
Treball Fi de Màster

The scales of attachment: exploring territory attachment at Nahr el-Bared refugee camp and the mechanisms to overcome transience

Fabiano Sartori de Campos



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MASTER THESIS

THE SCALES OF ATTACHMENT

Exploring territory attachment at Nahr
el-Bared Refugee Camp and the
mechanisms to overcome transience

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to Lana...

*“When I walk beside her
I am the better man”*

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ABSTRACT

Refugee camps, as emergency responses, embodies a hall of characteristics marked by the permanent temporariness. However, they gradually evolve, becoming informal urban settlements. Nahr el-Bared, the Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon adopted as the case study, is an example of how communities develop strategies to overcome transience. Although the improvement of the urban environment plays an important role, the extensive fieldwork brought to light that aspects related to the economic condition and the forms of control, which generates visible and invisible barriers, deeper affects living conditions and aspirations. The analysis of cultural aspects and how these aspects are materialized, combined with an ethnographic approach, revealed different mechanisms of attachment. The physical elements that determine how individuals and the community relate to the context, how they use them as tools to overcome transience and how they affect individual and collective memory, can be defined by “scales of attachment” – urban scale (public), building scale (collective), and object scale (private). Therefore, I argue that meaningful objects, as repositories of memories, capable of being carried, represent the most important scale of attachment for a community still waiting, and wanting the next move.

Keywords: Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp, Attachment, Culture and Identity, Memory, Creative Destruction

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ACRONYMS

GoL	Government of Lebanon
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces
LPDC	Lebanon Palestinian Dialogue Committee
NBC	Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp
NBRC	Nahr el-Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization

1. INTRODUCTION

Refugee camps are one of the most complex forms of contemporary human settlement. The displacement, relocation and resettlement of entire communities create an intricate condition where permanence and temporariness are concepts that coexist, and issues related to culture and identity play an important role in the process of adaptation to a new territory. Aiming at understanding how refugees deal with the urban environment and the elements that establish living conditions, this research explores the attachment with the territory and how it is materialized, considering how transience, economic issues, the multiple forms of control and the visible and invisible barriers faced by the community affects this process.

The case study selected, Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp (NBC), was implemented in 1948 as an emergency response to the Nakba. One of the most prosperous Palestinian camps in Lebanon; it provides an amazing environment for this academic debate. After six decades of evolution and informal urbanization, has become a symbolic Palestinian territory, where the community developed an emotional connection. The 2007 war that completely destroyed the camp revealed its deep meaning for the population and the fragility of their presence, opening the doors for a discussion about attachment.

To be able to promote this debate, a diverse theoretical background was adopted, with the objective of crossing different positions and fields of knowledge. A structural base of concepts and definitions about culture and identity provided a better understanding of culture as a continuum flux of creation and change, how power interests can be hidden on cultural manifestations and the concept of multiple identities. The definition and the meanings of refugee camps clarified the features of the case study, including the concept of urbicide as a characteristic of the 2007 armed conflict. Additionally, the economic concept of creative destruction complemented the understanding of the war as a planned event, while the thesis of how public spaces nurture collective memory and how personal objects can work as symbolic representations of memory and identity, were pivotal to develop this research arguments.

Aiming at bringing to light the individual's perception and going deeper into the ethnographic analyses, an extensive fieldwork was conducted, including 25 semi-structured interviews with both refugees and stakeholders and participant observation realized during 31 days. The significant involvement with residents, living with families,

was crucial to develop rapport with them, allowing me to access perceptions, feelings and personal histories.

