "yet 'so gentle.'"⁸² Arab men's masculinities are understood to be a "complex and contradictory array of traits."⁸³ Rather

⁷⁸ Sam de Boise and Jeff Hearn, "Are Men Getting More Emotional? Critical Sociological Perspectives on Men, Masculinities and Emotions," *The Sociological Review* 65, no. 4 (2017): 779–96.

⁷⁹ Conversation with NGO workers, Za'tari, 22.12.2015, Amman, 29.09.2015; interview with Suhail Abualsameed.

⁸⁰ Fieldnotes, Amman, 10.09.2015, 15.09.2015, 29.09.2015, 12.10.2015, and 15.02.2016.

⁸¹ Inhorn, *The New Arab Man*; Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, "Self-Orientalization and Dislocation: The Uses and Abuses of the 'Aryan' Discourse in Iran," *Iranian Studies* 44, no. 4 (2011): 445–72.

⁸² Massad, *Colonial Effects*, 89, 140.

⁸³ Jessica Jacobs, "Have Sex Will Travel: Romantic 'Sex Tourism' and Women Negotiating Modernity in the Sinai," *Gender, Place & Culture* 16, no. 1 (2009): 50.

than being ruled, like Western men, by rationality,⁸⁴ Arab men are deemed to be irrational, ruled by their emotions.⁸⁵ Protest movements within the Arab world have been subject to similar depictions; the so-called Arab street “is either ‘irrational’ and ‘aggressive’ or it is ‘apathetic’ and ‘dead.’”⁸⁶

As feminist scholarship has demonstrated, within many gender orders, rationality is considered opposed to emotionality; the former is valued and associated with masculinity, the latter devalued and associated with femininity.⁸⁷ In particular, this has been the case within Western contexts, where emotion has been feminised and emotional detachment masculinised.⁸⁸ bell hooks has gone as far as to argue that, “patriarchy demands of all males...that they kill off the emotional parts of themselves.”⁸⁹ The orientalist and (neo-)colonial portrayals of men in the Arab world as being ruled by their emotions, in contrast to men in the West, are therefore also a feminisation of Arab men. Such depictions should be understood as part of a system “that disempowers non-western men by proclaiming their effeminacy.”⁹⁰

The portrayal of Syrian men as ‘unemotional’ can be understood within a discursive structure that contrasts ‘the West’ and ‘the Arab world’ as discrete and opposed spaces, and a broader homonationalist context in which the former is understood as a space of tolerance and sexual diversity, and the latter intolerance and rigid heterosexuality.⁹¹ Men and masculinities within Western contexts are understood to be increasingly emotionally open, accepting and ‘inclusive’,⁹² and that openness is understood to be a component in building gender equality, as previously discussed. Accordingly, ‘the West’ or ‘Europe’ was consistently mentioned by multiple gender practitioners and NGO workers (both Jordanian and non-Jordanian), as well as Syrian refugees, as a space of gender equality,

⁸⁴ Carver, “Being a Man.”

⁸⁵ Jarmakani, *An Imperialist Love Story*; Massad, *Colonial Effects*.

⁸⁶ Asef Bayat, “The ‘Street’ and the Politics of Dissent in the Arab World,” *Middle East Report*, no. 226 (2003): 11; Emotion and irrationality are also deemed to be a possible motivation of terrorist acts by Arab/Muslim men, see Puar, “Mapping US Homonormativities.”

⁸⁷ Tickner, “You Just Don’t Understand,” 614.

⁸⁸ Carver, “Being a Man”; R. W. Connell and J. W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender & Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 829–59.

⁸⁹ bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004), 66.

⁹⁰ Adams and Savran, “Part IV: Empire and Modernity Introduction,” 229.

⁹¹ Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*; Jasbir Puar, “Rethinking Homonationalism,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45, no. 02 (2013): 336–39.

⁹² For discussion and critique see O’Neill, “Whither Critical Masculinity Studies?”; Puar, “Mapping US Homonormativities.”

women's freedom, and less-masculine men.⁹³ Simultaneously, within Western lenses and frameworks, Arab and Muslim men are depicted, in a post-9/11 era in particular, as religiously-devout 'traditional' family patriarchs with a tendency for violence.⁹⁴ Their allegedly 'unemotional' characters form part of a portrayal of the Middle East region as *particularly* patriarchal.⁹⁵

I argue that these depictions of Syrian men as unemotional can be understood as a continuation of their hypermasculinisation in the eyes of external actors. This hypermasculinisation, however, while consistent with prior positioning of Arab men as hypermasculine, differs from these previous depictions in that previous hypermasculinisations were often accompanied by a simultaneous feminisation specifically through the branding of Arab men as too emotional. In a post 9/11 context, however, new mappings of gender and race are created.⁹⁶

But what, exactly, did men being 'unemotional' mean? As extensive scholarship has demonstrated, the rational/emotional binary, and its mapping onto masculinity/femininity, is a Western binary understanding of gender.⁹⁷ As one non-Jordanian INGO worker joked to me, if any population of men is insufficiently open to successfully take part in this work, surely it is British men.⁹⁸ From my personal experiences as a British person, and informed by that perspective and positionality, as well as by the extensive time I have spent living in the Middle East, my male friends from Jordan, Palestine and Egypt seemed to be much more comfortable with the expression of emotion than the stereotypical British man.

I put some examples of behaviour that I would understand to clearly represent emotional openness to Lina Darras, the colleague with whom I had worked closely in Za'tari. The examples came from a Syrian mutual acquaintance of ours, whom here I will call 'Abdu. Despite having only met me on a few occasions, 'Abdu would regularly message me to say he missed me, how much he liked my friendship, urging me to visit him when I was

⁹³ Conversations with Syrian men and women, and NGO workers, Za'tari, 22.12.2015, 31.07.2016, 02.08.2016, and Amman, 15.11.2015.

⁹⁴ Inhorn, *The New Arab Man*; Jarmakani, *An Imperialist Love Story*.

⁹⁵ For discussion see Emma Sinclair-Webb, "Preface," in *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East*, ed. Mai Ghousseub and Emma Sinclair-Webb (London: Saqi, 2000), 7–16.

⁹⁶ Jarmakani, *An Imperialist Love Story*; Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*.

⁹⁷ E.g. see Carver, "Being a Man."

⁹⁸ Interview with protection programme manager.

next in Za'tari, and would be warm and tactile when we did next meet in person. While I recognise that there are power differentials that will inevitably structure my interactions with refugees in Za'tari, and that building connections with NGO employees can be very important for Syrian refugees, *the ways in which* 'Abdu would express himself struck me as emotionally open. I asked Lina if she would also consider them to be expressions of emotion, or emotional openness, or if we were using the term differently. We were, she replied, talking about something different:

What 'Abdu is doing with you is something we call being nice...and welcoming, especially to a foreigner. And in general in Arab culture welcoming others, welcoming guests, welcoming people from other cultures is something concrete and very important...it's a value, so this is not emotion...what we mean when we say emotions is things like expressing your feelings to your wife, expressing your feelings in sad situations, like death or things like that, having emotion for others.⁹⁹

Suhail Abualsameed, on the other hand, a gender consultant who is also Jordanian, agreed that there was a widespread depiction of men in the region as 'unemotional,' but strongly disagreed with it:

[It's] completely my impression and idea about my culture, that actually the men are so much more emotional than anywhere else in the world, they don't like to admit it...and [they don't] identify the things they do as emotional...Also, we find them emotional in comparison to western culture, or within a western lens, and [so] yes I can love my best friend, my male friend and hug him and touch him and express how much I love him but this is not emotional...and in the west that's the expression of emotion...So for men here emotional means you break down and cry every time you can...really it's just all about crying.¹⁰⁰

Suhail had conducted work on gender and SGBV with men and women from refugee communities in Jordan, in both camp and non-camp settings, with GoJ officials, and with the staff of UNHCR and humanitarian agencies. For him:

the most open of all the men, [the most] excited and genuinely interested in the concepts and wanting to improve their lives and change their mindsets are the refugee men, from Syria and Iraq. The most resistant were government employees...then in between them there's the staff of the agencies. You would think [humanitarian agency staff] would be indoctrinated enough, but you have a good level of resistance in work with UNHCR and different agencies. They are the

⁹⁹ Interview with Lina Darras.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Suhail Abualsameed.

ones who are providing the services, but then you hear things that are very problematic around their own beliefs on these issues.¹⁰¹

The expression of emotion, and understandings of what the expression of emotion constitutes, are clearly contextual. As Aymon Kreil's work on male intimacy in Cairo has demonstrated, intimacy and emotion are expressed by different actors in different contexts, and a range of meanings are derived from those intimacies.¹⁰² That humanitarian workers felt able to demand a particular form of emotional openness, on a particular topic, within a particular setting, demonstrates quite how much the intimate affairs and perspectives of Syrian refugees were meant to be at humanitarians' disposal. Simultaneously, an exploration of who was willing to open up, emotionally, on different topics, subverts humanitarian expectations about the 'global' being a positive, progressive influence on 'local' norms. It was men from the refugee communities, according to this interviewee, who were noticeably more 'open' than humanitarian workers themselves.

How Do You Say 'Gender(-Based Violence)' in Arabic?

Similar dynamics can be seen when it comes to questions of language. The Arabic context and language was also understood by numerous humanitarian workers to present an obstacle for 'engaging men and boys.' As the literary scholar Ferial Ghazoul has noted, "[g]ender does not have a ready-made unequivocal signifier in Arabic."¹⁰³ This lack of a common or vernacular term for 'gender' made it difficult to discuss the idea of the English term 'gender,' which has been "forcefully universalized, through the United Nations and human rights instruments and NGOs around the world."¹⁰⁴ Although sexual violence could be translated straightforwardly, without a word for 'gender,' the translation of GBV is clearly a challenge.

The lack of vernacular word for gender is sometimes tackled by simply using the term 'gender.' A phonetic transliteration of gender can sometimes be found in academic texts or on materials used for gender workshops for Arabic speakers.¹⁰⁵ In other contexts, the word 'gender' can be used verbally and, depending on the audience, more colloquially. At

¹⁰¹ Interview with Suhail Abualsameed.

¹⁰² Aymon Kreil, "Territories of Desire: A Geography of Competing Intimacies in Cairo," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 12, no. 2 (2016): 166–80.

¹⁰³ Ferial Ghazoul, "Gender and Knowledge: Contribution of Gender Perspectives to Intellectual Formations," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 19 (1999): 6.

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Andoni Massad, *Islam in Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 158.

¹⁰⁵ See Massad, 159–60. Author observation, 18.11.2015.

an Arabic-language event discussing women's political participation in Jordan, for example, all attendees introduced themselves at the beginning, with the word 'gender' being interspersed with Arabic.¹⁰⁶ Yet the circles within which such terminology can comfortably be used are limited, and often involve, as in the aforementioned example, groups who are professionally acquainted with ideas about gender. A colleague recounted to me, for example, an event he attended on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Jordan. Many of the government officials who participated in the event were familiar neither with the word 'gender,' nor with the idea of a sex/gender distinction. Scattered throughout the meeting were calls of '*Shu ya 'ni gender?*' (what does gender mean?), prompting the meeting to be stopped on several occasions for repeated explanations to be offered, somewhat to the frustration of other attendees, for whom such vocabulary was obvious.¹⁰⁷ The unfamiliarity with the terminology even extended to (prospective) NGO staff members. A Jordanian NGO programme manager told me that several Jordanians who had applied for jobs working on women's protection and empowerment, when asked in an interview what the term 'gender' means, would answer 'male and female.'¹⁰⁸

One of the most common formal translations of the term 'gender' is *al-naw' al-ijtima'i*, which literally translates to 'social type' or 'social kind.'¹⁰⁹ As Joseph Massad has pointed out, this term was one of the more accepted when 'gender' first entered Arabic, although was no more immediately intelligible to many Arabic speakers than 'gender' would have been to an English-speaking public before the proliferation of the term in the 1970s.¹¹⁰ Yet however un-common it might be, as a recognised formal translation of the term 'gender,' it was this term that became the subject of discussion with humanitarian work in Jordan, when the issue of how to translate GBV arose.

Some individuals and agency representatives argued that translating the term GBV as '*al-unf al-mabani 'ala al-naw' al-ijtima'i*,' that is, literally, 'violence based on gender,' would be both unhelpful and unnecessary. One non-Jordanian SGBV specialist working for a UN

¹⁰⁶ Fieldnotes, Amman, 10.03.2016.

¹⁰⁷ Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 31.01.2016.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with women's protection and empowerment programme manager.

¹⁰⁹ According to Joseph Massad, the Arabic word for now used for sex (*al-jins*) took on that meaning in the early twentieth century. But it already had, and maintained, its longstanding meanings of "type" and "kind," derived from the Greek "genos," thereby giving it similar connotations as the literal translation of the word being used for "gender." See Joseph Andoni Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago ; London : University of Chicago Press, 2007), 171–72.

¹¹⁰ Massad, *Islam in Liberalism*, 158–59.

agency, for example, had argued in meetings that since “no-one” among the attendees of their programmes would “have a clue” what the formal translation of GBV would mean, “violence against women” should be used instead (*al-‘unf didd al-mar’a*).¹¹¹ Another specialist reported to me that this was the subject of a contested “back and forth” in meetings, with UN Women being particularly vocal in arguing that ‘violence against women’ was the appropriate wording to use.¹¹²

Those advocating for the use of ‘violence against women’ typically did not prevail. In many promotional and campaign materials¹¹³ (although not all, see below), and in the implementation of sessions with refugees in the field, the full and formal translation of *‘al-‘unf al-mabani ‘ala al-naw’ al-ijtima’i*’ was used. Practitioners who I interviewed were all in favour of doing so, although often somewhat, or very, reluctantly. One said that the word felt so ridiculous that when he used it with groups he almost felt he should apologise.¹¹⁴ For another colleague who has to use the term regularly in her work, the term *al-naw’ al-ijtima’i* is necessary but “so *‘arabiyya fusha*,”¹¹⁵ that is, Modern Standard Arabic, rather than vernacular Arabic.

Practitioners who felt there was no better choice than to use the phrase would employ a variety of strategies to help make it intelligible. One commented that the pictures of families that were included on the promotional materials could help to communicate the meaning of the words, and that Syrians might understand the broad topic being addressed because the word violence was mentioned alongside the picture.¹¹⁶ Another said that they would typically introduce the topic by discussions of power and power relations, and then move from that to introduce the topic of gender and GBV.¹¹⁷ Others would break down the term into its constituent parts and introduce it bit by bit through discussion exercises.¹¹⁸ Even with these strategies, attempting to communicate the concept such that it stayed consistently in people’s minds was a challenge. As one

¹¹¹ Interview with SGBV specialist (1).

¹¹² Interview with Suhail Abualsameed.

¹¹³ E.g. see UNHCR et al., “Dalil Tatbiq Hamlat Amani - al-Urdunn [Implementation Kit for the Amani Campaign - Jordan],” 2014, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Suhail Abualsameed.

¹¹⁵ Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 21.12.2015.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Suhail Abualsameed.

¹¹⁷ Interview with women’s protection and empowerment programme manager.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Areej Sumreen.

practitioner told me, “after three or four days [of training], people come back and say, ‘*al-naw‘ al-ijtima‘i* [gender/social kind] - I’m an engineer’ or something like this.”¹¹⁹

Despite these difficulties, the term ‘gender’ did appear, very slowly, to be becoming slightly more widely known and understood among camp residents. When I returned to the camp with ARDD in the summer of 2016 to help conduct some of the next phase of their work ‘engaging men and boys,’ some of the younger participants were aware both of the term ‘*al-naw‘ al-ijtima‘i*,’ and of the differentiation between that term and ‘*al-jins*’ [sex]. Later on, I asked them how they knew the word, and they said that they had already done other workshops on the topic, with different NGOs in the camp.¹²⁰ New vocabulary was being introduced into the camp by humanitarian actors. As is discussed in more detail in the following Chapter, in contrast to ‘gender,’ the idea of men’s and women’s ‘roles,’ and of these changing in the camp, was very common among Syrian refugees, and this appeared to form part of people’s everyday vocabulary. This new vocabulary introduced by NGOs does not simply represent hitherto unknown synonyms for pre-existing vernacular words, but rather an introduction of new concepts into community life.

In my discussion of these questions of language so far, the focus has been on how to *translate* a concept, and what is possible and practical within the particular socio-linguistic context. However, at stake in these debates about translation, I argue, was an underlying debate about what GBV actually *is*. To what sets of practices is the signifier GBV referring, and what is understood to unite these practices such that they can be grouped in this way, and referred to by a single signifier? It became increasingly clear over the course of my fieldwork that there was a lack of consensus among humanitarian actors about the meaning of the term GBV. The discrepancies in people’s understandings of this concept would often appear in interviews, including, but not necessarily, in the aforementioned discussions about translation, but also in my participant observation and more casual interactions with colleagues.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Interview with Suhail Abualsameed.

¹²⁰ Conversation with Syrian men, Za‘tari, 02.08.2016.

¹²¹ Interviews with Suhail Abualsameed; Lina Darras; and SGBV specialist (1); fieldnotes, Amman, 29.09.2015, 17.05.2016 and Za‘tari, 24.11.2015.

For example, for some people working in the refugee response, GBV was simply synonymous with violence against women (and girls).¹²² If GBV is (and only is) violence against women (and girls), then the proposal to use ‘violence against women’ in Arabic is not necessarily an attempt to sacrifice complexity in the name of straightforward communication, but it is a proposed translation of two synonyms. In my experience, there was a strong correlation between those who understood the terms to be synonymous and those who were either in favour of translating GBV as ‘violence against women,’ or at least did not raise objections to it.¹²³ As is discussed in more detail below, the assumption that women, but not men, can be victims of GBV, has clear implications for programming, and whose needs are met.

Although, as stated above, GBV was typically translated on campaign materials as *‘al-‘unf al-mabani ‘ala al-naw‘ al-ijtima‘i,’* this alternative translation, to *‘al-‘unf didd al-mar’a’* (violence against women), was also occasionally evident. The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, mentioned above, is marked by numerous NGOs and government entities in Jordan. Described on UN Women’s website, as an ‘action to end violence against women and girls around the world,’¹²⁴ it is a campaign that takes place in over 150 countries annually between 25th November and 10th December.¹²⁵ The promotional materials released by a group of humanitarian agencies and NGOs for the 2015 campaign in Jordan included a notebook. Along the top of each page, against an orange banner to match the colour of 16 Days campaign was written, in English, ‘16 days of activism against gender-based violence,’ alongside the Arabic, which read ‘16 days of activism against violence against women’ (*sittat ‘ashara yawm min al-nashat didd al-‘unf didd al-mar’a’*).¹²⁶

For others, GBV was not necessarily targeted against women (and girls), but rather a term that appeared primarily to denote violence between men and women. Within this framework, the primary distinction between ‘violence against women’ and ‘GBV’ was

¹²² Conversation with NGO workers, Amman, 23.11.2015; interviews with Suhail Abualsameed; former NGO worker in Za‘tari; and SGBV specialist (1). I have written ‘and girls’ in parentheses here because, although ‘violence against women’ was the phrase that was most commonly used in these contexts, occasionally ‘violence against women and girls’ was used in its place.

¹²³ Interviews with SGBV specialist (1); and SGBV specialist (2); author observation, Amman, 23.11.2015.

¹²⁴ UN Women, “16 Days of Activism,” UN Women, 2016, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action/16-days-of-activism>.

¹²⁵ Center for Women’s Global Leadership, “A Life of Its Own: An Assessment of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign” (Rutgers: Center for Women’s Global Leadership, 2017).

¹²⁶ Fieldnotes, Amman, 09.02.2016.

that women could also perpetrate violence against men, for example in the home. This violence would be missed by the former understanding, but included in the latter. 'Gender' here appeared to be denoting not masculinities and femininities, nor gendered power imbalances that drive and facilitate violence, but rather in fact to be designating violence that happened between males and females.¹²⁷

Others still would use the term GBV to discuss violence that results from prevailing norms of masculinities and femininities, and the power imbalances and hierarchies within them. Such definitions recognise the possibility of males being victims/survivors of GBV, and that the notions of masculinity and femininity that feed that such violence are inextricably connected to the violence suffered by females.¹²⁸ For others, however, using the term GBV in this broader sense, was problematic. Indeed, for some, the expanded understanding of GBV represented the *loss* of a 'gender lens' of analysis, not an improved or more subtle gender analysis. According to one Western SGBV specialist, it was perceived as containing a lack of recognition that:

there is a specific type of violence which is also the most invisible kind because it's usually at home, by known people...you know you lose the focus completely, so that for me is not helpful.¹²⁹

This therefore represents another instance in which the 'global' does not necessarily enlighten the 'local.' One Jordanian practitioner told me of her surprise that there was a debate over whether men and boys could be victims/survivors of SGBV. The workshop participants with whom she worked, who have no background in gender or specialist training, could understand and accept this straightforwardly, so why could the experts not?¹³⁰

These varied understandings of GBV are similarly found in definitions of GBV offered by different agencies. According to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender-Based Violence Guidelines issued in 2015, "gender-based violence" is an:

umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. The term 'gender-based violence' is

¹²⁷ Interviews with women's protection and empowerment programme manager; and SGBV specialist (1); conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 20.09.2015.

¹²⁸ Interview with Suhail Abualsameed.

¹²⁹ Interview with SGBV specialist (1).

¹³⁰ Interview with Lina Darras.

primarily used to underscore the fact that structural, gender-based power differentials between males and females around the world place females at risk for multiple forms of violence.¹³¹

In contrast, in the same year UNHCR issued a revised definition of ‘sexual and gender-based violence.’ UNHCR’s new definition states that

[s]exual and gender-based violence refers to any act perpetrated against a person’s will based on gender norms and unequal power relationships. It encompasses threats of violence and coercion. It inflicts harm on women, girls, men and boys.¹³²

In a document that compares the two definitions, the attempts to broaden understandings of SGBV through this definition are made clear. UNHCR’s new definition aimed to “take a more inclusive approach,” to understand “SGBV through a dimension broader than, but inclusive of gender,” and to take a wider range of power differentials into account.¹³³ Therefore within definitional debates, translation debates, and programmatic debates, the ways in which men and boys could be understood as victims/survivors of SGBV was a particular point of controversy.

Can Men be Victims¹³⁴ of Gender-Based Violence

While men were strongly encouraged to be allies in the fight against SGBV, they were less often conceptualised, or dealt with, as (potential) victims of SGBV. As the rapidly growing academic literature on male victims of SGBV has demonstrated,¹³⁵ there is a relative absence of men-as-victims from discourses and practices surrounding SGBV, as

¹³¹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee, “Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing Risk, Promoting Resilience and Aiding Recovery,” 2015, 322, www.gbvguidelines.org.

¹³² UNHCR, “SGBV Prevention and Response: Training Package” (Geneva: UNHCR, 2016), 10.

¹³³ UNHCR, “Definitions - Sexual and Gender-Based Violence” (personal correspondence with UNHCR employee 18 May 2016, n.d.).

¹³⁴ Following Chloé Lewis, while I typically use the term survivor, which is understood to recognise the agency and resilience of survivors of SGBV, given that it is male victimhood, specifically, that appears for some to be conceptually challenging, here I use the term “victim.” See Chloé Lewis, “Systemic Silencing: Addressing Sexual Violence against Men and Boys in Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath,” in *Rethinking Peacekeeping, Gender Equality and Collective Security*, ed. Gina Heathcote and Dianne Otto (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 203.

¹³⁵ E.g. see Kirby and Henry, “Rethinking Masculinity and Practices of Violence in Conflict Settings”; Lewis, “Systemic Silencing: Addressing Sexual Violence against Men and Boys in Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath”; Mariz Tadros, “Challenging Reified Masculinities: Men as Survivors of Politically Motivated Sexual Assault in Egypt,” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 12, no. 3 (2016): 323–42; Heleen Touquet and Ellen Gorris, “Out of the Shadows? The Inclusion of Men and Boys in Conceptualisations of Wartime Sexual Violence,” *Reproductive Health Matters* 24, no. 47 (2016): 36–46.

well as little focus on sexual and gender minorities.¹³⁶ As far back as 2008, UNHCR, in its evaluation of its SGBV prevention and response efforts, explicitly recognised that sexual violence against men and boys is “neglected, under-reported and hardly addressed by any of UNHCR’s programmes.”¹³⁷ UNHCR also published a 2017 report, authored by Sarah Chynoweth, which documented the widespread nature of sexual violence against men and boys in the Syria crisis, and the urgent need for more efforts to support male survivors.¹³⁸ UNHCR’s increasing acknowledgement of the issue is indicative of a broader trend within humanitarian and UN agencies. Yet, as Chloé Lewis has argued, such “important discursive developments drawing attention to male-directed sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings...have yet to translate into definitive and consistent international policy and service delivery.”¹³⁹

Lewis’ insights, about both the discursive developments in this area and their lack of systematic incorporation into policy and service delivery, are very relevant for the context under discussion. SGBV documents in the Syria response have repeatedly recognised that “male survivors of SGBV may face barriers to accessing services.”¹⁴⁰ The report from the two-day workshop in Amman on engaging men and boys discussed above highlighted the “lack of service provider awareness of male SGBV survivors’ needs,” the “social stigmatization of male survivors who do seek assistance,” that programmes targeting women and girls often cannot accommodate male survivors nor meet their needs, and that awareness needs raising about the necessity of services for male victims of SGBV.¹⁴¹ Simultaneously, however, as noted in Chapter 2, at times the severity and even the legitimacy of male victims’ cases have been disputed, with humanitarian workers using a variety of narratives and excuses to delegitimise male victims’ testimonies and needs.¹⁴² Oxfam’s vulnerability scoring system similarly appears blind to the potential

¹³⁶ Myrtilinen and Daigle, “When Merely Existing Is a Risk”; Rothkegel et al., “Evaluation of UNHCR’s Efforts to Prevent and Respond to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Situations of Forced Displacement.”

¹³⁷ Rothkegel et al., “Evaluation of UNHCR’s Efforts to Prevent and Respond to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Situations of Forced Displacement,” 8.

¹³⁸ UNHCR, “We Keep It in Our Heart: Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys in the Syria Crisis” (Geneva: UNHCR, 2017).

¹³⁹ Lewis, “Systemic Silencing: Addressing Sexual Violence against Men and Boys in Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath,” 219.

¹⁴⁰ SGBV Sub-Working Group, “Workshop: Engaging Men and Boys in SGBV Programming: 13/14 May 2015, Kempinski Hotel, Amman,” 1; see also SGBV Sub-Working Group, “Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: Syrian Refugees in Jordan March 2014.”

¹⁴¹ SGBV Sub-Working Group, “Workshop: Engaging Men and Boys in SGBV Programming: 13/14 May 2015, Kempinski Hotel, Amman,” 2–3.

¹⁴² Interview with SGBV specialist (2).

needs of adult male victims of SGBV: it awards a woman at risk of SGBV ten ‘vulnerability points,’ and a child at risk of either child labour or SGBV ten ‘vulnerability points,’ but does not appear to conceive of the possibility that a man could be at risk of SGBV.¹⁴³

This reluctance to understand men as victims of SGBV can in part be understood through the definitional debates discussed above. For some working in the Syria response, GBV is understood to be synonymous with violence against women (and girls). By definition, then, men cannot be victims of GBV. Even where men are subjected to SGBV, it is often understood, or categorised, not as SGBV but as ‘torture.’¹⁴⁴ As one NGO employee told me, many men were tortured by the regime, or by other armed groups, “but this is not considered GBV because it is not related to the roles of women and men in society.”¹⁴⁵ In this instance, although the term ‘SGBV’ was the term typically used by humanitarian workers, and is UNHCR’s preferred term, sexual violence was being separated from gender-based violence. Men could plausibly be victims of the former, usually as a form of torture, but not the latter. Such narrow conceptions of what GBV is fail to recognise, as Miranda Alison has argued in her study of sexual violence in conflict, that “sexual violence against men and boys is no less a gendered issue than sexual violence against women and girls.”¹⁴⁶ Explanations of these forms of sexual violence, she explains, must “take into account the particularly of constructions of both gender *and* ethnicity (and/or sexuality, class, religion, caste, ‘race’, politics and so forth)” [emphasis in original].¹⁴⁷ For the purposes of the current discussion, the key point is that forms of SGBV against men and boys are, like SGBV against women and girls, informed by prevailing conceptions of masculinities and femininities and gendered (and other) relations of power.

To understand, or presume that, SGBV against men as a form of ‘torture,’ and to assume that it was connected to the Syrian regime or armed rebel groups, locates men’s experiences of SGBV within the realm of the public sphere, within the realm of politics.

¹⁴³ Oxford Jordan, “Oxfam Jordan - Final Vulnerability Scoring System for Syrian Refugee Families,” n.d., <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

¹⁴⁴ R. Charli Carpenter, “Recognizing Gender-Based Violence Against Civilian Men and Boys in Conflict Situations,” *Security Dialogue* 37, no. 1 (2006): 83–103; Tadros, “Challenging Reified Masculinities.”

¹⁴⁵ Interview with women’s protection and empowerment programme manager.

¹⁴⁶ Miranda H. Alison, “Wartime Sexual Violence: Women’s Human Rights and Questions of Masculinity,” *Review of International Studies* 33, no. 1 (2007): 90.

¹⁴⁷ Alison, 90.

This distinction must be problematised. Not only does it locate men's gendered needs as somehow outside of the realm of humanitarian action, but it depoliticises women's experiences of violence. While I am not claiming that there are no distinctions to be drawn between, for example, sexual violence in regime prisons, and sexual violence between family members in the home, the binary between them is detrimental to ensuring that services are provided to all who need them, and problematic from a feminist perspective. The personal is political, but the political can also be deeply personal.

The discussion of men as victims of SGBV has further highlighted the difficulties that humanitarian actors have in understanding refugee men as 'vulnerable' or as the object of 'gender work' or as in need of 'empowerment.' As in the discussions of psychosocial support in Chapter 4, many humanitarian actors believed that Syrian men would not come forward and identify themselves as SGBV survivors, or be willing to discuss their experiences.¹⁴⁸ This has been argued in other contexts too, although the evidence is often anecdotal.¹⁴⁹ Again, this idea must be placed in the context of humanitarian actors' actions towards refugee men. If service providers do not, for example, provide enough male counsellors or specialist staff, or safe spaces for men within the community, or discuss SGBV only at spaces where women are offered services, then many men who are victims of SGBV are much less likely or able to come forward.¹⁵⁰

Conclusion

In contrast to much of the material presented in this thesis, this chapter has focused on an area, indeed, *the* area, in which there has been considerable enthusiasm for working with Syrian men in the context of the refugee response. Analysing the ways in which they have been incorporated into SGBV prevention work has re-affirmed the central arguments of this thesis. Despite the focus on SGBV work with men, they are not, or at least not readily, understood as 'vulnerable,' or as victims. Although men may now have a specific and narrow role in the achievement of humanitarian objectives, they are not, in and of themselves, the object of those objectives.

¹⁴⁸ Interviews with Ruba Abu Taleb; Areej Sumreen; and SGBV specialist (2).

¹⁴⁹ Allsopp, "Agent, Victim, Soldier, Son: Intersecting Masculinities in the European 'Refugee Crisis,'" 157.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with women's protection and empowerment programme manager.

They are, however, understood as a new means through which humanitarian actors can achieve their pre-defined goals. In contrast to other areas of humanitarian work, men appear potentially of use to those holding power over them. As this chapter has documented, however, the attempts to take advantage of this usefulness has been perceived to be hampered by the Arabic cultural and linguistic context in which the work is taking place. That Syrian men are deemed not sufficiently emotionally open to take part in this work contrasts with orientalist stereotypes, yet reveals how Syrian men continue to be hypermasculinised by external actors. Humanitarianism's 'global' standards therefore collide with the 'local' context of Za'tari. While the former takes precedence within humanitarian work, these 'global' standards do not, as humanitarians assume, necessarily act to promote progressive norms or understandings of gender.

The analysis presented in this chapter has therefore brought out the instrumentality of humanitarian interactions with men in the course of SGBV prevention work. As an active contributor to work that attempts to open up conversations with men and boys about gender equality in the UK, I remain convinced of this work's worth and value; indeed, its necessity. Yet that this instrumental work, in the context of a humanitarian response, takes a central place in the humanitarian sector's relationships with refugee men is, I argue, deeply troubling. Can men be recognised, within humanitarianism, as people to be worked with and supported in and of their own right, without that engendering a (perceived) disloyalty to those who typically occupy humanitarians' attention?¹⁵¹ Can their lives and priorities be incorporated within humanitarian work? Central among those priorities, in the context of Za'tari, was obtaining paid work – and it is this topic to which this thesis turns next.

¹⁵¹ See Carpenter, "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence Against Civilian Men and Boys in Conflict Situations."

Chapter 6: Gender and (Cash for) Work, Inside and Outside of Za'tari

The possibility of obtaining paid work was central to men's demands of humanitarian authorities in Za'tari. Yet the work available from NGOs was intermittent, precarious, and often poorly paid. Earning income was of crucial importance for Syrian families, yet NGOs were providing work as a way of implementing their 'service provision,' almost as if it were a favour. As one Syrian man explained to me, he will sometimes receive a telephone call one morning and be told that his shift starts today. Many worry that were they to decline work on that morning, they will not receive a chance again. Their financial situation often gives them no realistic option but to accept work whenever it is offered, yet the remuneration is still entirely inadequate to meet their needs. This same man explained that once he got this telephone call his work would often continue for a week, but then he wouldn't receive any more work for two months. The 25 JOD (approximately \$35) he would receive from this every two months was 10 JOD less than the monthly cost of his wife's medication.¹

For many men in Za'tari, the ability to be, or to perform the role of, a breadwinner, was a key element in the construction of masculinities. Within the camp, livelihood opportunities were provided by NGOs through a scheme known as 'Cash for Work' (CfW), through which Syrian refugees are paid to 'volunteer' for NGOs, in roles such as cleaners, security guards, office assistants, and vocational trainers. In order to analyse this scheme, I introduce this chapter by exploring what I term 'breadwinner masculinities,' and then by situating CfW within broader discussions about work, aid, and neoliberalism. In the subsequent exploration of CfW and then of work opportunities outside Za'tari that were available to camp residents, I highlight the contestations that surrounded gender, 'vulnerability,' and the allocation of work, and the challenges these contestations presented for both Syrians and humanitarian actors. They reveal, I argue, the prioritisation of humanitarian goals, logics and knowledge, the discomfort with which some humanitarians confront their hierarchical relationships with refugees in contexts of work, and the ways in which encampment facilitates humanitarian actors' ability to exercise power over the refugee population.

¹ Interview with married Syrian man living in Za'tari (1), Za'tari, 27.07.2016.

Breadwinner Masculinities

Work, and its shortage, had a gendered significance for many refugee men in the camp. In particular, the inability of many men to provide the primary income, or at very least an income, for their family was a source of anger and resentment: at humanitarian agencies and NGOs for not providing work, at Jordanian authorities for their restrictions on movement, and at humanitarian authorities for their complicity in that system.² Many refugees, who each receive only 20 JOD (approximately \$28) per person per month in aid,³ have been relying on ever-depleting savings they brought from Syria, or income from family members living outside of the camp,⁴ making the ability to earn income even more important. The importance of work however, for many men in Za'tari, was not only related to relief of economic hardship. It also brought psychological relief, because of the extreme boredom that many men faced in the camp, and because it allowed men to fulfil gendered expectations and to perform the masculinised role of provider for the family.⁵

The importance of work for the enactment and performance of masculinities, and the presumption that a man should play the role of breadwinner,⁶ has been noted by scholarship from a range of contexts, including from Syria,⁷ Syrian migrant workers in Lebanon,⁸ Syrian men in Egypt,⁹ and other contexts in the Middle East. This is not always the prevailing gendered expectation, and in some communities and contexts in the Middle East women are seen as equal breadwinners,¹⁰ and women can be embodiments and performers of masculinities.¹¹ But in Za'tari the vast majority of the men I encountered understood themselves to be responsible, at least primarily, for earning an income for the family. As Aitemad Muhanna has argued in the context of Gaza, for many men work is fundamentally associated with their value and self-worth, and without it they feel that they can have little or nothing to offer the family.

² Author observation and conversations with Syrian men, Za'tari, 27.10.2015, 03.11.2015 and 17.11.2015.

³ UNHCR, "Zaatari Refugee Camp: Factsheet April 2015," 2015.

⁴ Norwegian Refugee Council, "Syrian Refugees Youth Needs Assessment Study."

⁵ ARDD, "ARDD's Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys," 11.

⁶ Connell, "Margin Becoming Centre."

⁷ Khattab and Myrntinen, "Most of the Men Want to Leave"; Sara Lei Sparre, "Educated Women in Syria: Servants of the State, or Nurturers of the Family?," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 17, no. 1 (2008): 3–20.

⁸ John T. Chalcraft, *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon* (Stanford, CA: London: Stanford University Press, 2009), 90.

⁹ Suerbaum, "Defining the Other to Masculinize Oneself."

¹⁰ Ababneh, "Troubling the Political"; Hossein Adibi, "Sociology of Masculinity in the Middle East," 2006, <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/6069>.

¹¹ Amar, "Middle East Masculinity Studies"; Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*.

The available data suggests that the prevailing expectation within Za‘tari of a male breadwinner is a continuation of practices in much of rural Syria before the conflict. In rural areas, from which the vast majority of Za‘tari residents come, women would often work in agriculture and perform extensive unpaid domestic labour. This agricultural work was mostly unpaid,¹² although the large-scale migration of men to find work outside of rural areas, for example in Aleppo and Idlib in northern Syria, had resulted in an increasing number of women joining the paid agricultural labour force.¹³ In rural areas, men were typically expected, by themselves and others, to bear the primary responsibility for supporting the family financially through paid work in the labour market.¹⁴ Therefore women’s participation in paid and unpaid labour markets can coexist with the expectation of a male breadwinner, and that expectation can “[reinforce] patriarchal structures and normative relations of gender domination by prioritizing the man’s role as provider.”¹⁵

The expectation of a male breadwinner can furthermore co-exist with economic circumstances that render it an impossible ideal to achieve, at least for very large segments of the population.¹⁶ Indeed, it can be understood as a middle-class model of a family, with an idealised vision of a woman at home (or at least who does not *have* to work), because a man provides sufficient income for the whole family.¹⁷ Many families cannot embody this classed ideal even in ‘ordinary’ circumstances. But scholarship from contexts of conflict, exile, and humanitarian crisis often emphasises how central the breakdown of the ‘male breadwinner model’ is to gendered experiences of exile, as relatively fewer men find (decent) work, and more women enter the paid labour market.¹⁸

¹² Sanja Kelly and Julia Breslin, *Women’s Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Progress Amid Resistance* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 473.

¹³ Malika Abdelali-Martini et al., “Towards a Feminization of Agricultural Labour in Northwest Syria,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 30, no. 2 (2003): 71–94.

¹⁴ Khattab and Myrntinen, “Most of the Men Want to Leave.”

¹⁵ Achilli, “Becoming a Man in Al-Wihdat,” 273.

¹⁶ Connell, “Margin Becoming Centre”; see also Nancy Lindisfarne and Jonathan Neale, “Masculinities and the Lived Experience of Neoliberalism,” in *Masculinities Under Neoliberalism*, ed. Andrea Cornwall, Frank G. Karioris, and Nancy Lindisfarne (London: Zed Books, 2016), 29–50.

¹⁷ Suerbaum, “Defining the Other to Masculinize Oneself,” 677.

¹⁸ For discussion of these issues in the context of Sudanese exile in Cairo, see Jane Kani Edward, *Sudanese Women Refugees: Transformations and Future Imaginings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Anita Fabos, “Brothers’ or Others? Propriety and Gender for Muslim Arab Sudanese in Egypt” (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); for Palestine, see Lisa Taraki, *Living Palestine: Family Survival, Resistance, and Mobility under Occupation* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2006); for Gaza, see Muhanna, *Agency and Gender in Gaza*; for IDPs in Georgia, see Kabachnik et al., “Traumatic Masculinities.”

El-Bushra and Gardner's research on Somali men characterised the collapse of the Somali state, "and hence employment," as a process that, for many men "wiped out status, self-respect, security, and income...[t]his was experienced as an existential catastrophe for many men."¹⁹ Within their multi-sited study, El-Bushra and Gardner found that Somali refugee men living under encampment, in Dadaab in Kenya, were particularly affected by these dynamics, and described "the hopelessness they felt at the loss of their roles [and] the restrictions they face under Kenyan encampment policy."²⁰ This combination of restricted encampment, widespread loss of earning opportunities, and the hopelessness many men faced, was replicated in Za'tari.

This pattern was recognised by some NGO workers in the camp, and by refugees themselves. As one Jordanian former Za'tari worker explained, "within the culture of this region, men are the main income generating part of the family." Not being able to perform this role, he claimed, "has a drastic psychological impact on the head of household, who is the man."²¹ In this, and the narratives of other NGO workers, this psychological impact was compounded by a resultant collapsing self-esteem, and by social isolation because of a lack of activity.²² These effects on men were also understood to be some of the factors behind the increased levels of domestic violence within the camp.²³ Recognising the various impacts that the lack of work was having on their male family members, Syrian women would regularly approach NGO workers to ask if they could find work for their husbands.²⁴ In some cases, women who were working said they would be happy for their salary to be split in two, if it meant that their husband could also have a job.²⁵ Given that such a proposal would not increase the amount of money being brought into the family, this example demonstrates that working is, at least for some men, important not only because of the income it brings into the family, but because of the psychological effects of taking part in paid work, and activity that they deem 'productive.'

¹⁹ El-Bushra and Gardner, "The Impact of War on Somali Men," 450.

²⁰ El-Bushra and Gardner, 451.

²¹ Interview with former employee of international organisation in Za'tari.

²² Interviews with NGO worker in Za'tari; former employee of international organisation in Za'tari; and former UNHCR worker in Za'tari; conversation with NGO workers, Za'tari, 03.11.2015; see also Women's Refugee Commission, "Unpacking Gender."

²³ See UN Women, "Restoring Dignity and Building Resilience."

²⁴ Interview with NGO worker in Za'tari.

²⁵ Interview with INGO programme manager in Za'tari (1).

This also came across strongly in my conversations with refugee men in the camp, both in the work undertaken with ARDD, and in other interviews I conducted. The shortage of work was one of, and often the, primary reason that participants in our workshops would provide when they discussed why they experienced stress and psychological difficulties in the camp. One noted that while living with stress was not a new phenomenon for them, the fact that there had been work in Syria, but not in Za'tari, represented a radical change in their ability to cope with stress. Another, reflecting on the changes in his personal life since coming to Za'tari, argued that he did not have a 'presence' in the family or community anymore, because he was not working.²⁶

Although at times the issue of work would be discussed by Syrian men as if it were the primary issue of concern for all men in the camp, the importance of work to different groups of men depended, in part, on their positionalities and statuses. Anger at the lack of work opportunities appeared to be particularly felt by older generations of men, many of whom had become accustomed to working to provide for their families prior to the conflict in Syria. Younger men, by contrast, were often less likely to be under as much pressure to provide for their families, or at least to be the main provider for their families, and more likely to be focused on trying to find opportunities to continue their education.²⁷ Many of these younger men were preoccupied by the disruption that the conflict had caused to their expected trajectory from education to work, marriage, and family life, and many were thus focused on education in order to try to build a better future.²⁸

Differing relationships to work were also found along class lines, with many professionally skilled and highly educated men lamenting the kinds of low-skilled work typically available in the camp, and expressing an unwillingness to take such positions.²⁹ By contrast, many other Syrian men, the clear majority in my experience, desired any form of work to help them generate income. As a skills study by NRC noted, the camp has a "large number of individuals able and willing to take any work opportunity," which

²⁶ ARDD, "ARDD's Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys," 8, 11.

²⁷ ARDD, "ARDD's Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys." This perception was shared by an NGO worker with extensive experience in the camp: interview with NGO worker in Za'tari; conversation with young Syrian man, Za'tari, 05.12.2015.

²⁸ Conversations with Syrian men, Za'tari, 05.12.2015; and with NGO workers, Amman, 15.12.2015 and 16.12.2015.

²⁹ ARDD, "ARDD's Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys."

contributed to the high supply of labour within the camp.³⁰ Many men came to apply for job vacancies without knowing what work was available, and some would ask me personally if I might be able to find them work with the NGO I worked with, or any other NGO I might have connections with. Some of the men who asked me this were well acquainted to me, others I was meeting was the first time. What exactly that work would entail did not seem important to them.³¹

These varied relationships to work, and to different kinds of work, mean that while earning an income was central to the construction of masculinities for many men in the camp, I do not attribute a 'hegemonic' status to breadwinner masculinities.³² As critical scholarship on masculinities has demonstrated, and as the above discussion again confirms, even within a context that can be understood as 'local,' relatively homogenous, and with identifiable boundaries, masculinities will be plural, and will not necessarily have a structure where there is one 'hegemonic' masculinity across the category of 'men,' who are always internally differentiated by other axes.³³

Work, Aid, and Neoliberalism

Given this importance of work for the construction of masculinities, it is unsurprising that finding work opportunities was a central preoccupation for many men. They could try to find paid employment outside of the camp, to find work in the camp market, or could find work through the CfW scheme. Because of camp refugees' restricted access to the wider Jordanian labour market, which is discussed later in this chapter, the limitations that have been placed on the informal market, and the fact that most jobs in the market went to the family members of stall-holders,³⁴ CfW opportunities were highly sought after by Syrians.³⁵

³⁰ Norwegian Refugee Council, "Syrian Refugees Youth Needs Assessment Study."

³¹ Author observation and conversations with Syrian men, Za'tari, 09.02.2016

³² See Connell, *Masculinities*; Connell and Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity."

³³ C. Beasley, "Rethinking Hegemonic Masculinity in a Globalizing World," *Men and Masculinities* 11, no. 1 (2008): 86–103; Cornwall and Lindisfarne, "Dislocating Masculinity: Gender, Power and Anthropology."

³⁴ See Chapter 7.

³⁵ Author observation and conversations with Syrians, Za'tari, 13.10.2015 and 03.11.2015, 09.02.2016 and 27.07.2016.

Along with other cash-based interventions (as opposed to the provision of food or other material resources), CfW is increasingly used in humanitarian settings.³⁶ There is only a very thin academic literature on the use of CfW in humanitarian contexts,³⁷ and “little documented experience with the use of cash in camps.”³⁸ Lesley Adams has analysed the use of CfW in the aftermath of the tsunami in Sri Lanka.³⁹ Her report, written for the Humanitarian Policy Group of the Overseas Development Institute, is broadly positive about, and supportive of, the use of CfW and cash-based interventions more generally. Cash-based interventions allow households “to allocate funds for a diverse range of needs – needs which agencies would have been hard-pressed to second guess,” and CfW projects assisted with participants’ “psycho-social recovery and the rehabilitation of communities.”⁴⁰ She does note, however, that many CfW programmes failed to adequately take into account the needs of households that were ‘labour-poor’ due to the age, disabilities, illnesses, and child-care responsibilities of household members.⁴¹

Tobin and Campbell, in one of the few academic discussions of CfW in Za‘tari, describe the programme as “a new formation of neoliberal governance in humanitarian crises,” because it “place[s] responsibility for the development of the individual on the shoulders of the individual themselves.”⁴² I argue, however, that this designation is not sufficiently nuanced to capture the dynamics of CfW in Za‘tari, or the broader contexts in which CfW is situated. The complexity of CfW is reflected in the fact that cash-based interventions do appear to be a progressive change relative to mechanisms of providing humanitarian aid that rely on providing food or material goods, which are much less fungible than cash. The use of cash allows Syrians (and Cash Workers in other contexts)⁴³ to make their own spending and consumption choices, and to respond to the specific needs and circumstances of their own families. The transfer of responsibilities is therefore simultaneously a transfer of decision-making power to Syrian Cash Workers.

³⁶ Paul Harvey, “Cash-Based Responses in Emergencies” (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2007); see also Jacobsen and Sandvik, “UNHCR and the Pursuit of International Protection.”

³⁷ See Lesley Adams, “Learning from Cash Responses to the Tsunami: Final Report” (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2007); Harvey, “Cash-Based Responses in Emergencies”; Hanna Mattinen and Kate Ogden, “Cash-Based Interventions: Lessons from Southern Somalia,” *Disasters* 30, no. 3 (2006): 297–315; Tobin and Campbell, “NGO Governance.”

³⁸ Harvey, “Cash-Based Responses in Emergencies,” 18.

³⁹ E.g. see Adams, “Learning from Cash Responses to the Tsunami”; Harvey, “Cash-Based Responses in Emergencies.”

⁴⁰ Adams, “Learning from Cash Responses to the Tsunami,” 4.

⁴¹ Adams, 5.

⁴² See Tobin and Campbell, “NGO Governance.”

⁴³ Adams, “Learning from Cash Responses to the Tsunami.”

As noted above in the discussion of masculinities in the camp, the opportunity to be responsible for one's own, and one's family's, welfare, is highly in demand among Syrian men. Therefore while the attempts to use CfW as a form of humanitarian intervention might encourage Syrians to work in order to maintain or improve their standard of living (however low it might remain in the camp), and that can be conceived of as an attempt to create neoliberal self-reliant subjectivities,⁴⁴ the opportunity to work is highly valued by Syrians. To the extent that a Cash Worker can be understood as a neoliberal subject position, it intersects, in the case of many refugees in Za'tari, with a gendered subject position that desires the ability to work, and finds deep fulfilment and well-being in doing so. In the words of one former resident of Za'tari, "I want to work. I want to be responsible."⁴⁵ This evidence from Za'tari falls into a much wider body of literature that demonstrates that refugees do not want to be dependent on 'handouts' from aid agencies, but rather want the opportunity to be able to work and provide for their families.⁴⁶

On the other hand, CfW can be understood within a broader context of the neoliberalisation of both welfare systems and work, in which the recipients of welfare and aid are obliged to work, for low or no wages, in order to demonstrate that they deserve welfare. Poverty is thereby conceptualised more as an individual failing, than a structural condition.⁴⁷ Yet the work that is provided by CfW, reflecting trends across a range of contexts subject to neoliberalisation, is deeply precarious. The almost \$1 million spent each month in the camp on CfW can improve the situation of the individuals and families who are able to partake in it.⁴⁸ But it does not, for the vast majority of Cash Workers, create financial stability or predictability. As in the case of 'zero-hours' contracts, which have gained prominence in debates about precarity in other contexts, you don't know how much work you will get, or when you will get it, and when you do,

⁴⁴ Mayssoun Sukarieh, "On Class, Culture, and the Creation of the Neoliberal Subject: The Case of Jordan," *Anthropological Quarterly* 89, no. 4 (2016): 1201–25.

⁴⁵ Interview with married Syrian man living in host community (5), Irbid Governorate, April 2016.

⁴⁶ For the key text in this body of literature, see Gaim Kibreab, "The Myth of Dependency among Camp Refugees in Somalia 1979–1989," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 6, no. 4 (1993): 321–49.

⁴⁷ Knut Halvorsen, "Symbolic Purposes and Factual Consequences of the Concepts 'Self-Reliance' and 'Dependency' in Contemporary Discourses on Welfare," *Scandinavian Journal of Social Welfare* 7, no. 1 (1998): 56–64.

⁴⁸ E.g. see BNL Working Group, "Cash for Work in Zaatari Camp February 2017," 2017, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

it is rarely well paid.⁴⁹ Under such circumstances, when it is unknown when your next work opportunity might come, the reasons for Syrians' prioritisation of work over other activities such as NGO programmes become even clearer.⁵⁰

The precarious nature of work available to Syrians within Za'tari largely mirrors the kinds of work available to Syrians living elsewhere in Jordan, although outside of refugee camps Syrians have often obtained work at the risk of arrest, forced encampment, or deportation.⁵¹ For the first few years after 2011, Jordan refused to contemplate allowing Syrians access to the formal labour market, yet since the opening of Za'tari in summer 2012 it has "tolerated" the use of CfW schemes in camps, which have operated "in a legal grey zone."⁵² In contrast to many CfW interventions,⁵³ SOPs for CfW in Za'tari note that the "incentive rates are set in consideration of the local labour/host community market rates and in no way meant to disrupt the local labor [sic] market/trends in the host community."⁵⁴ This framing betrays a broader concern on the part of the GoJ that Syrian refugees may be 'competing' with Jordanian workers, although the evidence that this has been taking place is limited, and Syrians appear to have been overwhelmingly 'competing' with other non-Jordanians.⁵⁵

Not everyone working in the camp falls under these regimes of precarity, however. No such restrictions appear to be placed on the remuneration of non-Jordanian humanitarian staff, whose salaries are typically much higher than their 'local' Jordanian counterparts.⁵⁶ Furthermore, as one of my Syrian interlocutors in Za'tari noted, there have been times when limits or cuts to CfW opportunities have been justified to Syrians on the grounds of limited funds. Are cuts to the salaries of Jordanian or international humanitarian workers contemplated, he asked, in order to increase the opportunities for Syrians, who earn a small fraction of a humanitarian salary?⁵⁷ Given that staff salaries and programme

⁴⁹ See Guy Standing, *A Precariat Charter: From Denizens to Citizens* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 165–70.