The analysis of the fieldwork findings and the secondary data collected exposed that the refugee's condition, opportunities of development and aspirations are completely affected by the forms of control and visible and invisible barriers. I argue, then, that the urban environment, although important for the quality of daily life, is not the principle element to generate attachment, once it is not so deeply connected with the Palestinian culture and represents temporariness. Based on it, I propose the thesis of "scales of attachment", identifying the urban environment and the houses as scales of attachment and the objects as the most significant mechanism to generate it, as mementoes impregnated of memory and identity, which can be carried. For a population in transit, waiting for the next move, simple but meaningful objects such as the key of a home, works as a powerful tool to overcome transience and keep the hope alive.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Concept and the Meaning of Refugee Camps

According to Benatti and Kattan (2017:2), refugee camps are the product of exceptional situations, meaning the application of emergency strategies – *exceptional, temporary and sometimes illegal* – that result in socio spatial solutions aiming to provide the minimum survival conditions and security.

The uncertainty of this temporary space and the unknown future that might follow it leads to dynamic social changes where "a camp is at once a place of social dissolution and a place of new beginnings where sociality is remolded in new ways" (Benatti & Kattan, 2017:2)

Further, the authors bring Agier definition based on three criteria: *extraterritoriality, exception and exclusion*. The inexistence as formal territory, the inexistence of a legal framework, and the limits of integration, respectively. Benatti and Kattan (2017) also argue that refugee camps tend to evolve, informally, as the initial formal governance gives place for community's participation, resulting in uncontrolled expansion and urbanization.

Alternatively, considering that contexts are extremely diverse, making a standard definition unprecise, Herz (2015) presents the three predominant notions about refugee camps: *humanitarian space* (to protect and save lives, the *classic* notion), *space of control* (the care of others is converted in the govern of others), and *space of destitution* (refugees are reduced to beings of wretchedness, deprived of identity or individuality). Arguing that notions are generalizations formulated by outsider's perspectives, the author requires researchers to go deeper on analyses of specific case studies.

Following this strategy, Gabiam (2018:155) analyses the Yarmouk Palestinian Refugee Camp in Damascus, Syria to argument that "*A camp is not simply a bounded and isolated place*". Refugee camps extrapolate their geographical condition to generate a particular life-style tied to their community's identity. Yarmouk is an example of how a refugee community, even with considerable level of integration with the host country, remains a Palestinian community that shares a similar history, revealing that social relations not only create but also dismantle boundaries.

I argue that "refugeehood" has emotional and political dimensions that – in the case of Yarmouk – take the form of a sense of identity and set of practices that transcend the limits imposed by a stereotypical understanding of life in a refugee camp. (Gabiam, 2018:145)

In accordance, Ramadan (2014) states that refugee camps work as tool to overcome transience and as a mechanism to acquire and preserve culture. Debating the Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp, in Lebanon, and the 2007 war that destroyed it, the author defends the camp as the element of connection, where Palestinians, mainly the generations born there, have the opportunity to live immersed in their culture. This emotional attachment with the camp is also related to the community's history, marked by six decades of efforts to convert the tents into an urbanized area, creating the stage for everyday life, so important to develop a sense of belonging. Ramadan (2009) explores the 2007 war as a case of urbicide to reinforce the meaning of the camp. The event exposes the state of exception that characterizes the majority of the camps. Without a defined legal framework and a clear system of governance, inhabitants are facing structural problems such as inadequate infrastructure and insufficient services.

Capitalism and the “Creative Destruction”

Parallel to the recognition of the 2007 war as uricide, the event can be interpreted as a planned action objectifying business generation, economic competitiveness reduction, community's impoverishment, and creation of a new cycle of emergency. The thesis is supported by a concept from the economic science, the Creative Destruction of Capitalism. As Hurley (2016) defines, the essence of the system is the destruction of the old to open space for the new. Elliot (1980) details it bringing Schumpeter's definition – capitalism is an evolutionary system that never can be stationary, creating “revolutions” that makes possible innovation.

In a contemporary discussion, Harvey (2007) explores how the recent wave of neoliberalism openly adopted the mechanism of creative destruction. Neoliberalism has been globally “naturalized” through the articulation of essential concepts – *freedom, autonomy, meritocracy* – to become embedded in common sense and fully adopted. Therefore, interests are fed while underprivileged populations lose agency capacity to bypass social inequalities.