⁵⁰ See Chapter 4.

⁵¹ ILO, "Work Permits and Employment of Syrian Refugees in Jordan," 64.

⁵² Livelihood Working Group, "Livelihood Working Group. Amman, Jordan 28.07.2016," July 28, 2016, 3, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

⁵³ Adams, "Learning from Cash Responses to the Tsunami: Final Report," 27.

⁵⁴ UNHCR, "Cash For Work - Standard Operating Procedures: Zaatari Camp," 3.

⁵⁵ ILO and Fafo, "Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Jordanian Labour Market."

⁵⁶ For discussion of these issues, see Ishbel McWha-Hermann and Stuart C. Carr, "Mind the Gap in Local and International Aid Workers' Salaries," *The Conversation*, April 18, 2016, <http://theconversation.com/mind-the-gap-in-local-and-international-aid-workers-salaries-47273>. Interview with former employee of international organization in Za'tari.

⁵⁷ Interview with married Syrian man living in Za'tari (3).

expenses appear in different budget lines for humanitarian agencies, the same trade-off may not have even occurred to them.⁵⁸

‘Cash for Work’ in Za‘tari

The vignette above demonstrates one of the many gulfs in perceptions and understandings of CfW between humanitarian actors and Syrian refugees, and how humanitarian logics and goals are prioritised over those of Syrians themselves. These contestations extend to the very nature of what CfW is. For humanitarian actors, CfW is a mechanism for service delivery that has been prioritised in light of the “lack of livelihood opportunities in Zaatari camp.”⁵⁹ However, while it provides a crucial income for refugees, as a report from NRC makes clear:

these opportunities are not in any way a welfare program meant to solve the income concern for the refugees; they are jobs required by organisations to fulfill their role in the camp.⁶⁰

Although they consider it their responsibility to maintain a basic standard of living for Syrians in Za‘tari, humanitarian actors do not appear to think it is their obligation to provide work for Syrians in the camp, despite the restrictions on Syrians accessing work outside of the camp. In any case, as I was told, even working with refugees who requested work, rather than aid or assistance, was experienced by humanitarian workers as unusual.⁶¹

Syrian refugees, on the other hand, would discuss work, and its shortage, very differently. In my own discussions with Syrian refugees on the issue of work, and in the interactions between Syrians and humanitarian workers that I witnessed, Syrians would discuss work opportunities as if humanitarian actors had a responsibility to provide them, at least for one person in each family. Given the restrictions on their freedom of movement, which made it difficult for Syrians to leave the camp, many Syrians experienced and discussed Za‘tari as a prison.⁶² They therefore placed the obligation for the provision of the means of a basic, dignified life onto those enforcing and complicit in their imprisonment.

⁵⁸ I am grateful to Katharina Lenner for sharing this observation with me when reviewing this chapter.

⁵⁹ BNL Working Group, “Cash for Work in Zaatari Camp February 2017.”

⁶⁰ Norwegian Refugee Council, “Syrian Refugees Youth Needs Assessment Study,” 17.; Interview with INGO programme manager in Za‘tari (1).

⁶¹ Conversation with humanitarian and NGO workers, Amman, 18.12.2015.

⁶² Fieldnotes, Za‘tari, 05.12.2015 and 15.12.2015; interview with former NGO worker in Za‘tari.

Reflecting these differing understandings of CfW were ongoing tensions about whether a CfW position constituted a job. For humanitarian actor, Cash Workers are not deemed employees, who would be either Jordanian or ‘international,’ they are rather volunteers “who are remunerated [sic] for supporting partner programming in the camp.”⁶³ In line with this designation, aid workers will often use the term ‘volunteers’ to refer to Syrians who are doing CfW.⁶⁴ Bemused by the incongruity of this terminology, I would sometimes, in casual conversations with NGO employees, joke that both they and I “get cash for work too.” Sometimes my interlocutors would laugh, recognising the point being made; at other times they would correct me, and reiterate the distinctions between employment and CfW, because I seemed not to have understood it.⁶⁵ When talking to Syrians about their participation in CfW, the language is markedly different. They are not volunteering, they are working. Many Syrians spoke with pride about the work they do, and the names of international organisations with which they are associated. One Cash Worker for IRC spoke to me about the origins of the organisation in post-World War II Europe and, upon finding out I was British, asked if I was aware that the IRC was headed by David Miliband, the former Foreign Secretary.⁶⁶

The first and most fundamental problem with CfW, from the perspective of Syrian refugees in the camp, was that the number of CfW opportunities provided did not even come close to the level they wanted there to be, or to the level that they understood was required for the wellbeing of the community.⁶⁷ The CfW monthly factsheets produced by the Basic Needs and Livelihoods (BNL) Working Group demonstrate that typically fewer than one in five adults in the camp holds a CfW position. On average, a little under thirty percent of ‘cases,’ i.e. family units as they are registered with UNHCR, had someone holding a CfW position in any one month.⁶⁸

The level of remuneration for these positions depends on the categorisation of the skill level involved. CfW opportunities are classed as either semi-skilled, skilled, highly skilled, piecemeal or technical. Syrians are paid by the particular humanitarian agency or NGO

⁶³ BNL Working Group, “Cash for Work in Zaatar Camp February 2017.”

⁶⁴ E.g. Interviews with NGO worker in Za‘tari; and former NGO worker in Za‘tari.

⁶⁵ Meeting at NGO, Amman, 12.11.2015.

⁶⁶ Conversation with Syrian man, Za‘tari, 24.11.2015 and 02.08.2016.

⁶⁷ Norwegian Refugee Council, “Syrian Refugees Youth Needs Assessment Study.”

⁶⁸ These figures are based on my analysis of the factsheets that were available on UNHCR’s Syrian Regional Refugee Response Inter-Agency Information Sharing Portal in August 2017. At that time, factsheets were available for May 2016-February 2017, and for April 2017.

running the project. Or, in humanitarian terminology, their volunteering is incentivised by payments of between 1 and 2.5 JOD per hour (approximately \$1.4 – \$3.5).⁶⁹ The vast majority of positions available under the auspices of CfW, for example over two-thirds in November 2016, were for cleaning either the camp itself or NGO offices within it. Following cleaning, the largest number of positions (at 11%) were security guards, who would typically provide security at NGO compounds, schools, and other facilities in the camp. These Cash Workers would typically guard the gates, let vehicles in and out, and help with the maintenance of the centre. ‘Piecemeal work’ is compensated at varied, but similar, levels and Cash Workers are paid based on the task completed, for example, per metre-cubed of ditch dug. In November 2016, when a large CfW study was completed, 84% of Cash Workers overall, and 96% of those in positions lasting for one month or less, earned the lowest rate available, of 1 JOD per hour.⁷⁰

Because the opportunities were so highly valued, they were vastly oversubscribed, and Syrians would question, and be suspicious of, the recruitment processes that were used to select ‘volunteers.’⁷¹ In particular, in focus group discussions that humanitarian agencies held with the Syrian community in 2015, the lack of a clear advertising process for CfW opportunities emerged as a widespread source of frustration.⁷² In the Cash for Work Standard Operating Procedures that were created, and for which the focus group discussions were conducted, this is addressed by the statement that

ALL NGOs shall publicly inform refugee community and NGO actors/UN agencies through brochures, notice boards, social media and community centers, [of] the available opportunities, eligibility criteria, target groups and selection process” [emphasis in original].⁷³

In line with this approach, one INGO employee said he felt that “in the name of fairness,” when recruiting for new positions he had to try to make sure that everyone in the camp was aware of the possible opportunity.⁷⁴ Even if humanitarian actors did conceptualise CfW as a form of ‘service delivery,’ some were clearly nonetheless sensitive

⁶⁹ UNHCR, “Cash For Work - Standard Operating Procedures: Zaatari Camp,” 2–3.

⁷⁰ REACH, “Cash for Work (CfW) Assessment in Zaatari Camp: Camp Wide,” November 2016, 1, http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/unhcr-reach_jor_factsheet_cash_for_work_assessment_campwide_november_2016.pdf.

⁷¹ Conversation with Syrian men, Za’tari, 03.11.2015.

⁷² BNL Working Group, “Za’atari Cash for Work - Focus Group Discussions Community Feedback on 2015 CFW Guidelines,” 2015, 1, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

⁷³ UNHCR, “Cash For Work - Standard Operating Procedures: Zaatari Camp,” 1.

⁷⁴ Conversation with INGO programme manager, Za’tari, 13.10.2015.

to the importance CfW held for Syrians, and the attendant concerns about the equity of its distribution.

Recruiting new ‘volunteers’ for CfW was therefore a significant undertaking. When new vacancies were advertised, hundreds or even thousands of camp residents would apply. One INGO, for example, received around 2,000 applications for 28 positions. Because many Syrians in the camp lack their official documents and accreditations, filtering candidates based solely on their paper applications became challenging, necessitating, to ensure the process was fair, over 700 interviews.⁷⁵ Multiple panels of interviewers spent almost two working weeks conducting the interviews. As one Jordanian employee from a different agency commented to me, signalling to the long queue developing outside her office, “there is an opportunity for employment and the whole camp comes,” before breaking into laughter, seemingly overwhelmed by the volume of applications she would have to process.⁷⁶

Because of the shortages of CfW, a rotation system had been put in place. CfW that fell into the different skill levels outlined above was regulated differently in terms of rotation. NGOs had to rotate semi-skilled and piecemeal positions on either a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis, although each organisation could decide which of these options to choose.⁷⁷ Guards and cleaners were exempted from these regulations regarding rotation, and some organisations chose to employ them for a period of 3 months at a time.⁷⁸ More skilled positions were often not subject to rotation, because there were fewer Syrians who could fulfil those roles, meaning some better educated Syrians were able to hold positions for much longer. Although the proportion of opportunities that are subject to rotation varies across time, on average around 60 percent are rotational, and 40 percent fixed. Fixed positions, however, are not the same as permanent positions, fixed positions are merely held by one individual for their duration, which can be very short.⁷⁹ REACH’s assessment of the implementation of CfW, however, suggested that in many cases there

⁷⁵ Fieldnotes, Za’tari, 13.10.2015 and 09.02.2016; interview with INGO programme manager in Za’tari (1).

⁷⁶ Conversation with humanitarian worker, Za’tari, 09.02.2016.

⁷⁷ UNHCR, “Cash For Work - Standard Operating Procedures: Zaatari Camp,” 3.

⁷⁸ Interview with INGO programme manager in Za’tari (1).

⁷⁹ See footnote 69 above.

is a lack of compliance with this rotation system, with some refugees holding jobs for longer than they should,⁸⁰ perhaps because of the time-consuming nature of recruitment.

Where the rotation system was implemented, however, it would often appear to Syrians that their work had ended abruptly. Opportunities also sometimes ended because agencies and NGOs were conducting short-term projects with limited funding. Especially in the earlier months and years of CfW, many Syrians lacked clarity about how the system worked, and the organisational logics that underpinned it. As one NGO worker commented, while “some of the Syrians now are starting to understand how organisations work...it’s [not] necessarily obvious.”⁸¹ When their work came to an end, some Syrians understood that they had been sacked, whereas from the perspective of the NGO the project had simply finished, or the work had to be rotated to another individual.⁸²

At the same time, while Syrians would like more opportunities for work in the camp, they were also typically in favour of frequent rotation of the opportunities that did exist. The “overarching consensus” of the focus group discussions mentioned above was that “more frequent rotation allows more individuals to benefit.”⁸³ Several focus group discussion participants also suggested that positions that were not subject to rotation could be split between two or more individuals, to increase the numbers able to benefit and receive income.⁸⁴ Yet while rotations meant that more Syrians could share the opportunities that were on offer, it also meant that the amount that it was possible to earn was often severely limited. Furthermore, some NGO staff believed that rotating positions had the potential to cause disruption to NGO service delivery, because their new Cash Workers would need inductions, training and to gain familiarity with the work before being able to do it efficiently.⁸⁵

In contrast to the semi-skilled and piece-rate positions, highly skilled and technical positions could either be rotated for periods of longer than one month, or have “no

⁸⁰ See REACH, “Cash for Work (CfW) Assessment in Zaatari Camp,” November 2016, http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/unhcr-reach_jor_factsheet_cash_for_work_assessment_by_district_november_2016.pdf.

⁸¹ Interview with NGO worker in Za’tari.

⁸² Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 07.10.2015; interviews with NGO worker in Za’tari; and INGO programme manager in Za’tari (2).

⁸³ REACH, “Cash for Work (CfW) Assessment in Zaatari Camp.”

⁸⁴ BNL Working Group, “Za’atari Cash for Work - Focus Group Discussions,” 2.

⁸⁵ Conversation with humanitarian workers, Za’tari, 03.11.2015.

rotation status, depending on the availability of the required skills within the population.”⁸⁶ The differing rotation statuses, and the shortage of some skillsets in the camp that were demanded by NGOs in order to help them meet their programmatic objectives, effectively inserts a class dynamic into the ability to attain and in particular to *maintain* a CfW position. In cases where there are very few people in the camp with particular skill sets - the ability to teach English or calligraphy, or advanced knowledge of plumbing, were examples offered by my interviewees⁸⁷ – agencies and NGOs are allowed to continue to employ them for the longer term. Some have even kept individual Syrians in the same positions for as long as two years, because they could not find others who could do that job as well as the incumbent.⁸⁸

As one of my interviewees noted, higher levels of education and skill are also often effectively inherited along class lines, which increases the likelihood that more than one generation of the same family living in the camp will gain CfW for an extended period of time⁸⁹ These longer-term positions can also bring with them personal relationships with NGO employees, which are perceived by some Syrians to be paths to extra assistance and connections, and thus potentially a source of favourable treatment by NGOs, which might range from access to extra services to transportation around the camp in NGO vehicles.⁹⁰ Even daily work that some had, though, was not enough to meet their financial needs. As one woman, whose husband had work each day, asked me, “what is 200 [JOD] a month for a family of seven?”⁹¹

The CfW monthly updates released by the BNL Working Group record how many ‘cases’ had more than one CfW opportunity during each month. Some months this figure was very low, for example 17 in June 2016.⁹² In other months it was drastically higher, with over 400 such cases in each of December 2016, January 2017 and February 2017, out of a total of around 5,500 Cash Workers.⁹³ This data does not even capture situations

⁸⁶ UNHCR, “Cash For Work - Standard Operating Procedures: Zaatari Camp,” 3.

⁸⁷ Interviews with INGO programme manager in Za’tari (2); and INGO programme manager in Za’tari (1).

⁸⁸ Interview with INGO programme manager in Za’tari (1).

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Conversations with Syrian refugees and NGO workers, Za’tari, 21.07.2016.

⁹¹ Conversation with Syrian woman, Za’tari, 15.12.2015.

⁹² BNL Working Group, “Cash for Work in Zaatari Camp June 2016,” 2016, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

⁹³ BNL Working Group, “Cash for Work in Zaatari Camp December 2016,” 2016, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>; BNL Working Group, “Cash for Work in Zaatari

where two members of an extended family who have CfW are part of different ‘cases,’ for example if members of a younger generation of a family are married and are registered and live as a separate family unit. Furthermore, in some months over two hundred Syrian individuals were holding more than one CfW position, even though two thirds of ‘cases’ had no one involved in CfW at all during those same months.⁹⁴ Although the standardised procedures for offering CfW aim to avoid all such ‘duplications,’ and to resolve them when they occur, many agencies and NGOs continued to offer CfW positions before checking with UNHCR whether they were already ‘volunteering’ elsewhere.⁹⁵ While, as noted previously, some humanitarian actors went to great lengths to ensure that CfW opportunities were (perceived to be) distributed equitably, others appeared to prioritise the efficiency of their service delivery by ‘employing’ someone without going through the official procedures.

Despite the aforementioned class dynamics of CfW, there were some positions that require relatively high levels of education, but from which Syrians, as outsiders to the nation, were excluded. Qualified Syrian teachers were not allowed, for example, to work as teachers in schools in the camp. Teaching is one of the 17 ‘sectors’ in Jordan that is only open to Jordanian nationals.⁹⁶ Although Syrians were allowed to work in other closed ‘sectors’ in the camp, for example by working as hairdressers and guards, this was not the case with teaching. The government insisted a modified version of the Jordanian curriculum be taught by Jordanian teachers. Both of these decisions caused resentment among the camp population.⁹⁷ In a form of compromise, the government eventually allowed 200 Syrians to work in the schools as ‘teaching assistants.’⁹⁸ In these instances, Syrians’ class and educational statuses could not overcome, or substitute for, their outsider status within Jordan; a different set of hierarchies foreclosed their access to work.

Camp January 2017,” 2017, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>; BNL Working Group, “Cash for Work in Zaatari Camp February 2017.”

⁹⁴ E.g. see BNL Working Group, “Cash for Work in Zaatari Camp December 2016.”

⁹⁵ See BNL Working Group, “Basic Needs Working Group Za’atari Camp. February 2 2016 Meeting Minutes,” 2016, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>; UNHCR, “Cash For Work - Standard Operating Procedures: Zaatari Camp.”

⁹⁶ See Ministry of Labour, “Decision: Closed Professions in Jordan,” October 2016, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

⁹⁷ Conversations with Syrian men and NGO workers, Za’atari, 03.11.2015.

⁹⁸ Human Rights Watch, “‘We’re Afraid for Their Future,’” August 16, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/08/16/were-afraid-their-future/barriers-education-syrian-refugee-children-jordan>.

This system of CfW also creates particular forms of (working) relationships between humanitarian actors, their staff, and their Syrian ‘volunteers.’ Many of these relationships are intermittent and impersonal, reflecting the fact that the majority of positions offered clearly class the ‘volunteers’ who occupy them as interchangeable from one week to the next. As one NGO worker interviewee commented, within this structure it is extremely hard to create a system where Syrians can learn, progress, get promoted, and take on increasing levels of responsibility as one might expect to do in a job.⁹⁹ Curt Rhodes, International Director of Questscope, told me that he “constantly” faces the problem of trying to invest time and effort in people under a structure in which they are formally obliged to rotate opportunities in a particular way, on a particular time-scale.¹⁰⁰ Humanitarian authorities in the camp, he argued, “don’t have a place in their minds for what you’re trying to accomplish” by investing in individuals, rather than rotating people in and out of positions. While it was not difficult, in and of itself, he claimed, to form more meaningful and personal relationships with Syrians, “it’s the controllers of the invisible environment that are difficult to overcome.” Within this form of work, of which he was very critical, ‘local people’ are needed, he said, but only as “the stage upon which we act,” rather than as individuals to be respected.¹⁰¹

Many humanitarian and NGO workers find their relationships with Cash Workers in their organisations difficult for a second reason, which is the positions of authority into which they are inserted as *de facto* employers of Syrians in the camp. NGO programme managers, for example, who may have little or no skill or expertise in a particular field, are put in the position of choosing who from among the camp population is able to continue to work within their chosen profession. It was “very awkward,” one explained, to have had to turn down a former University lecturer for a position teaching a basic, introductory course in his field, because he felt the former lecturer would not be an effective communicator with those attending the course.¹⁰² It would be similarly “awkward,” another NGO employee told me, to employ highly educated Syrians in relatively unskilled roles like that of a secretary or a guard. Many in the NGO sector, my interlocutor suspected, felt the same, and would hesitate to select them on those grounds.¹⁰³ The awkwardness, therefore, appeared to be the result of humanitarians

⁹⁹ Interview with former NGO worker in Za‘tari.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Curt Rhodes.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Conversation with INGO programme manager, Za‘tari, 13.10.2015.

¹⁰³ Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 04.11.2015.

having to confront, or at least acknowledge, their own place in the power hierarchies of life in a camp, which often disrupts pre-existing hierarchies and sets of relations among a refugee population.¹⁰⁴ In particular, exercising power over those who would otherwise be positioned as your social equals or superiors, brought humanitarians' own power to the foreground. The 'awkwardness' experienced in these contexts can also be contrasted to the relative ease with which humanitarians exercise power over refugee women.¹⁰⁵

At other times, however, despite these apparent challenges and feelings of 'awkwardness,' the hierarchical relationships, and the prioritisation of humanitarian logics and goals, continued without comment being passed. Some CfW programmes involve skills training, in which Syrians produce, for example, clothes or handicrafts. These products, in some instances, were sold by the agency responsible for the programme. The money from the sales went not to the individual Syrians involved in the production of goods, as if they were a craftsperson, but were rather re-invested in the programme overall, as if the products of refugees' labour was the property of the humanitarian agency. For example, at the opening of the new UN Women's Oasis that I attended,¹⁰⁶ there was a 'bazaar' of products made by Syrian women under the auspices of UN Women projects in the camp. Attendees of the opening were invited to buy mosaics, jewellery, handicrafts, and large shoulder bags made out of old tents that were previously used to house refugees. The bags made out of tents, priced at 20JOD each (approximately \$28), were especially popular, despite, or perhaps because of, being "a bit refugee chic" as one INGO worker put it to me. Many of the Syrian women who had made the products proudly pointed out to me which ones they had made, and we discussed the techniques involved and the creative decisions they had taken, but they did not stand to profit from their labour, beyond what they had already been paid as a 'volunteer.'¹⁰⁷ At the same event, a large buffet was served for the non-Syrians invited to the event, the opening of a centre for refugee women and girls. When the 'guests' had finished eating, the Syrians present were invited to eat what was left.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ See Agier, *Managing the Undesirables*; Turner, "Suspended Spaces."

¹⁰⁵ See Chapter 4

¹⁰⁶ See UN Women, "UN Women and WFP Unveil Expansion of 'Oasis for Women and Girls' - Safe Space in Za'atari Refugee Camp," UN Women | Jordan, November 10, 2015, <http://jordan.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/7/oasis-for-women-and-girls>.

¹⁰⁷ Conversation with humanitarian workers, Za'tari, 10.11.2015.

¹⁰⁸ Author observation, Za'tari, 10.11.2015.

‘Cash for Work,’ Vulnerability, and Gender

Further contestations about the allocation of work were created by humanitarian actors’ attempts to use CfW as a mechanism for ‘empowering’ the ‘vulnerable.’ Humanitarian agencies’ desire to ensure that work opportunities were held equally by men and women in the camp challenged Syrian men’s breadwinner masculinities by, in the eyes of many Syrian men, ‘reducing’ the work available to men. This exacerbated the perception among many Syrian men that humanitarian agencies were interested in supporting women and children, but not men, and revealed the paradoxical place of labour market access in humanitarian thinking about men’s non-‘vulnerability.’ As discussed in Chapter 4, there was a widespread, although inaccurate and a-contextual, assumption that Syrian men could access the labour market easily. This was perceived to be one of the reasons why they were assumed to not need support in the same ways as women and children. Yet when humanitarian actors provided, essentially, substitute labour market opportunities for refugees in Za’tari, a camp from which it was difficult to leave, this was nonetheless seen as an area in which the ‘vulnerable’ needed to be promoted.

Although individual agencies and NGOs offering CfW opportunities are allowed to “determine specific selection criteria and target groups,”¹⁰⁹ the criteria they develop are meant to take into account the camp-wide target to prioritise access to CfW for women and refugees deemed ‘vulnerable.’ The CfW SOPs explain that there should be “equal access to CfW opportunities for both male and female refugees (50-50), bearing in mind the cultural context.” Therefore, it continues:

where a female candidate has met all required qualifications/skills as the male counterpart for a job, positive discrimination towards female [sic] should be exercised to address the gender gap, and according to comparative household needs.¹¹⁰

Despite the official aim of 50-50, men hold around three quarters of positions, and women around one quarter.¹¹¹

From my early interactions with Syrian men in the camp in the autumn of 2015,¹¹² and before I had been able to gain access to the official gender breakdown of Cash Workers,

¹⁰⁹ UNHCR, “Cash For Work - Standard Operating Procedures: Zaatari Camp,” 2.

¹¹⁰ UNHCR, 2.

¹¹¹ See footnote 69 above.

¹¹² Conversations with Syrian men, Za’tari, 27.10.2015 and 03.11.2015.

I had formed an impression that a majority of Cash Workers were women. This impression, in some cases, reflected a parallel belief among the people with whom I had been speaking about the predominance of women within CfW. Yet in some cases, Syrian men I spoke to would speak much more generally about women working, without knowing, or offering, figures about the actual gender breakdown. Even 25% of CfW opportunities going to women, it appeared to me, represented for them a radical break from previous practices in Syria, and posed a severe challenge to the masculinities of some men, who believed that they should be prioritised for work opportunities.¹¹³

According to the SOPs, in addition to the 50-50 target for men and women, where a “specific vulnerability” compromises a person or household’s ability to meet basic needs, then those refugees “should be considered primary target [sic]” for CfW, and “[e]xceptions should ONLY be in tasks that require challenging physical effort” [emphasis in original].¹¹⁴ Despite broader attempts within the Syria response to move away from the ‘group’ or ‘category’ approach to vulnerability,¹¹⁵ within the allocation of CfW this approach is still used. The UNHCR vulnerability document to which the SOPs refer details six categories of “vulnerable” refugees - “woman at risk,” “single parent” (which in the vast majority of cases means a “female-headed household”), “serious medical condition,” “disability,” “older person at risk,” and “child at risk,” although this latter category is not relevant for CfW opportunities, which were only available to over 18s. Interestingly, when UNHCR and its partners did consultations with refugees in the camp about CfW, some of the refugee men’s focus groups disputed these humanitarian understandings of vulnerability, arguing that “all refugees in Za’atari are vulnerable.”¹¹⁶ Yet again, humanitarian and (at least many) refugees’ understandings of ‘vulnerability’ differed and, yet again, humanitarian understandings took precedence. ‘Global’ standards trump ‘local’ knowledge.