Understanding Culture and Identity

The use of ideologies to hide interests appears on anthropology studies. Sikka (2012) defends that what we understand, and accept, as cultural traces can hide interests of power maintenance. Those in power have historically promoted the creation of culture, imposing it. The author discuss the necessity of questioning “*moral norms*” of cultures to understand if these norms are not better interpreted as *ideology* – the result of power practices that present them as universal goods. The challenge of interpreting culture and identity is also addressed by Sökefeld (1999), who defends that culture is an organic and fluid process instead of a static entity that embodies individuals with a pattern behavior. He advocates for an approach on the individual and their agency to manage multiple identities, responding to the context and situations – including hidden forms of power as stated by Sikka – what, with the physical and cultural environment, influences behavior.

However, the interpretation of culture and identity also requires clearer definitions of the terms. White (1959:230) debates different authors to propose culture as the process of *symboling*, a mechanism of establishing meaning and value. When things and events dependent upon symboling are considered and interpreted in terms of their relationship to human organisms, i.e., in a somatic context, they may properly be called human

behavior. When things and events dependent upon symboling are considered and interpreted in an extrasomatic context, i.e., in terms of their relationships to one another rather than to human organisms, we may call them culture. Subsequently, what make them different in terms of analyses is the context and how we relate them, providing a clear definition of culture as a class of things and events, dependent upon symboling, considered in an extrasomatic context.

A thing is what it is; "a rose is a rose is a rose." Acts are not first of all ethical acts or economic acts or erotic acts. An act is an act. An act becomes an ethical datum or an economic datum or an erotic datum when – and only when – it is considered in an ethical, economic, or erotic context. (White, 1959:230)

Meaning is, likewise, the key element for Baecker (1997:40). The author argue that culture can operate as a mechanism by which social systems emerges as independent from organic and environmental conditions. *"Meaning is the basic stuff social and psychic systems are made of. They are made of meaning, and of nothing but meaning"*. Thus, culture can be determined by the human aspects of meaning, where meaning depends on context, being transformed to respond to it. Finally, for Baecker (1997:46), the practice of adding meaning is related to memory. By telling the story of a society we define its boundaries based on its meanings, hence, the form rule of meaning is translated by culture into memory and control. Hence, culture is a self-description of society.

The form rule of meaning is translated by culture into memory and control. The operational basis for this is a self-description society is elaborating. Culture means self-description of the society. (Baecker, 1997:46)

Space, Place and the Materialization of Memory

The dialogue between culture and memory is developed by Hayden (1997:09), defending that identity is intimately tied to memory and public spaces nurture the sense of belonging *"Urban landscapes are storehouses for these social memories"*. The relationship of individuals with spaces are both a biological response to the physical environment and a cultural creation. It is, by this combination, that people generate attachment with a territory, resulting in a sense of place, or place attachment. Hayden (1997) defends the examine of spaces as political territories, fundamental to understand the spatial

dimension of specific groups. A refugee camp, for instance, should be analyzed as a political context, considering the enclaves that results from political territorial divisions.

Memory and its materialization can be discussed in a different scale, as proposed by Belk (1990). Objects can mediate the individual's relationship with space and time. Personal possessions, according to the author, work as tools for maintaining our connection with the past, a process of establishing "self". In other words, material objects, impregnated with memories, gain a different meaning, as a tool for the restoration of an individual's history, playing a similar role of a museum for a society. By the same token, Parkin (1999) argues that in critical situations, such as forced displacement, people make choices about what to bring with them based on primary necessities (survival and mercantile exchange), but also based on the objects that can represent them, supporting the identity's constructions in different contexts. Working as bridges, connecting past, present and future, objects that carries meanings and memories works as tools of attachment, allowing individuals to remember who they are, recognizing himself in a new territory.