The monthly summaries of CfW provided by the BNL Working Group record the proportion of CfW opportunities that are currently held by “vulnerable” refugees, and the number of Cash Workers with “vulnerable” family members. On average,¹¹⁷ around

¹¹³ See also UN Women, “Restoring Dignity and Building Resilience.”

¹¹⁴ UNHCR, “Cash For Work - Standard Operating Procedures: Zaatari Camp,” 2.

¹¹⁵ See Chapter 4.

¹¹⁶ BNL Working Group, “Za’atari Cash for Work - Focus Group Discussions,” 1.

¹¹⁷ The figures on vulnerability exclude the factsheet for May 2016, which did not include information on vulnerability.

15 percent of Cash Workers were categorised as vulnerable, and a further 15 percent had family members categorised as vulnerable. Of the fifteen percent of Cash Workers classed as ‘vulnerable,’ typically around 10 percent were older people at risk, a further 10 percent were individuals with a serious medical condition, nearly 40 percent had a disability, just over 20 percent were women at risk, and a further 20 percent were single parents.¹¹⁸

Therefore, while regulations were in place to prioritise women’s and the ‘vulnerable’s’ access to CfW, this was subject to the two aforementioned restrictions – “the cultural context” and “tasks that require challenging physical effort.” These two criteria are subject to interpretation, and potentially to extensive discretion in their application, and were considered by some of my NGO interlocutors to be one of the reasons why the proportion of CfW opportunities held by women was consistently around 25 percent, rather than 50. According to one Jordanian interviewee, it was culturally not the norm, for example, for women to do plumbing, or street excavations, or electrical maintenance.¹¹⁹ Nor was it deemed widely culturally acceptable, among Za’tari residents, for men to teach female students or women to teach male students. One programme manager told me that his NGO cannot say to their male Cash Workers “go and teach females because this is global standards;” the local context disrupted humanitarian attempts to pursue (a particular vision of) gender equality.¹²⁰

Some humanitarian actors made efforts to ensure that there were CfW positions that women could do within the cultural constraints of the camp. Within the centres run by UN Women, for example, women would undertake activities such as making handicrafts as part of CfW,¹²¹ which were then sold by UN Women (see above). Where there were tasks in the camp that had to be done, but these tasks were not widely considered culturally or physically appropriate for women, some humanitarian actors made efforts to try and see how the job might be broken down. For example, to see what discrete elements of work women could comfortably do within the cultural context of the camp, which enabled some women to do work in waste management, which would otherwise not have been possible for them. Nonetheless, breaking down jobs in this way was time-

¹¹⁸ E.g. see BNL Working Group, “Cash for Work in Zaatari Camp February 2017.”

¹¹⁹ Interview with INGO programme manager in Za’tari (1).

¹²⁰ Interview with INGO programme manager in Za’tari (2).

¹²¹ See UN Women, “Restoring Dignity and Building Resilience.”

consuming, and not all humanitarian actors were committed to facilitating women's employment in this way.¹²²

For those involved in camp life, another aspect of the 'cultural context' shaped understandings of women's work. According to numerous interlocutors, women and men, Jordanian and Syrian, men's and women's work are understood differently in terms of the contribution they make to family income. Because men were typically expected to be the main income earner, when women did undertake paid labour, that income was understood to be supplementary to the 'main' income of the household, which it was the man's responsibility to earn. My interlocutors told me that this view was widely shared among Za'tari's residents, and in both Syria and Jordan more generally. This idea is also found, for example, in scholarship on agriculture in north-western Syria, which has noted that the designation of women's income as 'supplementary' continued "*even if women earned more than their husbands*" [emphasis in original].¹²³ As Abdelali-Martini and Dey de Pryck argue, labelling women's incomes as 'supplementary' (in addition to women's incomes typically being lower) can make them less "threatening to men socially or psychologically."¹²⁴ This enables the idea of a male breadwinner to continue to maintain social relevance and potency, even in the absence of male breadwinners.

In the context of Za'tari, where many women have paid work while their husbands do not,¹²⁵ and thus where women's income was often clearly not 'supplementary,' the distance between cultural expectations and practices on the ground was even wider than in contexts where both men and women were earning money. This appeared to further intensify the gendered psychological effects of not working on men. While there was more acceptance of the need for female-headed households to earn extra income, because of the absence of a man in the household, some could not understand why the 'supplementary' earner, when living within a family with an adult male, was being prioritised. As one Syrian man asked me, almost incredulous, "why are they employing women when there are men who do not have work?"¹²⁶

¹²² Interview with livelihood specialist, Amman, 27.06.2016.

¹²³ Malika Abdelali-Martini and Jennie Dey de Pryck, "Does the Feminisation of Agricultural Labour Empower Women? Insights from Female Labour Contractors and Workers in Northwest Syria," *Journal of International Development* 27, no. 7 (2015): 907.

¹²⁴ Abdelali-Martini and Dey de Pryck, 908.

¹²⁵ Conversations with Syrian men, Za'tari, 03.11.2015; interview with NGO worker in Za'tari.

¹²⁶ Conversation with Syrian man, Za'tari, 03.11.2015.

Therefore, while the normative value of the male breadwinner remained, for many Syrians, the day to day life in the camp was increasingly challenging this ideological structure. Married women working, combined with the presence of many female-headed households, were understood by many Syrians to be central factors behind the perceived change in day to day ‘gender roles’ within the camp.¹²⁷ As one of ARDD’s workshop participants stated, demonstrating the aforementioned perception that women held more than a quarter of Cash Worker positions, “gender roles have totally changed. Men are in the caravans and women are working.”¹²⁸ The extra income that many women earned as the result of their participation in the paid labour market was perceived, by many men in the camp, to have increased women’s power more broadly, both within specific families and the wider community.¹²⁹

As a UN Women study found, the vast majority of women Cash Workers gain both financially and non-financially from their participation in CfW, reporting less financial strain, less social isolation, and improved social networks.¹³⁰ But women’s increased participation in paid work, perceived by many in the community as ‘supplementary,’ does not involve a ‘re-balancing’ of domestic work, as international agencies have attempted to bring about in other contexts.¹³¹ According to the same UN Women report, one third of Cash Workers surveyed said that the burden of responsibility on them has increased, because they now work both inside and outside of the home.¹³² As Tobin and Campbell argue, therefore, the push to employ women, which aims to ‘empower’ them, can have the effect of disproportionately burdening them.¹³³

Perhaps the most politically challenging aspect of the gendered allocation of CfW opportunities is the relationship between work outside the home and violence within it. According to the same UN Women report, twenty percent of the female participants in UN Women’s CfW programme reported a fall in domestic violence in their homes since taking on CfW. The rest noted no change. Many of the women who faced less domestic

¹²⁷ Interviews with Syrian shop-holder in Za’tari market, man (3), Syrian man working in Za’tari market (2), and Syrian man working in Za’tari market (3); see also UN Women, “Restoring Dignity and Building Resilience.”

¹²⁸ ARDD, “ARDD’s Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys,” 11.

¹²⁹ Fieldnotes, Za’tari, 01.08.2016.

¹³⁰ UN Women, “Restoring Dignity and Building Resilience.”

¹³¹ Kate Bedford, *Developing Partnerships: Gender, Sexuality, and the Reformed World Bank* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

¹³² UN Women, “Restoring Dignity and Building Resilience,” 23.

¹³³ Tobin and Campbell, “NGO Governance.”

violence explained that this was the result of them “spending fewer hours in their home with their spouse,” which provided “less space for domestic disputes.”¹³⁴

The same report, however, repeatedly notes that discussions with men in the camp revealed that, when men had the ability to earn a living for their family it improved their self-esteem, well-being, and mental health, because they were more able to fulfil the role of breadwinner which was expected of them (by themselves and others, including by humanitarians).¹³⁵ Livelihood opportunities for men thereby were understood, by this report, to counteract one of the factors causing higher levels of domestic violence within Za‘tari: the:

lower self-esteem among Syrian men [that had] led to negative or exaggerated expressions of masculinity. Feeling disempowered with an eroding social status, they resort to violence to assert their authority and express their frustrations within the family.¹³⁶

As the report immediately notes: “[e]conomic opportunities are key to combatting this” [emphasis in original].¹³⁷ These conclusions were supported by the men with whom they spoke, one of whom said that although NGOs are “always talking” about domestic violence:

I do not need you to tell me that hitting my wife or yelling at my child is bad. Let me earn a living and you will see that it will solve this.¹³⁸

Adult women in Za‘tari who took part in focus group discussions conducted by the CPGBV Sub-Working Group in 2012 similarly supported the idea that “there will be a reduction in violence as men find jobs.”

This framing of the levels of domestic violence within Za‘tari being straightforwardly a function of men’s employment status, and also thereby their psychological well-being and self-esteem, is belied by decades of research that demonstrates the multiplicity of causes of gendered violence within the home.¹³⁹ It was however, both among refugees

¹³⁴ UN Women, “Restoring Dignity and Building Resilience,” 27.

¹³⁵ UN Women, 8–9, 28, 30.

¹³⁶ UN Women, 9; for a discussion of similar dynamics in a Jordanian host context, see Holly A. Ritchie, “Gender and Enterprise in Fragile Refugee Settings: Female Empowerment amidst Male Emasculation—a Challenge to Local Integration?,” *Disasters* 42, no. 01 (2018): 50–53.

¹³⁷ UN Women, “Restoring Dignity and Building Resilience,” 9.

¹³⁸ UN Women, 30.

¹³⁹ The literature on masculinities and gender-based violence is vast, but for a few examples that tackle these questions in different contexts, see Connell, *Masculinities*; Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne,

and many humanitarian workers, a very common understanding of the *immediate* cause of a perceived *increase* in GBV, in comparison to pre-conflict Syria. Yet despite this understanding, as previous chapters of this thesis have explored, men were typically not understood by humanitarians to need psychosocial support, or to be a specific category of person whose employment opportunities humanitarians should promote.

Making a deliberate and explicit decision to increase CfW opportunities *for men* (rather than for the community as a whole, or ‘vulnerable’ sections of it) would be very challenging for humanitarian actors not only because of men’s uncertain place within humanitarian operations, but also because of the material implications this might have. When work with men and boys is expanded, for example in terms of SGBV prevention, there was a perceived need among humanitarian actors to repeatedly emphasise that this work should not reduce or affect the work done with women and girls.¹⁴⁰ Given the long (and continuing struggle) to get refugee women’s issues taken seriously within humanitarian operations, this is understandable. Without higher budgets, however, increased work with men on SGBV or livelihoods, even if that work helps and improves the lives of women in the community indirectly, may well come at the expense of direct SGBV or livelihoods work with women. As in Chapter 5, additional work with men may involve a perceived disloyalty to those who were deemed to be the central objects of humanitarian attention. When it became possible for Syrians to seek formal work opportunities outside of the camp, these gendered contestations and trade-offs also emerged. The ability of humanitarian actors to implement their goals, however, was more limited, as I will now explore.

Za‘tari, the Jordanian Labour Market, and the Jordan Compact

In the first five years of the Syria crisis, the formal integration of Syrian refugees into domestic labour markets constituted a red line for Jordan and other host states neighbouring Syria. While Lebanon, in which Syrians had long worked in much larger numbers, appeared to somewhat facilitate, or at least typically not prevent, Syrians’ informal labour market participation, Jordanian authorities took a somewhat different

eds., *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies* (London: Routledge, 1994); Geraldine Terry and Joanna Hoare, *Gender-Based Violence* (Oxfam, 2007).

¹⁴⁰ Conversations with NGO workers, Amman, 17.01.2016. Subsequent to my fieldwork in Jordan, I encountered this perceived need on further separate occasions while acting as a reviewer of reports and policy papers for NGOs on work with men and boys.

approach.¹⁴¹ Syrians who were found working were often punished by being forcibly encamped in (or ‘deported’ to) refugee camps.¹⁴² Initially this was primarily to Za‘tari, although once Azraq opened in 2014, increasingly to the newer camp. According to Human Rights Watch, this fate has been faced by at least 16,000 Syrian refugees, due to either working without a permit or alternatively because of issues with their residency documents.¹⁴³ Businesses employing Syrians have regularly been punished for doing so, with almost 600 businesses being closed down in 9 months of 2013 alone, specifically because they were employing Syrians without a work permit.¹⁴⁴

Within this system, Za‘tari was therefore a means to threaten, punish, and render precarious, Syrians attempting to work in the informal labour market. Furthermore, as I have argued elsewhere,¹⁴⁵ as Za‘tari’s population became more permanent, and Syrians’ ability to leave the camp became severely restricted,¹⁴⁶ Za‘tari also functioned to keep a proportion of the Syrian population away from, and unable to access, the broader labour market. The conditions of the bailout system, in particular, which had an important role in determining who could leave the camp, meant that those who remained in Za‘tari were overall more likely to be from rural backgrounds, less skilled, less educated, and with fewer financial resources at their disposal.¹⁴⁷ In other words, they were more likely to belong to those categories of Syrians who were perceived to be exercising the most downward pressure on wages.¹⁴⁸

Nevertheless, this system did not prevent Syrians from leaving the camp in all cases. Some did so without permission from the authorities, for example to work in the nearby farmland and then return to the camp, although a 2015 ILO and Fafo study found that “few Zaatari residents are able to secure jobs outside the camp.”¹⁴⁹ As ‘bailout’ requests from the camp’s residents were increasingly refused in 2014, as part of a process to “make it more complicated for [Syrians] to leave the camps,” the complexity of getting

¹⁴¹ Turner, “Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees.”

¹⁴² Achilli, “Syrian Refugees in Jordan.”

¹⁴³ Human Rights Watch, “We’re Afraid for Their Future.”

¹⁴⁴ ILO, “The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on the Labour Market in Jordan: A Preliminary Analysis,” 2014, 20.

¹⁴⁵ See Turner, “Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees.”

¹⁴⁶ Achilli, “Syrian Refugees in Jordan.”

¹⁴⁷ ILO and Fafo, “Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Jordanian Labour Market.”

¹⁴⁸ Turner, “Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees.”

¹⁴⁹ ILO and Fafo, “Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Jordanian Labour Market,” 46.

work outside of Za'tari only increased.¹⁵⁰ 'Bailouts' were replaced by a system of 'leave' permits (*tasrih al-ijaza*).¹⁵¹ Unlike bailouts, leave permits offered only a temporary, short-term ability to leave the camp. Although leave permits gave Syrians no right to work outside the camp, some did use the leave permits to undertake several days' work at a time, while others used it to conduct business transactions, for example related to the market in Za'tari, or to visit family living in non-camp settings in Jordan. At first it was possible to get a leave permit for 15 days, although that was reduced to 7 days in the summer of 2016 – a source of consternation among many of my interlocutors in Za'tari at that time.¹⁵²

Despite UNHCR's claim in the summer of 2015 that up to 1,000 leave permits were being processed daily,¹⁵³ according to numerous Syrians in Za'tari, obtaining a leave permit could be a challenging process. The biggest difficulty, and frustration, was the fact that there was typically, I was told, only one officer issuing leave permits at a time, and the officers who did this rotating role would be liable to close the office at different times each day, with no notice, and no fixed hours. This unpredictability incentivised Syrians wishing to obtain leave permits to arrive at the relevant office early in the morning, which often meant queuing in the heat or extreme cold, depending on the time of year, for several hours at a time, perhaps only to find that, as they approach the front of the queue, the officer responsible would declare the office closed until tomorrow. In addition to the unpredictable opening hours, Syrians' requests for a leave permit could be turned down for 'security reasons', of which Syrians would not be provided details, and against which they could not appeal. If they were to successfully use a leave permit, they would also have to have access to money for transportation when outside of the camp, which would prove prohibitive for many.¹⁵⁴

Jordan's policy on Syrians' access to the labour market underwent a fundamental change, however, in February 2016. At the end of the London donors' conference for Syria and the region, the GoJ issued a document entitled 'The Jordan Compact: A New Holistic

¹⁵⁰ Achilli, "Syrian Refugees in Jordan," 6.

¹⁵¹ Protection Working Group, "2016 Jordan Refugee Response Protection Sector Operational Strategy" (Amman, 2016), 2–3, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/43783>.

¹⁵² Author observation and conversations with Syrian men, Za'tari, 16.02.2016, 27.07.2016, and 01.08.2016;

¹⁵³ UNHCR, "Jordan UNHCR Operational Update June 2015," 2015, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

¹⁵⁴ Conversations with Syrian men, Za'tari, 16.02.2016 and 01.08.2016; and conversation with employer of Syrians, Irbid, 25.02.2016.

Approach between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the International Community to deal with the Syrian Refugee Crisis.”¹⁵⁵ The Compact announced the GoJ’s intention, with the support of international donors, to “[turn] the Syrian refugee crisis into a development opportunity.”¹⁵⁶ Despite the continuation of an emphasis on (some) refugees’ ‘vulnerability’ in Za‘tari, Syrians were simultaneously being reframed as an untapped economic resource.¹⁵⁷ Through opening up access to EU markets, and through the use of SEZs and favourable investment laws, the GoJ anticipated being able to provide 200,000 work permits for Syrian refugees over the ‘coming’ years, and set an ambitious target of issuing 50,000 work permits by the end of 2016. As will be explored below, gender quotas became one of the central contestations in the implementation of the Compact, but the attempts to implement these quotas were much less successful than in the camp context.

The policy shift represented by the Compact had been anticipated for several months, with NGOs on the ground in Jordan preparing to undertake livelihood interventions that had hitherto been forbidden by the GoJ.¹⁵⁸ Presaging these shifts, in late 2015 Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, two academics at the University of Oxford, wrote an article in *Foreign Affairs*, arguing for Syrians to be able to join the labour market.¹⁵⁹ The situation of refugees in Za‘tari was a key component in their article and early blueprint. The authors had observed that King Hussein Bin Talal Development Area was located only ten miles from Za‘tari, and with only 10,000 employees in the factories there, the area was operating at only ten percent capacity in terms of workforce.¹⁶⁰ Their proposed ‘zoning’ of Syrian labour was appealing to the GoJ, because it could be presented to the Jordanian public as reducing (or in the case of Za‘tari not increasing) the ‘competition’ between Syrians and Jordanians in the labour market.¹⁶¹

As Betts and Collier later wrote of their encounter with Za‘tari and its nearby development zone, “[t]he combined intellectual resources of two Oxford professors

¹⁵⁵ See Government of Jordan, “The Jordan Compact: A New Holistic Approach between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the International Community to Deal with the Syrian Refugee Crisis,” February 4, 2016, <http://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/jordan-compact-new-holistic-approach-between-hashemite-kingdom-jordan-and>.

¹⁵⁶ Government of Jordan, 1.

¹⁵⁷ See Lenner and Turner, “Making Refugees Work?”

¹⁵⁸ Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 04.02.2016.

¹⁵⁹ Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, “Help Refugees Help Themselves,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 11, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/levant/2015-10-20/help-refugees-help-themselves>.

¹⁶⁰ Betts and Collier.

¹⁶¹ Lenner and Turner, “Making Refugees Work?”

managed to add two and two: with some appropriate international support, everyone could be better off.”¹⁶² Betts and Collier’s vision, however, was both ethically questionable, and much more difficult to realise than they and their allies envisaged. The SEZs in Jordan are renowned within the country for their exploitative labour practices, and Syrians largely were not willing to accept the prevailing working conditions.¹⁶³ The wage rates can make economic ‘sense’ for some migrant workers, often single women from South Asia, who make up the bulk of the workforce in many SEZs. They typically live in dormitories on site, and, unlike the clear majority of Syrians in Jordan, do not pay rent or raise families in the country.

Donors, government ministries, and humanitarian actors made numerous attempts to facilitate Syrians’ access to work permits through donor funding, NGO projects, legislative and regulatory changes, and partnerships with private sector actors, but very few Syrians were willing to accept the conditions in the SEZs. As I have argued, together with Katharina Lenner, these difficulties can be understood in the context of the Jordan Compact representing “a policy model that elicited enough consensus to be ‘implementable,’ and to achieve a variety of disparate objectives,” yet “long-standing features of political economy” and key features of “the lives and survival strategies of Syrian refugees” were “under-appreciated by most of the actors involved in designing the scheme.”¹⁶⁴ More broadly, as Heaven Crawley has argued, Betts and Collier’s interventions contain “little serious discussion of [refugees’] human rights” and represent a troubling “contention that global capitalism can come to the rescue of the refugee system.”¹⁶⁵

The focus on the possibilities of work for Syrians in camps may have been economically rational, in the sense that Syrians in camps typically have lower outgoing costs than refugees in host communities, in particular because they do not have to pay rent.¹⁶⁶ They thus might have been more readily drawn into the exploitative labour regimes of the SEZs in Jordan than their non-camp counterparts.¹⁶⁷ Yet despite this early focus on

¹⁶² Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, *Refuge: Transforming a Broken Refugee System* (Penguin UK, 2017), viii.

¹⁶³ See Lenner and Turner, “Making Refugees Work?”; Tamkeen Fields for Aid, “Walled in by Alienation: Working and Living Conditions of Migrant Workers in Jordan” (Amman, 2017).

¹⁶⁴ Lenner and Turner, “Making Refugees Work?” 1–2.

¹⁶⁵ Heaven Crawley, “Migration: Refugee Economics,” *Nature* 544 (2017): 27.

¹⁶⁶ Victoria Kelberer, “The Work Permit Initiative for Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Implications for Policy and Practice” (Boston: Boston Consortium for Arab Region Studies, 2017), 29.

¹⁶⁷ Tamkeen Fields for Aid, “Walled in by Alienation.”

Za'tari and its residents, and a plausible economic rationality for it, once the implementation of the Jordan Compact started in earnest, camp residents quickly became marginal to the efforts to formalise Syrian labour. Although the government's decision to allow Syrians to obtain work permits, in exchange for renewed donor funding for Jordan, removed the labour market rationality for restricting Syrians' freedom of movement from the camp, other concerns remained. GoJ actors argued in negotiations that there were 'security reasons' for not allowing camp residents to leave readily, which prevented Za'tari's full integration into the Jordan Compact.¹⁶⁸

Reflecting these concerns, in the summer of 2016, when work permit numbers for Syrians in Jordan were increasingly fairly quickly,¹⁶⁹ the Ministry of Labour issued a decree stating that the work permits were not to be issued to camp residents without the agreement of the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate. According to Maha Kattaa, the ILO's Response Co-ordinator for the Syria Crisis in Jordan, this in practice made it extremely hard for camp residents to obtain work permits.¹⁷⁰ Numerous Syrians that I spoke to during the summer of 2016 all confirmed that obtaining a work permit was extremely hard as a camp resident. Many were even somewhat dismissive of the relevance of the scheme to their lives, understanding that the push for work permits was a matter only concerning non-camp residents.¹⁷¹ Despite discussions taking place between UNHCR, the GoJ, and other partners from the summer of 2016 to try and open up access to work permits for camp residents, progress was slow.¹⁷² The opening of an employment centre in the camp to run job fairs and assess refugees' skills in August 2017, a full 18 months after the announcement of the Jordan Compact, together with renewed efforts by UNHCR to support refugees' work in factories through training and transportation, to some extent appear to have represented the beginning of greater access to the formal labour market for Syrians in Za'tari. By December 2017, almost 4,500 work permits had been issued to refugees in the camp,¹⁷³ although much of this work will be

¹⁶⁸ Interview with European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations Official, via telephone, 14.07.2017; see also Lenner, "Blasts from the Past."

¹⁶⁹ For example, over 20,000 work permits were issued to Syrians in Jordan between May and August 2016, see Maha Kattaa, "Support to the Ministry of Labour in Regulating Syrian Workers in Jordan. October 2016" (Amman: ILO, 2016), <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Maha Kattaa, International Labour Organization Syria Crisis Response Coordinator in Jordan, 13.08.2016.

¹⁷¹ Group discussion with Syrian men and women at Questscope Youth Centre, Za'tari, 27.07.2016.

¹⁷² Livelihood Working Group, "Livelihood Working Group. Amman, Jordan 28.07.2016."

¹⁷³ Ministry of Labour Syrian Refugee Unit, "Syrian Refugee Unit Work Permit Progress Report December 2017" (Ministry of Labour, December 2017), 8.

taking place within deeply exploitative labour regimes, with low wages, long hours, and poor working conditions.¹⁷⁴

Gender again became central to the contestations over the distribution of work to Syrians. Since the beginning of the Jordan Compact, up to the latest figures released in April 2018, fewer than 5 percent of the work permits that had been issued to Syrians were given to women.¹⁷⁵ Some agencies, such as UN Women, initially proposed that 30% of work permits be reserved for women, suggesting that donor funds, which were to be dispensed when certain work permit targets were reached, should also be tied to the proportion of work permits given to women. A livelihood specialist, who had been pushing for a gender quota, argued that, in her experience, gender had not been a priority in the early discussions around implementing the Jordan Compact. Without a quota, she believed, there would be little incentive for humanitarian actors to make the efforts that would be required to get women into the paid labour force. Increasing the number of women doing CfW in Za'tari had required a lot of effort, she explained, including visiting women at home to encourage them to take up opportunities, and dividing existing jobs into discrete work tasks to increase the number that were, in practice, open to women. However, she described the attempts to link the disbursement of World Bank funds to a gender quota as “a struggle.”¹⁷⁶ The quota initiative gained little traction among humanitarian actors, many of whom prioritised increasing the overall number of work permits as quickly as possible.¹⁷⁷

In contrast to this perspective, another livelihood specialist with whom I spoke sighed heavily when I raised the possibility of a gender quota for the dispensing of work permits. Rather than trying to force the question through quotas, she argued, the humanitarian sector should first look at what possibilities there were for work, and whether they were likely to be appealing to Syrian women.¹⁷⁸ As Katharina Lenner and I have explored at length, a pilot within the garment sector, which aimed to get 2,000 Syrian women into employment shortly after the Jordan Compact was announced, managed to get only 30 employed by the end of the calendar year. This was, in large part,

¹⁷⁴ Katharina Lenner and Lewis Turner, “Learning from the Jordan Compact,” *Forced Migration Review* 57 (2018): 48–51.

¹⁷⁵ UNHCR, “Work Permit Figures MoL/PMU as of April 19 2018,” 2018, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with livelihood specialist.

¹⁷⁷ Lenner and Turner, “Learning from the Jordan Compact.”