Contributions to the Academic Discussion

Notwithstanding, proposing the concept of scales of attachment, this research aims at contributing with the academic debate through a better understanding of the process of generating attachment with the territory, how it can be materialized in a range of forms and what are the elements that directly and indirectly affects this process. Additionally, by discussing the economic factors that influences Nahr el-Bared, this paper amplify the analyses of the 2007 war, debating it as a planned event, and how the capitalist concept of creative destruction operates in this context. Finally, debating the relationship between culture, identity and urban environment, the research contributes for the discussion about how physical elements supports the generation and maintenance of memory, for both individuals and collectivities.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology elected for the research is directly related to its anthropological approach. In order to provide qualitative data, I adopted a methodology based on the combination of secondary data analysis and an extensive fieldwork as a strategy to go deeper on the ethnographic investigation.

The purpose of **consultation of secondary data** was to develop a triangulation of data about the case study, collecting in three main sources: news, academic publications and official reports. The material was fundamental for the preparation for the fieldwork, and was consulted on the coding phase.

The **fieldwork** took place in Tripoli and Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp, lasting for 31 days (from 14 March to 14 April 2018). Investing a significant amount of time inside and outside the camp made possible a better understanding of both the host community and the Palestinian community, what became deeply important for investigating the relationship between them and analyzing cultural aspects of integration. During this period, **ethnographic analyses** were developed through participant observation in the daily life of these communities, building rapport with informants, accessing key places and visualizing the built environment. Spending twelve days inside of Nahr el-Bared, living with families that generously opened the doors of their homes, was a deep experience. Some refugees, as research assistants, were supporting the fieldwork with contacts, accesses and translations. With them, I had an intense coexistence, giving the bases for building a structured confidence. With their relatives was established an emotional bond, also essential to made them comfortable to share their history and feelings, in a process of free exchange and co-production of knowledge.

In the hope of bringing the community's perception, **25 semi-structured interviews** were conducted, divided in two main groups of actors: 18 Palestinian refugees and 07 stakeholders. Additionally, informal conversations contributed with diverse and complementary data. Without pre-selecting interviewees, the strategy was to access as diverse as possible representatives of specific roles, conditions and features. It is worthy to say that some interviews lasted for hours or even a whole day, taking place in a range of spaces. The interviews were conducted without a questionnaire, given to the interviewee freedom to debate any theme and share its point of view. Obviously, according to its profile, I asked specific questions to open discussions connected to it. This methodology is aligned with Sökefeld (1999:430) proposition of an individual approach.

It requires giving real importance to the actual individuals we work with while studying "culture". This presupposes not quickly and thoughtlessly subsuming them under some social or cultural category but representing them, even in the ethnographic text, as individuals. It is they whom we study, not some superindividual entity. This entity –

culture – is only our construction from countless encounters, dialogues, and interactions with actual selves or individuals. (Sökefeld, 1999:430)

The **fieldwork notes** were developed through a diary (notebook), and by mapping the paths (Annex II) and photographing the urban environment, providing complementary data and visual information, allowing me to daily check the work progress, supporting decisions during the process.

Regarding the **methodology's challenges and limitations**, three relevant points are worthy to be presented. Firstly, despite the support of UNRWA, which applied for my permission, I spent a significant amount of time struggling to receive an access permission from the Lebanese Armed Force. According to locals, recently LAF became more rigorous, denying requests, and taking more time to issue a decision. To circumvent the issue, interviews, including with refugees, were conducted off the camp boundaries.

Secondly, the fieldwork's data collection and the subsequent comparison with secondary data, revealed a significant inconsistency. It is important to clarify that in certain points, such as the number of deaths in the 2007 war, it was not possible to clarify, due to the absence or impossibility to access official documents.

Finally, a perception of a possible pre-conceived speech arose, recognized not only as a pattern of information, but also in the way it was expressed. In particular, some perceptions about key points such as the army presence as the cause for the decrease of the camp's economic activity, reduced the debate of a complex issue, but was stated frequently. According to Abdelnasser Al Ayyi, who developed academic studies on NBC, the obstacle of accessing the community's perception is that they know what to give us, having their own strategy to inform foreigners in a way they improve their chances of receiving something or creating the depiction they want. *“Researchers and journalists are part of the system, in the sense that they are reproducing the discourse and helping the process of creating a desired image about the camp”.*

4. CASE STUDY PRESENTATION

14 May 1948. The date marks the Israeli Declaration of Independence following the aspirations of the Zionist movement. The British Mandate ended at midnight and, on 15th,

the Israeli State came into being. Known as *Nakba*¹, the 15th marks the ethnic cleansing that forced an extreme exodus of uprooted 750.000 Palestinians (around 80% of the population). Although some sources translate the term as exodus, locals made it clear that Nakba means “*the catastrophe*”, representing a historical moment. This process resulted on the total obliteration of around 530 villages, the confiscation and repopulation of entire cities and the genocide of more than 15.000 Palestinians in a series of mass atrocities and around 70 massacres (The Nakba did not start or end in 1948, 2017).



Figure 1 **Palestinians in 1948, five months after Nakba, leaving a village in the Galilee.**

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/05/nakba-start-1948-170522073908625.html>



Figure 2. **Migration of Palestinians in Lebanon.**

Source: Benatti, B., Kattan, S. R. (2017:259).

Consequently, Arab countries on the region hosted different groups of Palestinians. Lebanon borders received approximately 110.000 Palestinians, the majority coming from the Galilee area, the coastal cities of Jaffa, Haifa and Acre (Benatti & Kattan, 2017). Seven decades later Lebanon still hosts 12 official Palestinian refugee camps. The massive presence of refugees, including Syrians, represents nearly 25% of the country's population (Charles, 2018).

¹ The word *Nakba* (الناكبة in Arabic) means “the catastrophe” and became the term that best express the Palestinian forced displacement in 1948. In order to avoid the loss of the history, Palestinians all over the world annually runs demonstrations and events on 15th of May to keep the memory of Nakba alive. It is a clear strategy on their fight to free Palestine and go back home, making the world recognize that the Palestinian community is still suffering the consequences of the mass expulsion. Alexandra Tohme recommended adopting catastrophe as a translation, not exodus. The same happened with the term “conflict” to define the 2007 event. For her, would be better to denominate it as “war”. In both cases, she argues, media and academia are simplifying and reducing the importance of these events when they use terms such as exodus and conflict. It is important to use the correct terms in order to keep the memory of these events alive; otherwise, the support to overcome them will gradually disappear.

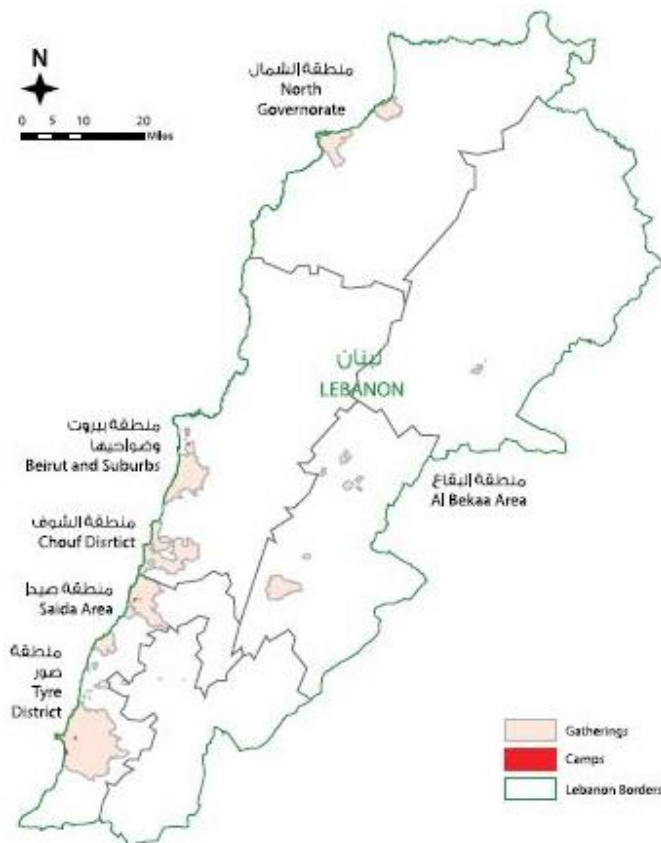


Figure 3. **Palestinian Camps and Gatherings (Grey Areas) in Lebanon.**

Source: Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (2018:07)

Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp was deployed in 1948 in the north of Lebanon² by the League of Red Crescent as an emergency response. Implemented with tents, it generated a temporary settlement for refugees coming from around 50 Palestinian villages, most of them from the Saffuriya area (Benatti & Kattan, 2017). Surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the west, Nahr el-Bared River to the south, a residential area to the east and agricultural land to the north, it is physically isolated from the adjacent residential area by a disabled railway, previously used for transport of goods and passengers between Tripoli and Syria.

² The refugee camp is located 16km north from Tripoli, the metropolitan area located on the eastern Mediterranean shore denominated North Governorate. Lebanon's second-largest city with a population of around 230.000, Tripoli is recognized as the capital of the North and is located around 85km by road from Beirut. It is also home to Lebanon's most northerly and second largest seaport and it is a key point for the region, including the refugee's community, for public services and job opportunities.



Figure 4. **Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp when deployed as an emergency response.**

Source: www.platform-ad.com/cold-river-reconstruction-of-nahr-el-bared-refugee-camp-by-unrwa-nbr/

With the natural population growth, the camp rapidly became overcrowded, facing the lack of public spaces and adequate infrastructure, resulting in a gradual process of urbanization and expansion beyond the original borders, culminating in an informal city. Palestinians used to buy and sell land, including on the surroundings, until the promulgation of the Law n° 269 by the Government of Lebanon (GoL), establishing rules on foreign ownership of property. The law does not specifically mention Palestinians, but it prohibits *“any person who is not a national of a recognized state... acquiring real estate property of any kind”* (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013). The measure had a direct impact on both the economic condition and their attachment with the territory, by a clear reduction of rights. A recent study showed that 38% of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are living outside the camps, a number considerable low if compared to other host countries, a consequence of legal restrictions to land tenure (Hassan, 2011).

Through time, the camp also became an important trade hub, receiving people from the cities and surrounding villages to buy there, ensuring significant economic improvement. This cycle of prosperity was tragically interrupted by 2007 war. The armed clash between LAF and Fatah Al-Islam (from May to September), resulted in the death of 226 members of the radical group, 179 Lebanese soldiers and 50 civilians (numbers not confirmed). It also resulted in the destruction of 95% of the camp's physical structures and the

displacement of 26,000 individuals (estimated), that were improvised resettled on other camps, occupying facilities, such as a community center, renting places with financial support of UNRWA, and staying with relatives. The Beddawi camp, for instance, hosted around 8.000 NBC's inhabitants.



Figure 5. **Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp completely destroyed after the 2007 war**

Source: www.platform-ad.com/cold-river-reconstruction-of-nahr-el-bared-refugee-camp-by-unrwa-nbrc/

With the end of the war, the community started to protest strongly to be allowed to come back to the camp, asking for its complete reconstruction. In parallel, with the support of volunteers and organizations, the community developed a memory project to map and raise data on the houses (location, typology, dimension, characteristics). The data acquired was the base for the elaboration of the reconstruction plan, led by UNRWA in a partnership with the Nahr el-Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies (NBRC) and the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC). In order to access funding for the reconstruction, took place in Vienna, Austria the International Donor's Conference for the Recovery and Reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared Camp and Surrounding Areas (23 June 2008). On the occasion, donors pledged US\$ 120 million, while the Arab countries committed to finance half of the project cost.