¹⁷⁸ Conversation with livelihood specialist, Amman, 13.06.2016.

due to Syrian women's reluctance to work in the garment sector. Factories often lacked childcare facilities, were far away from the areas in which many Syrians live, offered inadequate compensation, and many women expressed concerns about working in an environment with large numbers of men. Populations of refugees and migrant workers are not readily substitutable, as the planners of the Jordan Compact had envisaged.¹⁷⁹

The proposed 30 percent quota did not happen. At the beginning of 2017, the Livelihood Working Group noted that there were campaigns to try to increase the number of women holding work permits in sectors such as agriculture, and set a much more modest target of 10 percent by June/July 2017.¹⁸⁰ This target, however, was not linked to the disbursement of donor funds, and was thus, compared to the target that some had hoped for, much weaker both qualitatively and quantitatively. As was previously mentioned, however, by April 2018 only 5 percent of the work permits issued to Syrians had been given to women, and so even this much lower target had been missed.

Underlying the push for women to gain work permits was an assumption that women do and/or should want to find paid work outside of the home, which sheds further light on humanitarianism's relationships with women. The evidence about what kind work Syrian women would actually like to attain is mixed. A UN Women report on their activities within Za'tari reported that "74 per cent of women stated a preference for paid work outside the home and 18 per cent prefer to have paid work at home."¹⁸¹ The women who were questioned for this report, however, were women who were already taking part in UN Women's CfW or other activities, meaning that the figures do not constitute a representative sample of the camp population.

By contrast, in a survey of Jordanian and Syrian women in Jordan, conducted by UN Women and REACH, 58 percent of Syrian women stated a preference for paid work within the home, while only 7 percent preferred work outside the home. The figures for Jordanian women were much more balanced, with 28 percent preferring work at home, compared with 26 percent outside the home. Despite these figures, the report

¹⁷⁹ Lenner and Turner, "Making Refugees Work?"; see also Better Work Jordan, "Annual Report 2017: An Industry and Compliance Review" (Amman: ILO/IFC, 2017).

¹⁸⁰ See Livelihood Working Group, "Livelihood Working Group. Amman, Jordan 15.01.2017," 2017, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

¹⁸¹ UN Women, "Restoring Dignity and Building Resilience," 8.

nonetheless offers the general conclusion that there is “[n]o significant preference for home-based work,” without differentiating by nationality.¹⁸² Similarly, when Syrian women without work permits were asked why they did not hold a work permit and had not applied for one, 43 percent answered that they did not want to work.¹⁸³ As with masculinities, femininities, in any context, are plural and varied. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 2, some humanitarian workers could only conceptualise some Syrian women’s preference to work inside the home as a result of their cultural socialisation, rather than as a personal preference, a considered response to the circumstances in which they were living, and/or a decision about what is best for them and their families. Women’s capacity to make decisions for themselves is cast into doubt, when their preferences do not align with prescriptions of liberal feminism.¹⁸⁴

In this latter survey, when Jordanian and Syrian women who were not working were asked why they were not working, the most common factors cited were childcare (28 percent) and housework (20 percent), meaning that if work permits were to be successfully issued to women on the scale envisaged, the provision of childcare, for example, may also be necessary. But within the context of the Jordan Compact, because it is private sector actors, not humanitarian ones, who would be employing women, the provision of childcare by humanitarians, as in the case of the aforementioned provision of training and transportation for refugees in Za’tari, can also be understood as subsidising exploitative labour regimes. But even if there were satisfactory ways to alleviate the aforementioned factors for women who wanted to work, as noted above, work outside the home can effectively push more work onto women, because they typically maintain many domestic duties within the home.¹⁸⁵ It is hard to see how this pattern would not be followed outside of the camps.

As outlined in Chapters 2 and 4, the perceived imperative to ‘empower’ Syrian women, including economically through the labour market, relies on a particular understanding of women as ‘vulnerable’ and as uncontroversial objects of humanitarian care. In my discussions with humanitarian and NGO workers in Jordan, men’s perceived lack of vulnerability was often understood to be related to their ability to access the labour

¹⁸² REACH and UN Women, “Jordanian and Syrian Women’s Labour Force Participation and Perceptions on Employment” (Amman: REACH and UN Women, 2016), 9.

¹⁸³ REACH and UN Women, 6–7.

¹⁸⁴ See Mahmood, *Politics of Piety* Chapter 1.

¹⁸⁵ Tobin and Campbell, “NGO Governance.”

market. As noted in Chapter 2, many humanitarian workers, I was told, “still have in the back of their minds that Arab men can work easily.”¹⁸⁶ This view erases the many difficulties and dangers faced by men seeking to access the labour market informally in Jordan, of which, at least on some level, many humanitarian workers are aware.¹⁸⁷ If one of the key reasons why men allegedly do not need the focus or assistance of the humanitarian sector is their access to livelihoods, attempting to ‘empower women’ through quotas should surely call into question the place of men within humanitarian assistance, given the potential trade-offs between employment opportunities for women and men. In my experience, however, it did not.

Furthermore, the overwhelming predominance of men as recipients of work permits reflects a number of factors – such as which sectors are open to non-Jordanian workers, gendered understandings of responsibility, and what has elsewhere been termed an “androcentric division of labour.”¹⁸⁸ However given that families often have very limited resources; the (official and unofficial) fees to gain a work permit can be between 100 JOD and 400 JOD (approximately \$140 - \$560);¹⁸⁹ men are particularly liable to be arrested, forcibly encamped, or deported for not having a work permit;¹⁹⁰ many Syrian families may be prioritising the safety of their male family members by using their limited resources to apply for a work permit for them. Having a quota for work permits for women would also therefore potentially take away Syrian families’ ability to prioritise their resources in the ways that they think best serves them. While increasing women’s labour market participation may be understood to be an attempt to correct or compensate for power imbalances between Syrian men and women, it is also, unavoidably, the imposition of another agenda, another power structure, and can represent the removal, not the provision, of choices to many Syrians.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed key livelihood opportunities available to Syrians living in Za’tari: CfW programmes and the ability to access the Jordanian labour market outside of the camp. It has argued that being a breadwinner is central to the masculinities for

¹⁸⁶ Interview with humanitarian worker with focus on LGBTI rights. Similar sentiments were expressed in interviews with Lina Darras; and Jared Kohler.

¹⁸⁷ See Chapter 4.

¹⁸⁸ See Greig, “Anxious States.”

¹⁸⁹ Lenner and Turner, “Making Refugees Work?”

¹⁹⁰ Bellamy et al., “The Lives and Livelihoods of Syrian Refugees.”

many Syrian men, although the construction of masculinities differs according to age and class, demonstrating the plurality of masculinities even within the ‘local’ context of Za‘tari. These masculinities are challenged by the precarity of the work available through CfW, the limited number of CfW opportunities, and by humanitarian attempts to prioritise the ‘vulnerable.’ CfW nonetheless contains its own hierarchies, among Syrians of different classes, and between humanitarian workers and their Syrian ‘volunteers.’ These arguments have demonstrated the prioritisation of humanitarian goals over the knowledge and views of the Syrian community, the ways in which encampment can facilitate the exercise of humanitarian power over refugees, and shown the paradoxical place that the labour market holds in humanitarian ideas about ‘vulnerability.’

Before moving on to discuss the market, however, I will offer two wider reflections on the analysis presented in this Chapter. Firstly, attempts to prioritise women’s access to livelihood opportunities appear to be more successful under contexts of encampment. That is, the ability to implement the humanitarian sector’s goals in the sphere of gender has been facilitated by a system that involves the restrictions of refugees’ rights, and the more extensive humanitarian control over refugees’ lives that this enables.¹⁹¹ In a sense, this is unsurprising; scholarship has demonstrated that refugee camps are designed with the aims and goals of the humanitarian sector in mind.¹⁹² Within the specific sphere of livelihoods, however, it demonstrates how humanitarian actors assume not only governmental functions in a camp,¹⁹³ and operate as a kind of public sector employer,¹⁹⁴ but are also able to insert rationalities into employment schemes in a way that is not possible within the wider Jordanian economy. The gendered labour market produced by humanitarian operations is somewhat different to the gendered labour market within Jordan at large, although not without its own hierarchies. Humanitarian attempts to correct power imbalances are only possible because of its privileged position in a power hierarchy relative to refugees.

Secondly, the possible gendered effects of Za‘tari residents being able to take up work permits in much larger numbers could potentially have a big impact on camp life. At the end of 2017, the number of Za‘tari residents who had been issued work permits was

¹⁹¹ Verdirame and Harrell-Bond, *Rights in Exile*, Chapter 6.

¹⁹² Hyndman, *Managing Displacement*.

¹⁹³ Turner, “Suspended Spaces.”

¹⁹⁴ Eric Werker, “Refugee Camp Economies,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 3 (2007): 461–80.

fewer than 5,000, and these permits last for a maximum of one year, although can be renewed. But if tens of thousands of Za'tari residents were able to receive work permits, then a very large proportion of the camp population may have the ability to leave either daily to nearby factories and farms, or to work for longer periods in Jordan with only brief and occasional return visits to the camp. If, as has been the case within other livelihood schemes within the camp, there is a (somewhat successful) effort to prioritise women and 'vulnerable' persons, then there could be an intensification of the existing dynamics in the camp, whereby many men lack activities, feel side-lined by humanitarian authorities, with detrimental impacts on their mental health and psychosocial wellbeing. At the same time, the burdens placed upon women could increase even further. If, on the other hand, as has been the case within the work permit scheme outside of the camp, work permits are overwhelmingly received by Syrian men rather than Syrian women, the gender demographics of life in the camp will change. More men will be working, in absolute and relative terms, and spending potentially extended periods of time outside of the camp, perhaps akin to many migrant workers, who often spend the majority of their time away from their families. In this instance, the effective permanent population of the camp would include a much larger proportion of women and children. Za'tari would thereby come closer to resembling the humanitarian vision of a 'vulnerable' population, which is perhaps what many humanitarians would have preferred all along.

Chapter 7: Marketising Resources, Marketing Refugees: ‘Self-Reliance’ and ‘Entrepreneurship’ in the Market of Za‘tari

“#Innovation starts with affected communities. Great examples from @ZaatariCamp,” reads a September 2015 tweet from UNHCR Innovation.¹ @ZaatariCamp is the Twitter handle of Za‘tari, the first refugee camp in the world to have its own Twitter account.² Set up in October 2013, and run by UNHCR staff, its profile describes the camp as “vast, dusty and unpredictable” and a “remarkable stretch of desert [that] is home to 80,000 Syrian refugees.”³ Among the various depictions of the camp that @ZaatariCamp and @UNHCRInnovation offer, one consistent portrayal is of Za‘tari as a space of ‘innovation’ and ‘entrepreneurship.’ UNHCR Innovation has even tweeted that the camp is a “hotspot” of innovation.⁴ The market, where much of this ‘innovation’ and ‘entrepreneurship’ happens, has, according to @ZaatariCamp, “helped refugees in finding normalcy in displacement.”⁵

The market is central not only to how the camp is imagined and portrayed externally, but also to life within the camp. It is the busiest area of Za‘tari, the centre of its economic life, the public area of the camp most removed from the domain of humanitarian actors, and the venue for thousands of tours given to those visiting the camp. This chapter argues that Syrians’ endeavours to create and sustain the market are attempts to create spaces free from the control of state and humanitarian agencies, and thus another form of refusal to occupy the passive, feminised subject positions demanded of them. Humanitarian actors see Syrians’ independent economic activities as too radical a form of self-reliance, and therefore attempt to control and regulate it through further deployments of masculinised forms of power. Humanitarian actors also bring their own agendas to the economic life of the camp in the form of private sector partnerships and official forms of humanitarian innovation. Unable to create passive refugee subjects,

¹ @UNHCR Innovation, “#Innovation Starts with Affected Communities. Great Examples from @ZaatariCamp,” 2015, <https://twitter.com/UNHCRInnovation/status/641627674562183168>.

² Dina Rickman, “The Story behind the First Refugee Camp on Twitter,” *indy100*, November 15, 2014, 10, [http://indy100.independent.co.uk/article/the-story-behind-the-first-refugee-camp-on-twitter--x\]zo1hh3vl](http://indy100.independent.co.uk/article/the-story-behind-the-first-refugee-camp-on-twitter--x]zo1hh3vl).

³ @ZaatariCamp, “Za‘tari Camp,” Twitter, October 2013, <https://twitter.com/ZaatariCamp>.

⁴ @UNHCR Innovation, “Refugee Camps Can Be Hotspots of Innovation. See How a Device for the Blind Was Developed in @ZaatariCamp,” 2015, <https://twitter.com/UNHCRInnovation/status/675217322974556160>.

⁵ @Zaatari Camp, “One of the 2000+ Shops Run by @Refugees in #Zaatari. This Market Helped Refugees in Finding Normalcy in Displacement,” 2016, <https://twitter.com/ZaatariCamp/status/687273642200305664>.

humanitarian actors instrumentally utilise the vision of refugeehood and refugee camps that Syrians themselves have created. Syrians' attempts to live self-reliant economic lives are therefore constrained within the camp but promoted outside of it, condemned as unruly, yet fetishised as entrepreneurial.

The Market of Za'tari

By the time I arrived in Za'tari, I had seen many hundreds of pictures of the camp: in news reports, NGO documents, and fundraising appeals. Za'tari, and its market in particular, have become symbols of the Syrian refugee crisis and the object of tremendous media interest.⁶ News stories about unrelated aspects of the Syria situation, such as those entitled “Jordanian Air Force Bombs Syrian opposition vehicles,” and “Bond Markets Could Help Alleviate the Syrian Refugee Crisis,” appear with pictures of the Za'tari's market as the accompanying image.⁷ When I walked down the streets of the market, at times it almost felt, disturbingly, as if I were almost looking at a photo, so iconic had the market become (perhaps in my mind as well as in the media).⁸

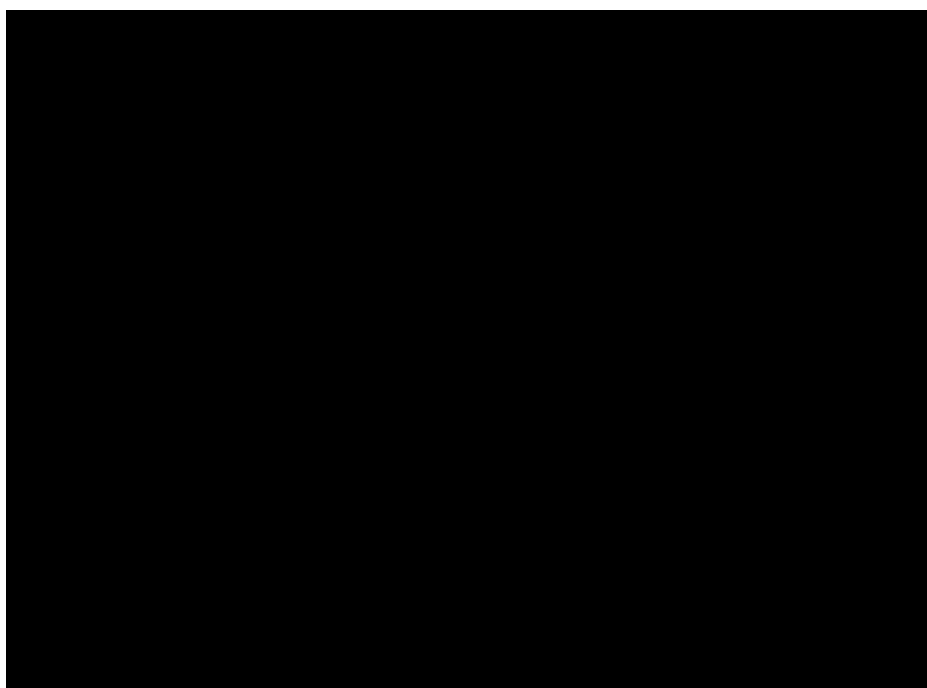


Figure 7.1: Map of Za'tari's Main Market Streets⁹

⁶ Betts, Bloom, and Weaver, “Refugee Innovation.”

⁷ Firas Choufi, “Jordanian Air Force Bombs Syrian Opposition Vehicles,” *Al Akhbar English*, April 17, 2014, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/jordanian-air-force-bombs-syrian-opposition-vehicles>; Jake Flanagan, “Bond Markets Could Help Alleviate the Syrian Refugee Crisis,” *Quartz* (blog), October 11, 2015, <https://qz.com/521764/bond-markets-could-help-alleviate-the-syrian-refugee-crisis/>.

⁸ Fieldnotes, Za'tari, 05.12.2015 and 21.07.2016.

⁹ REACH, “Market Assessment in Al Za'atari Refugee Camp in Jordan: Assessment Report” (Amman: REACH, November 2014), 5.

The market dominates several of the main streets of the camp. The NGO REACH's assessment identified four main streets that constituted the market, as shown in the map above. Market Street 1 (using REACH's terminology) starts very near to Base Camp, and the northern end of that street has long contained a large number of schools, clinics, and hospitals, which contributed to the eventual location of the market.¹⁰ The market also began in this area because many of the families living on or near to 'Market Street 1,' and who were already living in caravans rather than tents, were distributed porches and kits that contained additional building materials as part of 'winterisation' efforts in 2012-2013. In line with Syrians' determination to exercise agency over the space of the camp and the use of resources brought into it, many converted these porches into shops and stalls.¹¹ As the camp expanded further east from the original area that was inhabited (mainly Districts 1-4), shops also began to appear in new and different areas of the camp, and became concentrated on the streets labelled as Market Streets 2, 3 and 4 on the above map. In earlier years of the camp, Syrians who were planning to leave the camp would often sell their caravans to others who planned to remain in the camp, many of which were used to establish shops, although UNHCR has attempted to prevent this by obliging families who wish to leave the camp to return their caravan first.¹²

REACH's assessment in 2014 noted 1,438 shops and stalls on those four streets,¹³ although in 2017 UNHCR typically quoted the figure of 3,000 informal shops and businesses in the camp.¹⁴ This likely reflects an increase in the number of shops over time, that a large number of businesses do not operate from the main streets of the market, and that some businesses are conducted from home, rather than from a designated shop. The most common types of shops in the market are mini markets, clothes shops, shoe shops, jewellery shops, phone and internet shops, and restaurants and bakeries, while currency exchanges and animal/pet shops are among the more unusual sightings in the market. A majority of shop-owners told REACH that their main source of stock was the camp, in which wholesalers also operate, although almost half indicated that they re-stocked from at least one area outside the camp, primarily Mafraq. The vast majority of businesses are small, with 88% of those in the REACH assessment

¹⁰ Dalal, "Camp Cities Between Planning and Practice," 113.

¹¹ Betts, Bloom, and Weaver, "Refugee Innovation," 20.

¹² Conversations with Syrian shop-holders, Za'tari, 01.08.2016.

¹³ REACH, "Market Assessment," 1.

¹⁴ E.g. see UNHCR, "Zaatari Refugee Camp Factsheet January 2017" (UNHCR, 2017).

receiving between 1 and 50 customers daily. Just over half of the businesses surveyed employed staff, although almost 60 percent of these additional workers were family members, the vast majority of whom were not paid a wage. Extrapolating from REACH's figures, there were only around 300 paid employment opportunities for non-family members in the market at the time of the assessment. 96 percent of those working in the market are men, and only 4 percent women.¹⁵

Syrians began to conduct the informal economic activity that developed into the market as soon as the camp was set up: from day two of Za'tari's existence, "there was a ten year old kid selling Hamra cigarettes and tomatoes."¹⁶ In a fashion typical of many humanitarian operations,¹⁷ Syrians very quickly began to marketise and exchange the goods that were distributed to them, such as the porches and caravans that now house the market. In the words of then-camp manager Kilian Kleinschmidt, refugees were "privatising" the resources.¹⁸ Humanitarian actors did not see these items as commodities, and would often lament, in interviews and more casual interactions, that the items they provided at considerable expense were being sold on at much lower prices than humanitarian actors paid for them.¹⁹ These disputes, I argue, represent different understandings of refugeehood and the level of agency that refugees are expected to exercise within camp settings, and are another demonstration of many Syrian men's resolve to provide financially for their families. Syrians' determination to use the resources available to them in ways that suit their interests, as they see them, is an act of survival, but also, as this chapter will demonstrate, an act of defiance against the authorities that would prefer them to be passive, helpless, recipients of aid.²⁰

One prominent example of this marketisation is the bikes in the camp. The camp is slightly over 5 square kilometres, and has hostile weather conditions in both summer and winter, making sources of transportation and mobility within the camp important. The

¹⁵ REACH, "Market Assessment," 8, 12–15, 18.

¹⁶ Interview with former NGO worker in Za'tari. Hamra cigarettes are a popular Syrian brand.

¹⁷ E.g. see Karen Jacobsen, *The Economic Life of Refugees* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2005); Bram J. Jansen, "The Accidental City: Violence, Economy and Humanitarianism in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya" (Wageningen University, 2011).

¹⁸ UNHCR, *A Day in the Life* 1.

¹⁹ Interview with INGO programme manager in Za'tari (1); conversations with NGO workers and Jordanian police officer, Za'tari, 03.12.2015 and 21.07.2016.

²⁰ For scholarship on the humanitarian creation of dependent subjects, see Harrell-Bond, Voutira, and Leopold, "Counting the Refugees"; for examples of resistance to such labels and subject positions, see Bulley, "Inside the Tent"; Rygiel, "Politicizing Camps."

taxi service is very expensive, Syrians have no access to private motorised vehicles, and the only other main form of transportation is donkey-pulled carts or wheelbarrows, which one occasionally sees children inside.²¹ Many bikes have been donated to Za'tari, most notably by Amsterdam Municipality, which brought 500 second-hand bikes to the camp in early 2015.²² These were distributed to Syrians, often to men undertaking regular CfW with humanitarian actors. But the majority of Syrians who now have bikes in the camp, I was told by numerous sources, have bought them from the market, where many of the bikes originally distributed by humanitarian agencies end up.²³ Two men running bike shops in the camp told me that they would sell bikes for anything from 35 JOD (approximately \$50) for a smaller, cheaper bike, up to about 150 JOD (approximately \$210) for the best bikes that were available.²⁴ Many Syrians considered the use of bikes to be appropriate only for men and boys, although this is being challenged by at least one young woman in the camp.²⁵ Because of the extreme rarity of women using bikes in the camp, humanitarian actors would distribute them only to (some) men who were working for them, not to women. According to a colleague who worked with women in the camp, many Syrian women considered this to be discrimination, but wanted the bikes not for themselves, but for their male family members.²⁶

Syrians' attempts to create this market through the creative re-appropriation of humanitarian resources have been a source of contestation and controversy since the camp was opened. The market receives a great deal of praise from humanitarian workers on the ground,²⁷ and in the international media (see below). Yet in the earlier years of the camp, UNHCR had a complex relationship with the development of the market, which was happening largely outside of their control.²⁸ In particular, there were strong disagreements between UNHCR staff working in Za'tari and the UNHCR leadership in Amman. Humanitarian staff 'on the ground' in Za'tari were more likely to adopt, relatively speaking, a *laissez faire* attitude to the agency that Syrians were able to exercise over space within the camp, while the agency's leadership in Amman, which is

²¹ Author observation and conversation with Syrians, Za'tari, 24.11.2015 and 22.12.2015.

²² Agence France Presse, "Dutch Bikes given to Syrian Refugee Camp in Jordan," March 30, 2015, <http://ara.tv/jhbdk>.

²³ Conversations with Syrian men, including bike shop-holders, Za'tari, 01.08.2016.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Yaser Al-Hariri, "The Bike Is for Her Also," *The Road Media* (blog), March 1, 2017, <https://zaatari-media.org/2017/03/01/the-bike-is-for-her-also/>.

²⁶ Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 10.08.2016.

²⁷ Conversations with NGO workers, Za'tari, 27.10.2015 and 16.02.2016.

²⁸ Interviews with former NGO worker in Za'tari; former UNHCR worker in Za'tari; and former employee of international organisation in Za'tari.

accountable to the government for UNHCR's actions in the country, was concerned by the way the camp was developing, by the policies of its staff in the camp, and the level of attention that Za'tari was receiving.²⁹ Yet as this Chapter will demonstrate, the relative leniency of some UNHCR operatives in the camp did not constitute support for Syrians' attempts to create the market, or to thereby to fundamentally alter its social world and its temporalities.

In line with the analysis presented in Chapter 3, for Jordanian governmental and non-governmental actors, the development of the market was a sign that Syrian refugee camps in Jordan might be following the same trajectory as Palestinian camps in the country.³⁰ Even though, in comparison to Lebanon for example, Jordan's Palestinian camps are 'well surveyed' by the regime, Palestinian camps, and the fact that they are *de facto* permanent features of the Jordanian landscape, are highly sensitive topics within Jordan and the wider region.³¹ SRAD's attempts to regulate the entry of goods into the market can be understood as an attempt to ensure that Za'tari does not become similarly permanent. For example, SRAD insists that no concrete or breeze blocks be brought into the camp, although a small number are visible, and all of the shop-holders I met were keen to emphasise that they abided by this restriction put in place by the government.³²

As in other attempts to exert control over the life of the camp, SRAD uses draconian measures to ensure Syrian compliance with its rules, and to exert its supremacy over the space of the camp. Syrian interlocutors in the market, while reluctant to discuss the issue in any level of detail, volunteered to me the information that the police regularly shut shops down for (perceived) infractions of the rules governing the camp, and at times have deported the shop-holders to Syria as a punishment.³³ Syrians' agency within the camp is only acceptable within the limits defined by the authorities. Although Betts, Bloom and Weaver refer to Za'tari as an "enabling environment" for Syrians' economic

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Conversations with Jordanian NGO workers and Jordanian police officer, Za'tari, 27.10.2015, 03.11.2015, and 21.07.2016.

³¹ Laleh Khalili, "A Landscape of Uncertainty: Palestinian in Lebanon," *Middle East Report*, no. 236 (2005): 34–39; Misselwitz and Hanafi, "Testing a New Paradigm"; Peteet, "Cartographic Violence."

³² Conversations with Syrians working in the market, Za'tari, 21.07.2016; interview with Syrian woman working in Za'tari market (1), Za'tari, 21.07.2016.

³³ Betts and Collier, *Refuge*, 171. Fieldnotes, Za'tari Refugee Camp, 01.08.2016.

activities,³⁴ to the extent that this enabling environment exists, it is because of Syrian refugees' struggles to create it.

Too Much Self-Reliance? Syrians' Attempts at Radical Autonomy in the Market

The resistance, at higher levels of the UNHCR hierarchy, to the ways that the camp was developing might be considered surprising in light of the fact that for decades UNHCR has formally attempted to move away from a model of aid distribution and 'dependency' towards one of 'self-reliant' refugees who are 'active partners' in protection and assistance.³⁵ 'Self-reliant' refugees, according to UNHCR, are those who have the "economic and social ability to meet essential needs on a sustainable and dignified basis."³⁶ Among UNHCR policy documents, this 'self-reliance' is variously framed as a right, a protection tool, and a strategy for combatting poverty.³⁷ In other documents, such as UNHCR's handbook on the subject, understandings of 'self-reliance' are infused with the language of neoliberal governmentalities. UNHCR describes 'self-reliance' as "a form of empowerment," that will enable refugees to be "recast...as agents of development" and to cope with crisis and meet their own social and economic needs with renewed "hope and vigour."³⁸ The refugee, like increasing numbers of others, becomes "not a citizen with claims on the state, but a self-enterprising subject who is obligated to become an entrepreneur of himself or herself."³⁹ Noting the articulations of refugee policies and neoliberalisations in the North, Randy Lippert has argued that the critiques of refugees' alleged dependence on aid bear a "remarkable" resemblance to contemporary critiques of welfare systems in Europe and North America.⁴⁰

Yet it is, as Gaim Kibreab has demonstrated, a 'myth' to suggest that long-term aid creates a system, or mentality, of dependency among refugees.⁴¹ The push for refugee self-reliance, as UNHCR's own documents acknowledge, is also a response to the declining budgets that the agency has experienced since the 1980s, as a response to

³⁴ Betts, Bloom, and Weaver, "Refugee Innovation," 18.

³⁵ UNHCR, "Handbook for Self Reliance" (Geneva: UNHCR, 2005).

³⁶ UNHCR, "Local Integration and Self-Reliance," Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme Standing Committee, EC/55/SC/CRP.15 (Geneva: UNHCR, 2005), 3.

³⁷ Evan Easton-Calabria, "Refugees Asked to Fish for Themselves": The Role of Livelihoods Trainings for Kampala's Urban Refugees," New Issues in Refugee Research (Geneva: UNHCR, 2016).

³⁸ UNHCR, "Handbook for Self Reliance," 3, 13, 21.

³⁹ Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*, 14.

⁴⁰ Randy Lippert, "Governing Refugees: The Relevance of Governmentality to Understanding the International Refugee Regime," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 24, no. 3 (July 1, 1999): 313.

⁴¹ Kibreab, "The Myth of Dependency among Camp Refugees in Somalia 1979–1989."

increasingly protracted refugee crises across the globe.⁴² In line with the need to reduce budgets, and in accordance with neoliberal governmentalities, UNHCR has promoted ‘self-reliance’ policies even in contexts in which refugees’ objective circumstances would appear to foreclose the possibility of them achieving genuine self-reliance.⁴³

As Mark Duffield has argued, in the field of development it is “axiomatic” that populations in underdeveloped countries “are self-reliant in terms of their main economic, social and welfare requirements,” and therefore crises present an opportunity to deepen and strengthen self-reliance.⁴⁴ There is a limit, however, to the forms of self-reliance that humanitarian and development agencies are willing to support. Populations in the South are expected to undertake “approved forms” of self-reliance, such as “the self-reliance of NGO-audited microcredit projects [and] legal forms of economic self-help.”⁴⁵ Other forms of self-reliance, on the other hand, the ones that signal “*radical autonomy*...[and] the discovery of effective means of existence beyond states and free of aid agencies” (emphasis in original) are in opposition to “official aid efforts” and therefore threatening to those agencies and authorities.⁴⁶

Promoting (particular forms of) ‘self-reliance’ was part of humanitarian workers’ understandings of their role in Za’tari. A former UNHCR worker in the camp, in response to my question of whether ‘self-reliance’ for refugees was part of what he and his colleagues were attempting to achieve in Za’tari, said “I do think, yeah, it is, generally.” Most people in the organisation subscribed, he said, to both the goals of ‘self-reliance’ and conducting their work in a participatory way.⁴⁷ Immediately after this, however, he drew attention to exactly the tension that Duffield explores – in complex circumstances such as Za’tari, he said, “your idea of what resilience and community empowerment are might not necessarily be theirs.”⁴⁸ Put another way, what forms of self-reliance are acceptable to humanitarian actors, and what forms are, ironically, *too* self-reliant? When is a self-reliant population an unruly population in need of governance? As

⁴² Jeff Crisp, “UNHCR, Refugee Livelihoods and Self-Reliance: A Brief History,” UNHCR, 2003, <http://www.unhcr.org/3f978a894.html>; Duffield, “Global Civil War”; UNHCR, “Handbook for Self Reliance.”

⁴³ Kaiser, “Participating in Development?”; Tania Kaiser, “Between a Camp and a Hard Place: Rights, Livelihood and Experiences of the Local Settlement System for Long-Term Refugees in Uganda,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 44, no. 4 (2006): 597–621.

⁴⁴ Duffield, “Global Civil War,” 154.

⁴⁵ Duffield, “The Liberal Way of Development,” 67–68.

⁴⁶ Duffield, 68.

⁴⁷ Interview with former UNHCR worker in Za’tari.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

in other areas of this thesis, there is a deep gap in priorities and understandings between humanitarian actors and their ‘beneficiaries.’ The contestations surrounding the supply of electricity in the camp provide a particularly pertinent example of these differing understandings of self-reliance in Za‘tari.

The provision and use of electricity in the camp has long been a subject of controversy, or a “sensitive issue” in the words of one NGO worker.⁴⁹ UNHCR never planned for electricity to be supplied to refugees’ houses in the camp,⁵⁰ but it did bring electricity into the camp in order to create systems of public lighting (at least in the older parts of the camp, in which the busiest streets were) and to ensure that there was electricity available in facilities such as schools and hospitals.⁵¹ Syrians living in the camp, however, had other ideas, and soon started to informally connect their homes and businesses to the electricity pylons. By October 2013, 73% of households were connected to electricity.⁵² In August 2014, according to REACH’s assessment, 94.8% of businesses in the market were connected to the local power grid.⁵³

This meant that the cost of electricity being supplied to the camp, for which UNHCR was responsible, grew rapidly, and became a major concern for them. According to UNHCR officials, in 2014 the electricity bill ran to \$500,000 per month,⁵⁴ although others quote even higher figures, especially for winter months.⁵⁵ UNHCR also expressed concerns about the safety implications of uncoordinated and unregulated large-scale attempts to tap into the electricity supply, especially given that for the first two years of its existence, the majority of accommodation in the camp was tents rather than caravans. For example, in its 2013 ‘Safety and Security Report’ for the camp, UNHCR notes that “several” of the fires that occurred in the camp in that year were a result of “faulty electrical connections.”⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Interview with NGO Worker in Za‘tari.

⁵⁰ Talia Radford, “Refugee Camps Are the ‘Cities of Tomorrow’, Says Humanitarian-Aid Expert,” *Dezeen*, November 23, 2015, <https://www.dezeen.com/2015/11/23/refugee-camps-cities-of-tomorrow-killian-kleinschmidt-interview-humanitarian-aid-expert/>.

⁵¹ Ledwith, *Zaatari*, 10.

⁵² REACH, “Key Findings of REACH Camp Sweep Assessment in Za‘atari,” 20.

⁵³ REACH, “Market Assessment,” 16.

⁵⁴ Conversation with UNHCR official working in Za‘tari, Amman, 13.10.2015.

⁵⁵ E.g. see Michael Kimmelman, “Refugee Camp for Syrians in Jordan Evolves as a Do-It-Yourself City,” *The New York Times*, July 4, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/05/world/middleeast/zaatari-refugee-camp-in-jordan-evolves-as-a-do-it-yourself-city.html>; Ledwith, *Zaatari*, 30.

⁵⁶ UNHCR, “Za‘atari Refugee Camp - Safety and Security Report (2013),” 10.

Yet even if it is a phenomenon that carries risks, both private and public, Syrians' interactions with the electricity system, and their attempts to turn it to their advantage, is also an instance of self-reliance, of people not having a 'dependency mentality,' not waiting for governing agencies to provide for them, but using what is available from their circumstances to provide for themselves. But because it is, to use Duffield's terminology, a non-approved form, which demonstrates autonomy from aid agencies,⁵⁷ it is not recognised as an instance of 'self-reliance.' Instead, the electricity system in the camp became an example of "chaos and crime" in the camp,⁵⁸ and a key aspect of camp life over which governance needed to be asserted.⁵⁹ UNHCR undertook "a clean-up of electrical wiring," i.e. removed many connections from the grid,⁶⁰ installed electricity metres in many of the shops,⁶¹ and although electricity is now supplied to caravans, the overall budget is limited by UNHCR to \$100,000 per month.⁶²

Because of this cap on the monthly electricity budget, the number of hours for which this electricity supply has been made available to camp residents changes regularly, with both the number of hours per day, and which hours per day, changing according to how much electricity is being used. UNHCR and SRAD have released a guidance sheet, to inform refugees how to reduce their electricity usage, and to encourage them to do so.⁶³ By September 2015, at the beginning of my fieldwork, it was being supplied for only 8 hours a day, between 7pm and 3am, which was a reduction from the previous provision of 11 hours per day.⁶⁴ During one of my visits to the caravan of a family in July 2016, a Syrian man showed me a text message he received earlier that day, to say that from today the electricity times would be changed from 7pm to 4am, to 6pm to 2am.⁶⁵

Electricity is supplied in the evening and the night, I was told by one Syrian man, because if it were supplied in the daytime it would be used a lot more, and thus available for fewer hours per day.⁶⁶ The timings that have been chosen have created particular

⁵⁷ Duffield, "The Liberal Way of Development."

⁵⁸ Würger, "Chaos and Crime: The Trials of Running a Syrian Refugee Camp."

⁵⁹ E.g. see UNHCR, *A Day in the Life* 14.

⁶⁰ UNHCR, "Jordan Interagency Weekly Highlights: Syrian Refugee Response," February 10, 2014, 3.

⁶¹ Ledwith, *Zaatari*.

⁶² Conversations with INGO workers, Za'tari, 13.10.2015.

⁶³ UNHCR and SRAD, "Save Energy to Increase Number of Supplied Hours," *THE ROAD MEDIA* (blog), February 8, 2017, <https://zaatari-media.org/2017/02/08/save-energy-to-increase-number-of-supplied-hours/>.

⁶⁴ UNHCR, "Zaatari Refugee Camp Factsheet September 2015" (UNHCR, September 2015).

⁶⁵ Interview with married Syrian man living in Za'tari (1), Za'tari, 27.07.2016.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

difficulties for women in the camp, who do the overwhelming majority of domestic labour, much of which requires, or at the very least is made significantly easier by, the presence of electricity.⁶⁷ That NGOs, both in their programmatic outposts in the camp, and in Base Camp, typically have electricity throughout the day, for fans in the summer, for heaters in the winter, and for computers all year round, unsurprisingly doesn't go unnoticed by the Syrian population,⁶⁸ many of whom are dissatisfied by the electricity supply they receive. In the summer of 2016, for example, it was the issue about which the Community Police in the camp received the most complaints.⁶⁹

These restrictions and regulations of the electricity supply have had an important impact on the functioning of the market, significantly reducing the level and variety of activity in the market streets. One senior NGO official even went as far as to say that the electricity policies "killed the Champs-Élysées," the term many humanitarians use for the main market street, as is discussed below.⁷⁰ Some shops responded to humanitarian actors preventing them from connecting to the local electricity grid by buying small generators for their shops, which requires a permit, as does any gasoline that is brought into the camp to power them. While I was asking one shop worker whether the shop had electricity, she began to turn to point to the generator at the back of the shop, which was slightly obscured from view. Her voice stopped abruptly, and she turned to the policeman who was accompanying me, and checked with him that generators were allowed in the camp. The policeman reassured her that there was no problem, as long as they had a permit for the generator, which she in turn assured him they had.⁷¹ Where electricity is provided in 'self-reliant' ways, with the relevant permits, and at extra cost to Syrians, it is a topic of little interest, let alone concern, and conversation quickly moved on. But for some shop-holders, depending on the nature of their business and the level of electricity usage entailed, providing electricity in ways that accorded with the official vision of 'self-reliance' was costly and difficult.⁷²

Adding further analytical depth to the complex contestations surrounding self-reliance is the argumentation presented in Chapters 3 and 6 about the importance of gendered

⁶⁷ Interview with married Syrian woman living in Za'tari (2), Za'tari, 27.07.2016.

⁶⁸ Interview with married Syrian man living in Za'tari (3).

⁶⁹ Visit to community police station, Za'tari, 21.07.2016.

⁷⁰ Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 25.11.2015.

⁷¹ Interview with Syrian woman working in Za'tari market (1).

⁷² Betts, Bloom, and Weaver, "Refugee Innovation," 18.

understandings of agency and responsibility among refugees and humanitarian workers. Syrian refugees in Za'tari want to exercise agency over the space of the camp, how it is designed, and how it is run, yet the men who are often at the (at least visible) foreground of organising such efforts are seen as 'political,' and thereby to threaten the implementation of humanitarian goals, and to disrupt the governability of the camp population. Simultaneously, being a 'breadwinner' was central to the creation of masculinities for many Syrian men in the camp, and largely expected of men by themselves, Syrian women, and humanitarian workers. Put another way, many Syrians do want to be self-reliant, and to exercise control and agency over their own lives and circumstances, but not necessarily in the ways that humanitarian actors designate as appropriate for them.

In accordance with this analysis, it is not surprising that men dominate the work opportunities created in, and provided by, the market, which offered some men much-needed meaningful activity that was studiously not provided by humanitarian actors. When I asked Syrians working in the market (men and women) to estimate what proportion of the people working in the market were women, some declined to give a figure, but suggested that it was very few, while others offered an estimate of 5 percent, remarkably close to REACH's 2014 finding that only 4 percent of market employees were women or girls.⁷³ The REACH assessment also found that only 1.7% of businesses in the camp were owned by women.⁷⁴

These gendered expectations were also clear in how men and women justified their presence in the market, and the shops in which they worked. During some of my visits to shops, I would ask the employees, men and women, why they were working in the market. Men's presence was typically justified by the simple need to work, or by the fact that this was the best work opportunity they had found. That they should be working went unquestioned in their answers.⁷⁵ In contrast, most of the women I met working in the market would respond to the question by offering particular information about their circumstances, in order to justify their presence in the paid labour market. For example, some women told me that male family members were not in the camp, or were physically unable to work, and so they had to do it instead. Others explained that the type of shop

⁷³ Fieldnotes, Za'tari, 21.07.2016 and 01.08.2016; REACH, "Market Assessment," 15.

⁷⁴ REACH, 1, 14.

⁷⁵ Interviews with Syrian shop-holder in Za'tari market, man (2) and Syrian shop-holder in Za'tari market, man (4), Za'tari, 01.08.2016.

that they were working in was deemed to require (or benefit from) women staff: beauty shops, wedding shops, and women's underwear shops were all offered as examples of this type of shop.⁷⁶ The concentration of women in specific businesses is also reflected in the data gathered by REACH, whereby although 4 percent of employees in the market were female, females were only employed in 2.9% of businesses.⁷⁷

The proportion of men working in the market is a reflection of the patterns of labour market participation in much of pre-conflict Syria; access to particular positions is mediated by gender, class and other factors. Referring to Syria's 2006 Labour Force Survey, Line Khatib details that women represented 25 percent of public sector workers, but only 8 percent of private sector workers.⁷⁸ In the previous three decades prior to the Syrian uprising, it is noteworthy that as neoliberal reforms in Syria were progressively bolstering the role of the private sector at the expense of the public sector,⁷⁹ women's participation in the former decreased significantly.⁸⁰ The percentages of men and women working in different roles in the camp, both in the 'public sector'⁸¹ of CfW, and the private sector in the market, quite closely mirror the situation in pre-2011 Syria, albeit with women occupying a slightly smaller percentage of roles in the market than in the paid private sector in pre-2011 Syria.

The quest for different forms of 'self-reliance' also made visible the importance of temporalities in Syrians' relationship to the camp, and the relationship between masculinities, breadwinning and planning for possible futures. While the circumstances of refugeehood require Syrians to act in the 'subjunctive mode,' that is, in the present in relation to an unknown future,⁸² many of the shop-holders I met had invested significantly in their shops in order to expand them. Several of the shops I visited in July and August 2016 had made improvements over the recent holiday period of Ramadan

⁷⁶ Interviews with Syrian woman working in Za'tari market (1); Syrian woman working in Za'tari market (2), Za'tari, 21.07.2016; Syrian woman working in Za'tari market (3), Za'tari, 21.07.2016; and married Syrian man living in Za'tari (3).

⁷⁷ REACH, "Market Assessment," 15.

⁷⁸ Line Khatib, *Islamic Revivalism in Syria: The Rise and Fall of Ba'thist Secularism* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011), 100.

⁷⁹ Angela Joya, "A Comparative Study of Neoliberalism in Egypt and Syria," in *Confronting Global Neoliberalism: Third World Resistance and Development Strategies*, ed. Richard Westra (Atlanta, Georgia: Clarity Press, 2010).

⁸⁰ Khatib, *Islamic Revivalism in Syria*, 99.

⁸¹ Werker, "Refugee Camp Economies."

⁸² Whyte, Susan (2005) quoted in Turner, "What Is a Refugee Camp?," 145.

(early June – early July 2016).⁸³ One showed me around his barber's shop, with its newly-decorated violet interior, before pointing out the smaller stall across the road that he previously owned. A falafel seller had installed a new faux-brick design on the back wall of his shop to create more atmosphere. A tailor had recently opened up a new branch of his shop across the street, which bore the same name as the original, with a number two in brackets afterwards.

This level of planning and investment demonstrate that while, as Cathrine Brun argues, humanitarian policies create little room for biographical lives or potential futures,⁸⁴ there are (uncertain) futurities that shape and influence the actions of Syrians. The camp may be designed to be a temporary space, and Jordanian state actors may go to great lengths to try and render it so, but Syrians' investment in their futures within and beyond Za'tari undermine the idea that the camp is necessarily a transitory space. Secondly, it demonstrates that providing for others, which many Syrian men were expected to do, and expected of themselves, often included attempts to provide for children of the family, and to plan for and improve their future, which was a common preoccupation of many Za'tari residents.⁸⁵ Thirdly, in their presentation of the businesses they had started and grown, and their obvious pride in showing me the improvements and investments that they had made, it was clear that the shops provided many men in the camp with a sense of purpose that, as this thesis has demonstrated, it was otherwise difficult for them to find.⁸⁶

Private Sector Good, Private Sector Bad

A second humanitarian agenda that plays an important role within Za'tari is that of 'humanitarian innovation.' Innovation, as Tom Scott-Smith argues, "is the new buzzword in humanitarianism."⁸⁷ While a "nebulous concept...calls to innovate all involve an underlying commitment to novelty, embracing new technologies and shifting focus to 'new actors' in the private sector."⁸⁸ As was explored in Chapter 3, the encamped population represents a captive audience for humanitarian actors. This includes attempts

⁸³ Author observation and conversations with Syrian shop-holders, Za'tari, 21.07.2016, 27.07.2016 and 01.08.2016.

⁸⁴ Brun, "There Is No Future in Humanitarianism."

⁸⁵ Conversations with Syrian men, Za'tari, 02.02.2016 and 09.02.2016.

⁸⁶ Author observation and conversations with Syrians working in the market, Za'tari, 21.07.2016, 27.07.2016 and 01.08.2016.

⁸⁷ Scott-Smith, "Humanitarian Neophilia," 2229.

⁸⁸ Scott-Smith, 2230.

to deploy ‘innovations’ in the governance of refugees, who in many cases have little choice but to comply. One article on humanitarian innovation even explicitly refers to the “potential for seeing [humanitarian innovation] as a ‘crisis laboratory’ for stimulating novel thinking.”⁸⁹ In other contexts, UNHCR has deployed technology that is genuinely experimental and unproven in its refugee operations.⁹⁰ The camp hosts its own Innovation Lab, run by NRC, an organisation that has previously run other “innovative” activities in Za‘tari, including “upcycling for the vulnerable.”⁹¹ The camp is also the site of a ‘refugee coding week’⁹² run by software company SAP, regular tours for private sector actors,⁹³ and demonstrations of Google’s self-drive cars.⁹⁴

One part of the humanitarian innovation agenda is the incorporation of private sector actors into humanitarian operations. According to a paper written by Alexander Betts, Louise Bloom, and Naohiko Omata, academics at the University of Oxford’s Refugee Studies Centre, the humanitarian sector should abandon its “instinctive antipathy” for private sector actors, who as innovators are a model to be emulated.⁹⁵ The state sector is the “old way,” the private sector is the “new way.” Humanitarianism the “old way,” development the “new way.” Dependency the “old way,” empowerment the “new way.”⁹⁶ While humanitarians are encouraged to become more open to private partners, the private sector, in a report released by the Overseas Development Institute, is encouraged to see possible collaboration with the humanitarian sector not as a form of corporate social responsibility, but as a business opportunity.⁹⁷

⁸⁹ John Bessant, Howard Rush, and Anna Trifilova, “Crisis-Driven Innovation: The Case of Humanitarian Innovation,” *International Journal of Innovation Management* 19, no. 06 (2015): 12.

⁹⁰ See Katja Lindskov Jacobsen, “Experimentation in Humanitarian Locations: UNHCR and Biometric Registration of Afghan Refugees,” *Security Dialogue* 46, no. 2 (2015): 144–64.

⁹¹ Norwegian Refugee Council, “NRC Finds Innovative Ways to Support Refugees in Zaatari Camp,” Text, ReliefWeb, September 16, 2014, <http://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/nrc-finds-innovative-ways-support-refugees-zaatari-camp>.

⁹² SAP News Center, “Refugee Code Week: Programming A Future Perspective,” Digitalist Magazine, December 2, 2016, <http://www.digitalistmag.com/improving-lives/2016/12/02/refugee-code-week-programming-a-future-perspective-04731513>.

⁹³ Interview with former NGO worker in Za‘tari.

⁹⁴ Radford, “Refugee Camps Are the ‘Cities of Tomorrow’, Says Humanitarian-Aid Expert.”

⁹⁵ Alexander Betts, Louise Bloom, and Naohiko Omata, “Humanitarian Innovation and Refugee Protection,” Working Paper Series (Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre, 2012), 4.

⁹⁶ Betts, Bloom, and Omata, 5.

⁹⁷ S. Zyck and Randolph Kent, “Humanitarian Crises, Emergency Preparedness and Response: The Role of Business and the Private Sector. Jordan Case Study,” *Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG): Overseas Development Institute* 400 (2014), <http://www.cridlac.org/digitalizacion/pdf/eng/doc19581/doc19581-contenido.pdf>.

Within Za'tari, the incorporation of private sector actors and innovations represent another deployment of masculinised rational-bureaucratic power by humanitarian agencies, and a simultaneous disempowerment of the refugee population. In this instance it is rationalised by the use of technology and 'innovation'.⁹⁸ These dynamics are clearest in the two supermarkets in the camp, which are commonly referred to as *al-mall* (meaning 'the mall'). The first to open, in January 2014, was Safeway, which has fourteen stores in Jordan, and is owned by the Kuwaiti company The Sultan Center.⁹⁹ A year and a half after the camp opened, this supermarket offered, according to one Jordanian news outlet, "refugee retail therapy" for Syrians living there.¹⁰⁰ The second supermarket, which opened just weeks later, is called Tazweed ('supply' or 'provision' in Arabic). According to its website, Tazweed is a "leading provider of customized and integrated logistics and support services in remote, demanding, and hostile environments."¹⁰¹ The client list on its website is a mixture of UN agencies, large international NGOs, and state militaries, including the militaries of both the United States and Jordan.¹⁰² In Safeway, the staff is half Jordanian and half Syrian (the latter 'employed' through CfW), and 93 percent of the staff at Tazweed are reportedly Jordanians from the local area.¹⁰³ Tazweed also conducts youth trainings for Jordanians in Mafraq Governorate, and Za'tari village specifically,¹⁰⁴ allowing Jordanians to benefit from the introduction of certain forms of private sector activity into the camp.

The means through which Syrians are able to shop at the supermarket have been subject to a series of 'innovative' steps, steps that have, in turn, reduced the ability of Syrians to innovate independently. In the earliest months of the camp, food assistance was initially offered by the World Food Programme (WFP) through the provision of hot meals, although by October 2012 this had changed to 'take home' dry rations.¹⁰⁵ In September 2013, the system switched again, and WFP began to distribute paper food vouchers that

⁹⁸ See Chapter 2.

⁹⁹ The Sultan Center, "TSC Jordan," The Sultan Center, n.d., <http://corporate.sultan-center.com/our-business/tsc-retail/tsc-jordan/>.

¹⁰⁰ Albawaba, "Refugee Retail Therapy: Safeway Supermarket for Syrians Debuts at Jordan's Zaatari Camp," Al Bawaba, January 20, 2014, <http://www.albawaba.com/editorchoice/jordan-zaatari-548638>.

¹⁰¹ Tazweed, "About Us," Tazweed, n.d., <http://www.tazweed.jo/index.php/about-us>.

¹⁰² Tazweed, "Clients," Tazweed, n.d., <http://www.tazweed.jo/index.php/clients>.

¹⁰³ Muath Freij, "Two Hypermarkets Offer Zaatari Residents Variety of Foodstuff," Jordan Times, February 6, 2014, <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/two-hypermarkets-offer-zaatari-residents-variety-foodstuff>.

¹⁰⁴ Mona Shalabaya, "افتتاح مركز تزويد للتسوق في مخيم الزعتري بالشراكة مع الغذاء العالمي," *Petra News Agency*, February 10, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Edgar Luce, "Evolution of WFP's Food Assistance Programme for Syrian Refugees in Jordan," *Field Exchange* 48 (November 2014): 71.

Syrians could use at dedicated shops in Za'tari, and to gradually increase the value of food vouchers distributed, while simultaneously gradually reducing the food it distributed as a monthly ration, which included staples such as pasta, rice, lentils, sugar and salt.¹⁰⁶ The model of distributing food rations, which some NGO workers told me had been used because it was the system to which humanitarian workers were accustomed to using 'in Africa,' was unpopular with many Syrians. The changes, whereby Syrians had increased autonomy over their diet, were therefore unsurprisingly welcomed.¹⁰⁷

This new system of paper vouchers was replaced again the following year by an 'e-card,' which functions like a debit card, and is topped up every month by the WFP. Syrians can use these e-cards in particular shops, which included the two supermarkets mentioned above. Yet e-cards were also soon innovated away by a combination of "cutting-edge technology" and "WFP's commitment to employing innovative tools and approaches in the fight against hunger."¹⁰⁸ This particular innovation came in the form of iris scanning technology, "allowing" (although 'obliging' would have been more accurate) "refugees to purchase food from camp supermarkets using a scan of their eye instead of cash, vouchers, or e-cards" for the "first time in the history of humanitarian assistance."¹⁰⁹ The World Food Programme, its Jordan Director announced, was "thrilled" that it had this new ability to "serve" Syrian refugees in the camp.¹¹⁰ Or, in the words of Andrew Harper, then UNHCR Country Representative in Jordan, on Twitter, the iris scanning system represented "[m]ore really cool stuff not seen before to facilitate protecting and assist [sic],"¹¹¹ betraying the fascination with the new that Tom Scott-Smith argues is central to the support for the humanitarian innovation agenda.¹¹²

This system is made possible by UNHCR taking an iris scan of each refugee as they enter Jordan. UNHCR stores the scan on a database, which can be used by other partners such

¹⁰⁶ World Food Programme, "Syrian Refugees Begin Using WFP Vouchers To Buy Food At Zaatari Camp," September 17, 2013, <https://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/syrian-refugees-begin-using-wfp-vouchers-buy-food-zaatari-camp>.

¹⁰⁷ Conversations with NGO workers and Syrians, Amman and Za'tari, 27.10.2015.

¹⁰⁸ World Food Programme, "WFP Introduces Iris Scan Technology To Provide Food Assistance To Syrian Refugees In Zaatari," October 6, 2016, <http://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/wfp-introduces-innovative-iris-scan-technology-provide-food-assistance-syrian-refu>.

¹⁰⁹ World Food Programme.

¹¹⁰ World Food Programme.

¹¹¹ Andrew Harper, "More Really Cool Stuff Not Seen before to Facilitate Protecting & Assist @refugees @WHSummit @IrisGuard #innovationpic.Twitter.Com/Xn27fKoqGc," @And_Harper (blog), May 5, 2016, https://twitter.com/And_Harper/status/732944592987918336.

¹¹² Scott-Smith, "Humanitarian Neophilia."

as WFP.¹¹³ The involvement of the private sector is again central to these developments. The introduction of the iris scan for registration came from a partnership between UNHCR and Cairo Amman Bank, and was a “flagship tool for the bank” since 2008, according to the independent evaluation of UNHCR’s Syria crisis operations in Jordan and Lebanon.¹¹⁴ The introduction of these facilities to Za’tari involved a different bank, Jordan Ahli Bank, its counterpart Middle East Payment Services, and IrisGuard, a company with offices in the UK and Jordan, which developed the platform. While the gathering and deployment of biometric data may offer benefits to UNHCR and its partners, Syrians are not offered the chance to opt in or out – they simply must submit to having their biometric data taken and retained by UNHCR if they wish to seek refuge or receive humanitarian assistance. Such ‘innovations’ allow huge amounts of data to be collected,¹¹⁵ in this context for example people’s biometrics but also their movements, spending habits, and eating patterns. As Katja Jacobsen argues, these developments cannot be understood separately from broader political sentiments, in particular the increased securitisation of refugee populations. Furthermore, the collection of this data in the contemporary environment could jeopardise UNHCR’s “ability to enact its role as the guarantor of refugee protection.”¹¹⁶

On one of my visits to the camp, I encountered a crowd of at least 100 waiting near the securitised entrance to Base Camp that Syrians can use if they have an appointment or specific reason to enter. That day was in the middle of a summer heatwave, with temperatures already nearing 40 degrees Celsius at 10.30 am. The heat was intensified by the piercing light bouncing off of the white caravans among which people were milling, and waiting. I asked some of the men squatting in the shade of a caravan what everyone was waiting for, and they informed me that they had been told they needed to come this morning to have their irises scanned. I replied that I thought everyone in the camp had done this already. Through a sigh, he explained that they had, but had been told that they must come to do it again, although had not been offered an explanation for why. A second Syrian man in the discussion told me that this was typical of how the camp was run – instructions that make little sense to their recipients are handed down without even

¹¹³ Bethan Staton, “Eye Spy: Biometric Aid System Trials in Jordan,” IRIN, May 18, 2016, <http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2016/05/18/eye-spy-biometric-aid-system-trials-jordan>.

¹¹⁴ Transtec, “Beyond Humanitarian Assistance? UNHCR and the Response to Syrian Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon” (Brussels: Transtec, 2015).

¹¹⁵ See Duffield, “The Resilience of the Ruins.”

¹¹⁶ Jacobsen, “Experimentation in Humanitarian Locations.”

a semblance of justification. He had once asked, he told me, why he was being made to perform a task that appeared to him to be similarly pointless and repetitive. He was told, bluntly, “it’s none of your business.”¹¹⁷

As Scott-Smith argues, it is important to ask who benefits from the agenda of humanitarian innovation. In whose interest do these systems work?¹¹⁸ For refugees living in the camp, innovations can create, as is often heavily advertised, means of humanitarian assistance that are more dignified. Being able to choose one’s own shopping (even within very limited financial means) may be more agential than being handed generic food rations. Being able to go to shops, rather than wait in distribution lines, may be preferable because of the flexibility it allows in terms of time, and because it is more akin to Syrians’ previous experiences of life. Having ‘e-cards’ where an allowance can be used over multiple occasions, rather than paper vouchers that had to be used in one go, may provide a modicum of increased flexibility, and increased ‘normalcy.’¹¹⁹ But as the above incident demonstrates, these supposed rationalisations can also create extra burdens for Syrians, whose time is a necessary component of making the delivery of humanitarian aid more ‘efficient.’ The introduction of iris scans has also led to increased inconvenience for many Syrians who shop using them. While it does not have to be the ‘head of household’ who is the designated shopper whose iris is scanned, families must designate one person to do their shopping, and this person stays the same over time. The need to do this inevitably reduces the amount of flexibility that Syrians have over their daily lives.¹²⁰

Through these innovations, the fungibility of the WFP’s assistance has also effectively been eliminated, which has had an effect on the market, i.e. the private sector activity conducted by Syrians themselves. Food that was handed out could be sold on if it were deemed unsuitable or unnecessary, paper vouchers could be used in the market (albeit for below their face value), and then redeemed by stall sellers in the supermarkets of the camp, or sold on again.¹²¹ The e-card and iris scan systems eliminate this fungibility. Just as some forms of ‘self-reliance’ are approved of, and others are deemed *too* self-reliant, certain forms of private sector activity is facilitated, at the expense of others. When I put

¹¹⁷ Conversation with Syrian man, Za’tari, 01.08.2016.

¹¹⁸ Scott-Smith, “Humanitarian Neophilia.”

¹¹⁹ World Food Programme, “Jordan RRP6 Monthly Update - October 2014 Food Security,” October 2014.

¹²⁰ For discussion of this in the context of Azraq camp, see Staton, “Eye Spy.”

¹²¹ Interview with INGO programme manager in Za’tari (1).

it to an NGO worker in the camp that these changes might have harmed the market, he rather dismissively replied that now Syrians trade other commodities, so it's not difficult for them. The difficulty was rather for the NGOs, who would provide a voucher that was sold on below its face value.¹²² Syrians using humanitarian items for their own ends is thereby understood as a threat to humanitarian actors' ability to exercise control over the use of resources in the camp.

While the earlier forms of vouchers that were traded on the informal market derived their value from the fact that they could, if the holder wished to, be redeemed in particular shops, to the extent that these changes have restricted the fungibility of refugee assistance, they also ensure that the money goes more directly and reliably to the private sector actors offering the technological means to shop using e-cards and iris scans. The system appears to be providing reliable profits. According to a report produced by the University of Oxford's Refugee Studies Centre, one of the supermarkets in the camp, although it does not name which one, is now that company's most profitable branch in Jordan.¹²³

The personal interactions of humanitarian workers with Syrians' own private sector is another interesting lens through which to examine their relationship to Syrians' independent economic activity. On my second visit to the camp, a colleague told me that humanitarian and NGO workers were not allowed to buy food from the stalls run by Syrians in the market. This was presented to me as a directive coming from UNHCR, and as having been justified on health and safety grounds. Eating food from a Syrian stall and then becoming ill, I was told, might count as an accident at work. One NGO worker present in the discussion, perhaps sensing my scepticism, strongly defended the ban, by reminding me of the importance of safety, and that "there is no hospital in the camp."¹²⁴ Later that day, my colleagues and I had an unexpected break between workshops. Having been told that we should not be consuming food from the market, we drove out of the camp (through the checkpoints) to a local restaurant in Za'tari village, purchased bread and falafel, and then returned to the camp (back through the checkpoints) to eat it with a wider group of colleagues. The food we brought prompted a debate about the relative merits of the different restaurants in Za'tari village, with which there seemed to

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Betts, Bloom, and Weaver, "Refugee Innovation," 17–18.

¹²⁴ Conversation with NGO workers, Za'tari, 27.10.2015.

be a good deal of familiarity.¹²⁵ Other NGO workers, on the other hand, believed the ban to have been a restriction from the earlier days of the camp that had now been lifted, and others still said they had never heard of it.¹²⁶

There was also ambiguity about whether non-food items could be purchased by humanitarian workers and visitors. While being given a tour of the market by a Jordanian police officer, one of the largest shops we stopped at was selling a range of men's shirts. As I complimented the shop-holder on his colourful collection, he joked that he did not know whether he had any shirts that would fit someone of my height (six foot four inches). As he went to another part of the shop to investigate, conscious of the apparent regulations surrounding the purchase of food, I discreetly asked the police officer whether or not I was allowed to purchase goods from the market. He paused for a few seconds, and then replied "It's okay. But it's a secret."¹²⁷

When Syrians shop in the supermarkets, on the other hand, they are treated with suspicion by the companies running them. On one of my visits to the camp, a colleague was feeling unwell, and suggested that before our workshops we pay a visit to the supermarket, so that she could purchase some food to increase her energy levels. Walking into Tazweed supermarket, the most striking feature, in particular in contrast to the market, was its uniformity. Items were sold in large quantities, and there were many of each item on sale. In a UK context it might be more accurately pictured as a 'cash and carry' or 'wholesalers' rather than a 'supermarket.' In particular, it was noticeable that the section with fresh produce was relatively small compared to the supermarket as a whole.¹²⁸ To the extent that this reduces the competition with the shops stocking fresh produce in the market, this might be seen in a positive light. Given, however, that Syrians are forced to use a proportion of their income here, it might restrict their choices.

Immediately after completing the purchase of any goods from the store, you are required to demonstrate to a security guard, who stands less than three metres from the checkout tills, that you have paid for every item. This security guard checks the items in your possession against the receipt provided by the cashier, and then puts a tear in the receipt

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Conversations with humanitarian and NGO workers, Za'tari, 27.10.2015 and 21.07.2016.

¹²⁷ Fieldnotes, Za'tari, 21.07.2016.

¹²⁸ Author observation, Za'tari, 15.12.2015.

upon satisfactory inspection of the goods. As a colleague and I left having purchased one item, this check was easy to perform. Much less so for the Syrian woman standing next to us, who was patiently unloading each item in her large trolley, so that the security guard could check a purchase that happened only a few feet away from him, only a few seconds ago.¹²⁹ These checks both protect the company's financial interests, while underlining that the system of humanitarianism within which the supermarkets operate is "maintained and legitimized by the absence of trust between the givers and the recipients."¹³⁰

#Innovation @ZaatariCamp: Za'tari on the Internet, the Internet in Za'tari

At the same time, however, the private sector activity taking place in the market is showcased online by humanitarian agencies as a demonstration of the entrepreneurship of Syrians. In its promotion of Syrians and their activities online, UNHCR gives sharply contrasting visions of refugeehood to the visions its policies and actions on the ground appear to deem acceptable and appropriate. Gendered and racialised understandings of who is a 'refugee' are again important, as humanitarian agencies promote Syrians as 'non-African,' active, driven, entrepreneurs.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, these portrayals are prominent on the Twitter feeds of @ZaatariCamp and @UNHCRInnovation. UNHCR's website similarly reports on the innovation and entrepreneurship of Syrians, for example, by profiling a new pizza delivery service that opened in early 2015.¹³¹ One of the most notable features of this piece, I would argue, is not the details presented about the business itself (such pizzas and pastries are a common part of many Syrians' diet), but rather it is the quotations from UNHCR staff about the pizza delivery service. The new shop is a demonstration, the reader is told by a UNHCR representative, of the fact that Syrians in Za'tari "are not just...waiting for humanitarian agencies to create opportunities for them...[they] are proactive, they are very creative, and they come up with new ideas."¹³² One might question whether there was any doubt over Syrians refugees' ability to "come

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Eftihia Voutira and Barbara Harrell-Bond, "In Search of the Locus of Trust: The Social World of the Refugee Camp," in *Mistrusting Refugees*, ed. Daniel Valentine and John Knudsen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 219.

¹³¹ Charlie Dunmore, "Syrian Refugee Starts Pizza Delivery Service in Za'tari Camp," UNHCR, March 2, 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/54f43af26.html>.

¹³² Dunmore.

up with new ideas.” Would it need pointing out, unless it was (at least implicitly) in doubt?

Attempts to promote an image of Syrian refugees in Za‘tari as entrepreneurial and innovative are part of a deliberate strategy used by UNHCR to counter prevailing negative images of Syrian refugees, and of Za‘tari as a camp. In contrast to the media portrayals that Za‘tari received, particularly in its early years, as a place of violence and disorder,¹³³ in many media accounts it is now portrayed as a space that facilitates entrepreneurship and that is inhabited by entrepreneurial and innovative people. According to Jared Kohler, a photographer formerly contracted to UNHCR Jordan, UN agencies believe that there is nothing to gain from an advocacy viewpoint by amplifying stories that highlight abuses, violence and corruption in the camp, and so they are “always looking for a feel good story.”¹³⁴ As opposed to the refugee contexts of sub-Saharan Africa, where it is believed that dire material circumstances can clearly be captured and communicated to middle-class, Western audiences, more empathy for Syrians can be created among these same audiences if they are portrayed as innovators and inventors, as people who “you wouldn’t mind if they moved into your neighbourhood.”¹³⁵

These narratives are regularly used by English-language international news media. ABC News informs us that “Syrian entrepreneurs thrive” in the camp,¹³⁶ which has “mushroomed as Syrians set up shop,” according to the Guardian.¹³⁷ It has also been found in academic production, as in Lionel Beehner’s article on Za‘tari, in which he describes Syrians as “a unique breed of refugees,”¹³⁸ who were, apparently, unaccustomed to receiving public goods from the state. This spurred on their economic activity, which

¹³³ E.g. see Al Jazeera, “Report Exposes Syria Refugee Camp Conditions - Al Jazeera English”; Phoebe Greenwood, “Rape and Domestic Violence Follow Syrian Women into Refugee Camps,” *The Guardian*, July 25, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/25/rape-violence-syria-women-refugee-camp>.

¹³⁴ Interview with Jared Kohler.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Amy Guttman, “Syrian Entrepreneurs Thrive in Refugee Camp,” ABC News, November 22, 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-22/syrian-entrepreneurs-thrive-in-zaatari-refugee-camp/8009324>.

¹³⁷ Mark Tran, “Jordan’s Zaatari Refugee Camp Mushrooms as Syrians Set up Shop,” *The Guardian*, November 18, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/nov/18/jordan-zaatari-refugee-camp-syria-shops>.

¹³⁸ Lionel Beehner, “Are Syria’s Do-It-Yourself Refugees Outliers or Examples of a New Norm?,” *Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 2 (2015): 168.

demonstrates that “today’s refugees are on average economically better off, more sophisticated, and generally more entrepreneurial than their predecessors.”¹³⁹

Even the main market street is named, by humanitarian actors and in the media, to resonate with western audiences. This street, designated ‘Market Street 1’ by REACH, is regularly called the *Champs-Élysées*.¹⁴⁰ The term is also sometimes written or said as ‘*Shams-Élysées*,’ a play on the French street and the historical name for Syria (*al-Sham*, which is also a contemporary name for Damascus).¹⁴¹ While humanitarian workers, and several of my non-Syrian interviewees, would use the term, I never once heard it used by a Syrian. The name was coined not by Syrians but by French aid workers, who were working in a clinic towards the end of the street.¹⁴² In this context, rather than an expression of Syrian pride at their creation, the term appears to more resemble a distasteful joke, a reflection of the amazement that is regularly expressed at Syrians’ capacities. This *Champs-Élysées*, according to the BBC News website, is a “fertile ground for small businesses.”¹⁴³ This article included a story of a Syrian family who had apparently moved to the camp from a Jordanian town, after seeing the business opportunities available to them in Za’tari. When I mentioned this story to one Syrian man in the camp with whom I had been discussing the market, his scorn was barely hidden by his laughter.¹⁴⁴

It would be inaccurate to assume, however, that humanitarian workers are critical of, or would disagree with, these narratives that are deployed strategically to create sympathy for Syrian refugees. One of the most often-recurring features of my conversations with humanitarian and NGO workers in Jordan was their consistent surprise, at times even astonishment, at Syrians’ ‘entrepreneurial’ activities. When discussing the market with

¹³⁹ Beehner, 160.

¹⁴⁰ E.g. see Toufic Beyhhum and Nadim Dimechkie, “The Champs-Elysées in Zaatari Camp,” *Middle East Revised* (blog), September 9, 2015, <https://middleeastrevised.com/2015/10/09/the-champs-elysees-in-zaatari-camp/>; Robert King, “Strolling the Champs-Élysées with 120,000 Syrian Refugees,” *Vice*, October 21, 2013, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/strolling-the-champs-elysees-with-120000-syrian-refugees-0000116-v20n10; Phoebe Weston, “Inside Zaatari Refugee Camp: The Fourth Largest City in Jordan,” August 5, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/jordan/11782770/What-is-life-like-inside-the-largest-Syrian-refugee-camp-Zaatari-in-Jordan.html>.

¹⁴¹ E.g. in Emma Batha, “Harness the Ingenuity of Refugees, Aid Agencies Told,” *Reuters*, July 17, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-refugees-innovation-idUSKCN0PR13520150717>; Betts, Bloom, and Weaver, “Refugee Innovation.”

¹⁴² Conversations with Jordanian police officer and NGO workers, Za’tari, 21.07.2016.

¹⁴³ Dale Gavlak, “Zaatari Syrian Refugee Camp Fertile Ground for Small Businesses,” *BBC News*, July 30, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28541909>.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with married Syrian man living in Za’tari (3).

some of the rare critical voices in the humanitarian sector, these conversations might reflect on how impressive it was that Syrians living in Za'tari were able to be so productive and inventive despite the restrictions placed upon them by political and humanitarian authorities.¹⁴⁵ Yet more often, the surprise did not seem to be what Syrians had done in spite of the specific political circumstances in Za'tari, but rather that Syrians, who were refugees, had managed these accomplishments.¹⁴⁶

Although the camp has become a perceived case study for the innovative abilities of refugees,¹⁴⁷ these sentiments about Syrians were also found beyond the camp context. At a social event in Amman, I was introduced to a white European man who was a postgraduate student studying, he told me, refugee innovation and entrepreneurship and how aid agencies can harness and incorporate it into their work. He proceeded to show me pictures, on his phone, from a non-camp context in Jordan, where a Syrian family had been designing and building a house. Despite what I understood to be his good intentions, I found his apparent amazement at the ability of 'Syrian refugees' to design floorplans for a new house patronising in the extreme. I was unwilling to feign amazement, but also uncertain how to best react in a casual social setting, so found myself awkwardly smiling and nodding as he scrolled through the pictures on his phone.¹⁴⁸

It is important to understand to whom Syrians are being compared, explicitly or implicitly, when amazement is expressed about their entrepreneurial abilities. Such an analysis must again highlight the importance of gendered and racialised understandings of 'the refugee,' and the interconnectedness of gender and race in these understandings.¹⁴⁹ In their depoliticisation of the camp, and in their attempts to suppress the self-reliance of Syrians that were documented in this chapter, humanitarian and governmental agencies have attempted to enforce adherence to a gendered and racialised vision of 'the refugee' as passive and non-agential, which Syrians have continually resisted. Yet in their public communications with western audiences, humanitarian agencies attempt to separate Syrian refugees from passive, feminised 'Africans,' whom humanitarians regularly deem, either explicitly or implicitly, to be the relevant basis of

¹⁴⁵ E.g. interview with Curt Rhodes.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Jordanian women's rights activist; conversations with NGO workers, Za'tari, 27.10.2015.

¹⁴⁷ Betts, Bloom, and Weaver, "Refugee Innovation."

¹⁴⁸ Fieldnotes, Amman, 12.02.2016.

¹⁴⁹ See Chapter 2.

comparison through which they can understand Syrians' activities, and a benchmark against which to judge their work, programmes, and experiences working with Syrians.

For example, food shortages 'in Africa' mean that 'Africans' would tolerate eating the same food that was provided by humanitarians each day, but not Syrians.¹⁵⁰ In 'Africa,' refugees ask for handouts, but Syrian refugees ask for jobs.¹⁵¹ Literacy programmes were suggested for Za'tari because 'in Africa' they worked well.¹⁵² 'In Africa,' refugees had a lot of enthusiasm for the work engaging men and boys.¹⁵³ These comparisons reached high levels of the camp management. One former UNHCR employee relayed to me an incident where their manager in the camp was discussing the fact their (the manager's) child was now an intern on a hygiene project in a camp in an African context that the manager had helped to set up decades ago. According to my interviewee, the manager remarked that since Syrians can transform Za'tari in just a couple of years, you would expect, in a camp in Africa, that "in thirty years these people would have learned to clean up their own shit by now."¹⁵⁴

These comparison with Africans, through which we discover Syrians' high expectations and high abilities, are evidence of what Adia Benton has termed "professional humanitarianism's thorny and under-examined relationship with anti-blackness and white supremacy."¹⁵⁵ In the words of one of my interviewees "frankly, it's just so racist, and I think it's linked to the sector mentality that all refugees are Africans, and all Africans are illiterate."¹⁵⁶ The aforementioned attempts to portray refugees as innovators and entrepreneurs are, according to the photographer quoted above, an attempt "to make them look white, so to speak."¹⁵⁷ Yet while the racialised commentary on Syrians' entrepreneurship, both on the ground and in portrayals of it, was frequent and at times explicit, gender operated differently. While the contrast with expectations of 'the refugee' is a gendered contrast, in the sense of 'the refugee' being expected to be both a female and a passive and thereby feminised figure, the fact that it was Syrian men, overwhelmingly, with gendered motivations and understandings of their activities, who

¹⁵⁰ Conversation with NGO worker, Amman, 27.10.2015.

¹⁵¹ Conversation with humanitarian and NGO workers, Amman, 18.12.2015.

¹⁵² Conversation with NGO workers, Amman, 18.01.2015.

¹⁵³ Humanitarian worker, Amman, 09.06.2016.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with former UNHCR worker in Za'tari.

¹⁵⁵ Adia Benton, "African Expatriates and Race in the Anthropology of Humanitarianism," *Critical African Studies* 8, no. 3 (2016): 267.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with former NGO worker in Za'tari.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Jared Kohler.

had created and run the market, is rarely mentioned or discussed in online depictions or by humanitarian workers on the ground.¹⁵⁸ As outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, men's activities and agency are dangerous to the projects of humanitarianism. Their 'non-African' entrepreneurship, however, if understood in particular ways, and as long as it is 'governable,' has the potential to be employed strategically to further humanitarian agendas.

These discussions of Syrians, however, are also grounded in long-standing discourses of Syrians specifically, and the people of the Levant more generally, being hard-working and entrepreneurial. Kilian Kleinschmidt declared in a televised interview that it was "very natural [Syrians] have set up shops, because they are traders."¹⁵⁹ Interestingly, this understanding of Syrians as entrepreneurs co-existed in Jordan with hesitation about their suitability for jobs in the formal labour market in certain sectors. As I have explored elsewhere at length, together with Katharina Lenner, one of the reasons why employers were reluctant to employ Syrians in garment factories was because they worried that Syrians would be inefficient, 'like Jordanians.' Such judgments are located within different racial and gendered stratifications, in which South Asian female migrant workers were deemed the most skilled and productive.¹⁶⁰

Nevertheless, that Syrians are, at least by many, 'known' to be entrepreneurial and hardworking¹⁶¹ is a source of considerable pride among the refugee population. In casual conversation, Syrians in Za'tari asked me whether I had seen the market in the camp and what they had managed to create from nothing, and regaled me with the stories they had heard from 6th October City in Cairo, where many Syrians have settled, and how many Syrian restaurants have opened there in the past few years. "Wherever we go," one man told me, "there is activity, there is work, there are shops, there are restaurants."¹⁶² Syrian shop-holders in Za'tari would similarly tell me that the market is a result of the hard work for which Syrians are justifiably known.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ E.g. see Gavlak, "Zaatari Syrian Refugee Camp"; Tran, "Jordan's Zaatari Refugee Camp Mushrooms"; Weston, "Inside Zaatari Refugee Camp."

¹⁵⁹ UNHCR, *A Day in the Life 1*.

¹⁶⁰ Lenner and Turner, "Making Refugees Work?"

¹⁶¹ For a discussion of the attributes for which Syrians are 'known' in Lebanon, see Chalcraft, *The Invisible Cage*. Interestingly, the types of work deemed "suitable" for Syrians in Jordan differs noticeably from Chalcraft's observations in Lebanon, see Lenner and Turner.

¹⁶² Conversation with Syrian men, Za'tari, 24.11.2015.

¹⁶³ Conversations with Syrian shop-holders, Za'tari, 21.07.2016.

In striking contrast to the camp's online presence, access to the internet in the camp itself was severely restricted. In late January 2016, cellular data access (the internet provided through data packages on mobile phones) abruptly stopped working. Although there were suggestions and rumours in the camp that it was a temporary measure, as the weeks and months went on, it became increasingly clear that the Jordanian authorities that run the camp had decided to turn off the internet.¹⁶⁴ Despite the impact of the decision on Syrian residents and NGOs working in the camp, it was not officially announced to either Syrians or NGOs. It was not mentioned in the weekly Camp Management Coordination meetings,¹⁶⁵ and when NGO workers and Syrians made more informal enquiries they were simply told that it was for 'security reasons.' Similarly, there was no international attention or outcry, as has happened in other instances of internet restriction in the region.¹⁶⁶

The restricted ability to keep in contact with friends and family, and events in Syria and around the world, runs the risk of severely impacting Syrians' mental health and attempts to make informed decisions about their choices and futures.¹⁶⁷ But humanitarians and refugees appear to believe that the 'security reasons' rationale is not one that can easily be contested. Syrians typically have very little, if any, access to camp decision-makers. But furthermore, in an environment in which deportations to Syria are a common phenomenon, as one Syrian woman expressed it to me, "you know when they say security reasons, you..." She stopped, and then mimed pulling a zip across her lips.¹⁶⁸ As in the instance of deportations, because to challenge the decision would involve directly challenging the police and security services, NGOs feel equally powerless to challenge the internet restrictions, either directly to SRAD or through UNHCR. As I noted earlier, one NGO project manager told me frankly: "It's the police. They're managing the camp. You cannot win in a discussion with the police or with the camp management because they work, erm, together."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Conversations with Syrian women, humanitarian and NGO workers, author observation, Za'tari and Amman, 09.02.2016, 12.02.2016, 16.02.2016, 24.03.2016, 10.04.2016; interview with INGO programme manager in Za'tari (2).

¹⁶⁵ Interview with INGO programme manager in Za'tari (2).

¹⁶⁶ Al Jazeera, "When Egypt Turned off the Internet - Al Jazeera English," January 28, 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/01/2011128796164380.html>.

¹⁶⁷ E.g. see International Medical Corps and UNICEF, "Mental Health/Psychosocial and Child Protection Assessment," 22 The report notes that one of the causes of anxiety for Za'tari residents is the lack of information about loved ones in Syria, and suggests Skype calls as one way to alleviate this.

¹⁶⁸ Conversation with Syrian woman, Za'tari, 27.07.2016.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with INGO programme manager in Za'tari (2).

Internet access was nonetheless present, to a much greater extent, in Base Camp and NGO centres. Although the cellular data signal is weak in many areas of Base Camp too, NGOs can apply to get “whitelisted” and to get their own line of password-protected internet into the camp, which would be inaccessible to Syrians. By the summer of 2016, however, even the Base Camp wireless network password was being kept from many NGO employees who work in the camp, to try and stop the password being given to Syrians, thereby circumventing the ban on the internet, and slowing down the wifi network due to ‘over’ use.¹⁷⁰

Syrians were nonetheless attempting to find ways around the restrictions on the internet; “whatever barrier you put there, they will drill around it.”¹⁷¹ One can typically find Syrians squatting next to the fences that surround Base Camp, often as closely as they can to the fence to find shade from the sun, trying to gain access to the wireless networks that are used by humanitarian workers. As I walked with a Jordanian police officer past some Syrians doing this on one visit, feigning ignorance I asked him what they were doing. “Stealing wifi!” came the reply.¹⁷² Some Syrians use their technical skills to log onto the wifi networks without passwords or permission, others have connections to those who have access to the passwords.¹⁷³ An NGO project manager chuckled as he recounted that a Syrian child had once somehow managed to get hold of a Base Camp wifi password, and proceeded to sell it to anyone who wanted it for 2 JOD (about \$3). It wasn’t just Syrians who took advantage of the service offered by the boy: “you would see David¹⁷⁴ standing with his laptop and using the password that he just bought from the kid.”¹⁷⁵

It is almost Orwellian that stories about Za’tari on the internet will discuss the entrepreneurship of Syrians, or the role of technology in the camp, without mentioning the ways in which, at the time of writing their articles, access to the internet was severely restricted. A BBC News article from March 2016, for example, entitled “Tech eases Syrians’ trauma in Jordanian refugee camp,” is enthusiastic about the “vibrant community of makers” that live there, but utterly silent on the GoJ’s attempts to stop

¹⁷⁰ Interview with INGO programme manager in Za’tari, Amman (2).

¹⁷¹ Interview with Curt Rhodes.

¹⁷² Jordanian police officer, Za’tari, 21.07.2016.

¹⁷³ Conversations with NGO workers, Za’tari, 27.10.2015, 22.12.2015 and 21.07.2016.

¹⁷⁴ This name has been anonymised.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with INGO programme manager in Za’tari (2).

Syrians' from using one of the most essential forms of technology that could be available to them.¹⁷⁶

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the market of Za'tari, which was created and has been sustained by Syrians themselves, and demonstrated it is a means through which they achieve vital income and perform masculinities. More widely, it has used the market as a site of analysis through which to understand central contestations between camp authorities and refugees: over gendered and racialised understandings of refugeehood and agency, the repressive and rational-bureaucratic modes of power that humanitarian and states actors deploy, and the prioritisation of humanitarian goals and logics over those of Syrian refugees themselves.

It has argued that Syrians' efforts to build, expand, and invest in the market can be understood as an attempt to build a form of self-reliance that aims for radical autonomy from external governance structures, and that represents resistance to the passive subject position of the 'refugee.' Both humanitarian and governmental agencies have challenged this vision for the camp. Jordanian governmental actors attempt to monitor and restrict economic activity within the camp, while simultaneously making efforts to align it with governmental interests. Humanitarian agencies, meanwhile, have brought the agendas of innovation and official self-reliance to Za'tari. Despite these humanitarian agendas coming into conflict with the operations of the market, and despite UNHCR appearing to have a fundamentally different vision of what a camp should be, the agency nonetheless continues to favourably portray the refugees of Za'tari as innovative entrepreneurs to a wider public, while acquiescing to restrictive policies on the internet – a key tool of entrepreneurship – on the ground. Syrian refugees' attempts to live with economic dignity therefore often proceed in spite of, rather than facilitated by, the agendas of those who exercise sovereign power in Za'tari.

¹⁷⁶ Jen Copestake BBC Click, "Tech Eases Syrians' Trauma in Jordanian Refugee Camp," BBC News, March 26, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-35889662>.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This thesis has argued that refugee men present a challenge for humanitarianism. In contrast to humanitarian actors' understandings of refugee women and children as 'vulnerable,' and thereby uncontroversial objects of care, humanitarians read refugee men as agential, independent, political, and at times threatening. They thereby disrupt humanitarian understandings of refugees as passive, feminised objects of care. The result of these gendered and racialised understandings is that refugee men have an uncertain position in humanitarian practices, policies, and imaginaries. They are too political when they protest, too agential in the market, yet insufficiently interested in much of the work of the humanitarian sector. As this thesis has demonstrated, however, it is humanitarian actors that show a distinct lack of interest in the lives of Syrian men. Men are assumed, incorrectly, to have easy access to labour markets, rendering them ostensibly non-'vulnerable.' Yet while the labour market is perceived to be a source of men's independence, it is also a way in which humanitarians can promote the 'empowerment' of those whom they deem 'vulnerable.' When Syrian men attempt to create their own livelihood opportunities, however, they are once again too agential, since their actions conflict with humanitarian and state visions of refugee camps, and how they should be governed.

Enthusiasm for working with Syrian men is primarily generated when that work can be understood by humanitarian actors as a new means through which to achieve their pre-existing goals of supporting women and children. But in these instrumental attempts to work with refugee men, the 'local' context of Za'tari disrupted humanitarian actor's 'global' understandings of priorities and methods; Syrian men do not speak humanitarianism's 'global' language. This same 'global' language ostensibly promotes the empowerment of refugee women, while problematically re-inscribing the rights and lives of refugee women as outside of the 'political' realm, into which humanitarians do not intervene. When women's autonomous decisions run contrary to these 'global' standards, the latter take precedence, further demonstrating the inseparability of humanitarian care and humanitarian control.

After introducing the overall arguments of the thesis and the fieldwork that was undertaken for it, in Chapter 2, I analysed how refugee men and masculinities were

understood as objects of research, and how they were positioned, by humanitarians, relative to prevailing understandings of gender, the refugee, and power and politics. In each of these instances, refugee men, their needs, and the gendered threats they faced, were understood as somehow outside of the realm of humanitarian work with refugees. Subsequently, I offered an analysis of the context of Za'tari in Chapter 3. This explored the camp's location within the territory, history and politics of Jordan; the embodied, material and spatial practices of humanitarianism that take place there; and the ways in which Syrian men in Za'tari were primarily understood in the years prior to my fieldwork – as political troublemakers who needed to be governed. When the attempts to police and depoliticise the camp more effectively had been relatively successful, refugee men became more invisible in camp life, from the vantage point of humanitarians. As Chapter 4 demonstrates, they were deemed non-‘vulnerable,’ and uninterested in and unavailable for the work of the humanitarian sector. Work with refugee women, by contrast, one of the objects of humanitarian attention, proceeded according to ‘global’ standards, rather than the standards of Syrian women themselves.

The focus of the thesis then shifted to an area of work in which refugee men did appear, before humanitarians, as an object of interest: SGBV prevention. This enthusiasm was generated, I argued, not by an interest in refugee men's lives per se, or in the difficulties they were experiencing, but rather because working with men could be understood as an instrumental mechanism through which pre-existing humanitarian goals could be achieved. In contrast, Syrian men in Za'tari were primarily concerned with (the shortage of) livelihood opportunities in the camp, the subject of Chapter 6. For many Syrian men, performing the role of a breadwinner was central to their understanding of masculinities, which was challenged by the availability and allocation of CfW in the camp. These masculinities, and the allocation of work, differed according to class and generation. Finally, in Chapter 7, this thesis analysed the informal market of Za'tari, and how humanitarian agendas clashed with Syrians' attempts to exercise agency and earn income within the camp space. While humanitarian actors restricted Syrians' authentic attempts for radical autonomy on the ground, they promoted Syrians as ‘entrepreneurial’ to external audiences. The figure they promoted contrasted with prevailing images of the ‘refugee,’ the kinds of refugees that humanitarians attempt to create, and their understandings of how camp spaces should operate.

As a study of the place of refugee men within humanitarianism, this thesis has been particularly concerned with masculinities, not only the masculinities of Syrian men living in the camp, but also the masculinised forms of power deployed by humanitarian individuals and organisations. It did not aim to be, nor is it, an all-encompassing study of the masculinities of Za'tari. Such a study would have required access to spheres of life and areas of the camp that it was not possible for me to enter, at least in a sustained way, such as mosques, caravans, and family relationships. While, given the restrictions of the context, my access to Za'tari was relatively extensive for a researcher, it did not allow for all of these avenues to be explored, and this thesis is therefore neither a complete study of men's masculinities, nor of their entire social worlds within the camp. A thesis that discussed all of the masculinities of Za'tari would also have necessitated an exploration of women as performers of masculinities. While this thesis discussed both female-headed households and women's participation in paid work, my interlocutors did not discuss these phenomena as instantiations of female masculinities, and the language used here reflects that. Nevertheless, a research project that centred masculinities, rather than refugee men, may find this a useful avenue for further exploration.

This study was located within the specific context of Za'tari. As spaces in which humanitarian actors characteristically exercise extensive power over refugee populations, refugee camps constitute appropriate and revealing sites for investigations into humanitarianism. As the refugee camp that hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees in the Middle East, and as a camp that is highly regulated, policed, that restricts Syrians' movement, but also in which humanitarian policies are deeply contested by camp residents, Za'tari was a particularly appropriate context for undertaking my research into humanitarianism. However, humanitarian actors are increasingly operating in non-camp spaces, including within Jordan,¹ and what constitutes a 'camp' varies dramatically across context, with 'camps' often being less formal, and having more fluid boundaries, than Za'tari.² The differences and similarities between my research in Za'tari and the situation in non-camp contexts could be examined in future research. It might be expected that, in contexts where humanitarian actors have less control over refugees' lives, and where there may be alternative service providers, the dynamics of the interactions between humanitarians and refugee men would be different. In these contexts, other issues, for

¹ Brun, "There Is No Future in Humanitarianism."

² Agier, *Managing the Undesirables*.

example resettlement, may constitute a more important part of humanitarian-refugee relations.

Further research could also attempt to understand the place of refugee men in humanitarianism in contexts where the prevailing gender regimes in the host communities are different, and where gender and race among refugee communities are read differently. For example, does a European host context alter humanitarian understandings of Syrian, Arab and Muslim refugee men? Given humanitarian agencies' need to adapt to, and to a large extent to fall into line with, the policies of host governments, the contours of humanitarian work will change, as will refugee men's needs and circumstances. In these contexts, research projects may find it appropriate to dedicate greater time and attention to exploring the perspectives of state actors. Furthermore, research could explore to what extent a refugee population being composed of individuals who are, for example, predominantly neither Arab nor Muslim, alters humanitarian understandings of refugee men? Would men who are racialised differently be understood by humanitarians, like Syrian men, to be non-'vulnerable'? How does the humanitarian deployment of gendered and racialised modes of power play out differently when they govern different populations?

Finally, both within contexts of Syrian displacement and elsewhere, work by organisations from and funded by non-Western states would be another interesting topic of enquiry. Although humanitarianism remains an enterprise largely dominated by western donors, organisations and rationalities, within the Syria refugee response there are a large number of organisations from, and funded by, Gulf Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.³ This reflects a wider trend in which states and organisations from the South are playing an increasingly prominent role in a range of humanitarian operations.⁴ The Gulf organisations working in the Syria response operate, to a large extent, in parallel to the UN-led structures that coordinate the refugee response, but have hitherto been the subject of little scholarly attention. The place of refugee men, and of gender more broadly, within Gulf humanitarianism is an important avenue that has not yet been explored in research.

³ UNHCR, "Gulf Donors and NGOs Assistance to Syrian Refugees in Jordan" (Amman: UNHCR, 2014).

⁴ Paul Amar, ed., *Global South to the Rescue: Emerging Humanitarian Superpowers and Globalizing Rescue Industries* (Hoboken: Routledge, 2013).

This thesis is grounded within the subfields of feminist IR and critical scholarship on humanitarianism, and offers distinct contributions to them, as I will shortly outline. Nevertheless, in advancing its arguments it has drawn on a range of cross-disciplinary literatures, including scholarship on gender and development, refugee studies, (forced) migration in the Middle East, refugee masculinities, the history and politics of Jordan, and postcolonial, feminist scholarship on gender and race. Different elements of this research will therefore be of interest to scholars working in this wide range of fields, and to scholars of the Syria crisis and refugee response.

Furthermore, through its approach and methodology, this thesis offers contextual depth, and links ethnographic insights and broader theoretical debates, and thereby demonstrates the connections between wider power structures and a specific context. It goes beyond studying the formal policies, structures, and elites of humanitarianism, and analyses how different power structures are enacted by the embodied, material and spatial practices of humanitarianism within a particular space. It demonstrates how these practices take on particular meanings within that context, and how they are resisted by those populations who are subject to them. This ethnographically-informed, contextual approach, while extremely fruitful, remains relatively rare within IR as a whole.

Within the subfields in which it is located, it makes several contributions to scholarship. Deploying a feminist curiosity, it refuses to accept humanitarianism's categories of the 'vulnerable' refugee woman and the independent, agential refugee man. Instead it asks new questions of humanitarianism, and new questions about the refugee men subject to its power. It promotes an understanding of men as both the subjects and objects of power. As objects of power, refugee men are actively disempowered by humanitarian policies and practices. This is not done to 'empower' refugee women, as humanitarians imagine, but to enable the exercise of humanitarian power over both refugee men and refugee women. In contrast to both the humanitarian sector and much scholarship on men in contexts of humanitarianism, this thesis refuses to focus solely on men and gender equality or men and SGBV, and thereby broadens the possibilities for research and debate on men as the objects of humanitarianism.

Through its historically informed account of gendered interventions in the Middle East, this thesis also allows contemporary humanitarianism, with its 'global' standards, its

instrumentalisation of women's rights, and its depoliticisation, hypermasculinisation and feminisation of men, to be understood in light of the rationalities it shares with the (post)colonial interventions that continue to haunt, and be enacted across, the region. In its examination of the contestations that result from this deployment of power, it brings out the relevance of studying masculinities for understanding humanitarianism, and external interventions more broadly. It demonstrates the importance of Syrian men's attempts to perform masculinities, how humanitarian policies challenge these masculinities, how humanitarian understandings of Syrian men's gender influence humanitarian work, and the ways in which humanitarian actors deploy masculinised modes of power. In these contributions therefore, it not only studies 'men' and 'gender' within humanitarianism, but also, crucially, genders humanitarianism itself.

As I finished writing this thesis, I reflected on another ending: the final time I left Za'tari with my NGO colleagues, in August 2016. In contrast to the extensive permit checks each time we entered the camp, we went smoothly through the checkpoint at the camp's edge. We received a perfunctory, even if not friendly, wave from a Jordanian soldier as we passed. Every day, a small number of Syrians were at the checkpoint too, waiting with documents and permits in hand, also trying to leave, even if only temporarily. These daily exits epitomised the absurdity of thousands of people applying for permits to enter a space that many more thousands are desperate to leave. These moments, and indeed the existence of Za'tari as we know it, are dependent on the containment of its population, a containment in which both the Jordanian state and humanitarian actors are, at best, deeply complicit. Coupled with the analysis presented in this thesis, moments such as this one make it difficult to think of Syrians in Za'tari as being hosted by Jordan. Rather, one might be led to think they are held captive there, with humanitarian actors not empowering them, but keeping them imprisoned.

Appendix: List of Interviewees

This appendix contains a list of all of my interviewees, as described and defined in the introduction. Where interviews with more than one individual were conducted together, they have been recorded within the same row of the table. The interviews are listed in order of the date on which they took place. When more than one person has the same descriptor, numbers have been assigned to differentiate between them, again using date order. The varying amount of information provided here reflects the differing levels of confidentiality agreed with the interviewees. I have also listed here how I would refer to each interviewee if quoting them, although some of these interviews have not been cited. I nonetheless used them all in the preparation of this thesis, in the ways agreed by each interviewee.

Table 1: List of Interviewees

Name/Description and Role	If quoted or referenced, referred to as	Interview Location	Interview Date
Stephen Boddy, Billy Dodds, Sully Sultan, all employed by SIREN Associates, which oversaw the project to implement community policing operations in Za'tari, non-Jordanian, men.	Stephen Boddy, Billy Dodds, Sully Sultan	Amman	15.10.2015
NGO worker in Za'tari, non-Jordanian, woman	NGO worker in Za'tari	Amman	16.10.2015
Former employee of international organisation in Za'tari, Jordanian, man	Interview with former employee of international organisation in Za'tari	Amman	13.11.2015
SGBV specialist working for international agency, non-Jordanian, woman	SGBV specialist (1)	Amman	30.11.2015

Women's rights activist, Jordanian, woman	Jordanian women's rights activist	Amman	06.12.2015
Former NGO worker in Za'tari, non-Jordanian, man	Former NGO worker in Za'tari	Via Skype	08.12.2015
Former UNHCR camp management official working in non-Jordanian contexts, non- Jordanian, man	Former UNHCR camp management worker	Via Skype	20.12.2015
LGBTI activist working with refugees in Jordan, non- Jordanian, man	LGBTI activist working with refugees	Amman	26.01.2016
Former UNHCR worker in Za'tari, non-Jordanian, man	Former UNHCR worker in Za'tari	Via Skype	06.02.2016
Women's protection and empowerment programme manager for INGO, Jordanian, woman	Women's protection and empowerment programme manager	Amman	28.03.2016
Jared Kohler, photographer formerly contracted to UNHCR Jordan, non-Jordanian, man	Jared Kohler	Amman	28.03.2016
Official in donor agency working on Jordan Compact, non- Jordanian, man	Donor agency official	Amman	11.04.2016
INGO resettlement officer, non- Jordanian, woman	Resettlement officer	Amman	11.04.2016
Ahmad Awad, Director of Phenix Center for Economic and	Ahmad Awad	Amman	20.04.2016

Informatics Studies, Jordanian, man			
Single Syrian woman living in host community with children	Single Syrian woman living in host community (1)	Irbid Governorate	26.04.2016
Married Syrian woman living in host community with husband and children	Married Syrian woman living in host community (1)	Irbid Governorate	26.04.2016
Married Syrian woman living in host community with husband and children	Married Syrian woman living in host community (2)	Irbid Governorate	26.04.2016
Married Syrian man living in host community with wife and children	Married Syrian man living in host community (1)	Irbid Governorate	26.04.2016
Single Syrian woman living in host community with extended family and children	Single Syrian woman living in host community (2)	Irbid Governorate	26.04.2016
Married Syrian woman living in host community with husband and children Married Syrian man living in host community with wife and children	Married Syrian woman living in host community (3) Married Syrian man living in host community (2)	Irbid Governorate	26.04.2016
Married Syrian man living in host community with wife and children	Married Syrian man living in host community (3)	Irbid Governorate	27.04.2016
Married Syrian man living in host community with wife and	Married Syrian man living in host	Irbid	27.04.2016

children	community (4)	Governorate	
Married Syrian woman living in host community with husband and children Married Syrian man living in host community with wife and children	Married Syrian woman living in host community (4) Married Syrian man living in host community (5)	Irbid Governorate	27.04.2016
Older Syrian woman living in host community with extended family	Single Syrian woman living in host community (3)	Irbid Governorate	27.04.2016
Married Syrian man living in host community with wife and children	Married Syrian man living in host community (6)	Irbid Governorate	27.04.2016
Official involved in garment sector work permits trial, non-Jordanian, woman.	Official involved in garment sector work permits trial	Amman	02.05.2016
UNHCR official working on gender	N/A: interview for background only	Amman	17.05.2016
Suhail Abualsameed, Jordanian consultant and SGBV specialist, Jordanian, man	Suhail Abualsameed	Amman	18.05.2016
Curt Rhodes, International Director of Questscope, non-Jordanian, man	Curt Rhodes	Amman	19.05.2016
Dina Khayyat, Chairperson, JGATE (Jordan Garments and	Dina Khayyat	Amman	28.05.2016

Textiles Exporters Association), Jordanian, woman			
Linda Kalash, Director of Tamkeen Fields for Aid, Jordanian, woman	Linda Kalash	Amman	29.05.2016
UNHCR official working on livelihood programmes, non- Jordanian, woman.	N/A: interview for background only	Amman	31.05.2016
Humanitarian worker with focus on LGBTI rights	Humanitarian worker with focus on LGBTI rights	Amman	01.06.2016
2 managers of Needlecraft for Clothing Industry, non-Jordanian, men	Needlecraft factory manager (1), needlecraft factory manager (2)	Al-Dulayl Industrial Park	06.06.2016
Lina Darras, Psychosocial Support Unit Manager, ARDD, Jordanian, woman	Lina Darras	Amman	09.06.2016
Interview with single Syrian man living in Jordanian host community	Single Syrian man living in host community (1)	Karak	13.06.2016
Interview with married Syrian woman living in Jordanian host community	Married Syrian woman (5) living in host community	Karak	13.06.2016
Interview with single Syrian man living in Jordanian host community	Single Syrian man living in host community (2)	Karak	13.06.2016

Ruba Abu-Taleb, Nutrition Coordinator, Jordan Health Aid Society (JHAS) and Health Sector Gender Focal Point, Jordanian, woman	Ruba Abu-Taleb	Amman	15.06.2016
Areej Sumreen, Clinical Psychologist, Institute of Family Health, Noor al-Hussein Foundation, Jordanian, woman	Areej Sumreen	Amman	22.06.2016
Livelihood specialist, Jordanian, woman	Livelihood specialist	Amman	27.06.2016
Livelihood programme manager for INGO, non-Jordanian, man Protection programme manager for INGO, non-Jordanian, woman	Livelihood programme manager Protection programme manager	Amman	27.06.2016
INGO programme manager in Za'tari, Jordanian, man	INGO programme manager in Za'tari (1)	Amman	30.06.2016
SGBV specialist working for international agency, non-Jordanian, woman	SGBV specialist (2)	Amman	04.07.2016
Single Syrian woman working in the market	Syrian woman working in Za'tari market (1)	Za'tari	21.07.2016
Married Syrian woman with children working in the market	Syrian woman working in Za'tari market (2)	Za'tari	21.07.2016
Single Syrian woman working in	Syrian woman working	Za'tari	21.07.2016

the market	in Za'tari market (3)		
Syrian shop-holder in Za'tari, man	Syrian shop-holder in Za'tari, man (1)	Za'tari	21.07.2016
Syrian man working in Za'tari	Syrian man working in Za'tari market (1)	Za'tari	21.07.2016
Married Syrian woman living in Za'tari with husband and children	Married Syrian woman living in Za'tari (1)	Za'tari	27.07.2016
Married Syrian man living in Za'tari with wife and children	Married Syrian man living in Za'tari (1)		
Married Syrian woman living in Za'tari with husband and children	Married Syrian woman living in Za'tari (2)	Za'tari	27.07.2016
Married Syrian man living in Za'tari with wife and children	Married Syrian man living in Za'tari (2)		
Syrian shop-holder in Za'tari, man	Syrian shop-holder in Za'tari, man (2)	Za'tari	01.08.2016
Syrian shop-holder in Za'tari, man	Syrian shop-holder in Za'tari, man (3)	Za'tari	01.08.2016
Syrian man working in Za'tari market	Syrian man working in Za'tari market (2)		
Syrian man working in Za'tari market	Syrian man working in Za'tari market (3)		
Married Syrian man living in Za'tari	Married Syrian man living in Za'tari (3)	Za'tari	01.08.2016
Syrian man working in Za'tari market	Syrian man working in Za'tari market (4)	Za'tari	01.08.2016
Syrian man working in Za'tari	Syrian man working in	Za'tari	01.08.2016

market	Za'tari market (5)		
INGO programme manager in Za'tari, Jordanian, man	INGO programme manager in Za'tari (2)	Amman	08.08.2016
Maha Kattaa, International Labour Organization Syria Crisis Response Coordinator in Jordan, Jordanian, woman	Maha Kattaa	Amman	13.08.2016
Lawyer who worked in Za'tari for an NGO, Jordanian, man	NGO lawyer in Za'tari	Amman	14.08.2016
European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations Official, non-Jordanian, man	European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations Official	Via telephone	14.07.2017

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