The GoL, to be able to execute the construction actions, bought from the families their land inside the official camp. UNRWA, though, developed an intense participatory

process on the phase of studies and design, including the consultation of every single family, giving them the opportunity to make adjustments on their flats. In parallel, UNRWA implemented temporary shelters, made with iron containers, as an emergency solution. Once the reconstruction, divided in packages, is still undergoing, it is estimated that 1.000 refugees are still living on the shelters, where the living conditions are completely unsatisfactory and unhealthy. Over a quarter of individuals enjoy less than 5m² of living space and half of them have less than 10m² per person (UNRWA).



Figure 6. Participatory process methodologies
Source: www.platform-ad.com/cold-river-reconstruction-of-nahr-el-bared-refugee-camp-by-unrwa-nbrc/



Figure 7. Deployment of temporary shelters
Source: www.platform-ad.com/cold-river-reconstruction-of-nahr-el-bared-refugee-camp-by-unrwa-nbrc/

It is worthy to highlight that, after the 2007 war, NBC became a military zone, controlled by LAF, that not only controls the access of residents and visitants, but it is also responsible for authorizations and the building code established for the reconstruction. Another important fact is the legal division between the official camp, defined by the 1949 boundary and the expansion denominated Grey Area by UNRWA, the unique service provider whose mandate is determined by the original perimeter, preventing it to work on Grey Areas. With all in consideration, NBC is an exemplary of the complexity of refugee's condition, providing a context full of elements of investigation.

5. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The findings of the extensive fieldwork were codified and organized in three sections, approaching the most important features of the case study, resulting in a broad spectrum of analyses. The first section presents the concept of scales of attachment, while the

next two addresses how the community's attachment is affected by a diversity of elements – from economic issues to forms of control.

5.2 Culture, Memory and Mechanisms of Attachment

The analysis of cultural aspects, and how they are materialized in the urban environment and affected by it revealed different mechanisms of attachment. The physical elements that determine how individuals and the community relate to the context, how they use them as tools to overcome transience and how they affect individual and collective memory, can be defined by scales, which I designate “scales of attachment”. The urban scale congregates the public sphere, related to the construction of a Palestinian territory inside Lebanon. The scale of houses is related to collective spaces in the domestic sphere, fundamental for intimate cultural practices. The object scale is related to the individual sphere, simple elements that gain a symbolic status by the addition of meanings. Therefore, I argue that objects, as repositories of memories, capable of being carried, represents the most important scale of attachment for a community living in permanent temporariness.

The first interviews with refugees in Tripoli portrayed, unanimously, the camp's landscape as an expression of Palestine. Abedel-Rahman Khaled Alrhim, 23-years-old, who loves to learn languages and workout at the gym, is a student of architectural engineer at the Sibliin Training Center (STC)³. He stated.

Everywhere you look, you see Palestine. We do many paintings on the walls, we spread our flag, it is all there. The camp does not let you forget that you are in Palestine, and makes us remember home, all the time.

Developing the fieldwork made it possible to identify cultural manifestations, however, less intensely than expected. The symbols are there – flags, paintings, posters of fighters and political leaders – though, in specific places and not in significant number, dividing attention with projects and campaigns developed by NGOs.

³ The Sibliin Training Center is a college provided and managed by UNRWA inside of the Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp, where they offer two-year's programs. It is located in the waterfront, on the area established for facilities and collective equipment on zoning system developed as part of the reconstruction process. Locals informally call the street where it is located “the school street” because all of the school buildings are concentrated there.



Figure 8. Urban environment and cultural manifestation
Source: Author's archive



Figure 9. Urban environment and cultural manifestation
Source: Author's archive



Figure 10. Urban environment and cultural manifestation
Source: Author's archive



Figure 11. Urban environment and cultural manifestation
Source: Author's archive



Figure 12. Urban environment and cultural manifestation
Source: Author's archive



Figure 13. **Urban environment and cultural manifestation**
Source: Author's archive



Figure 14. **Intervention by organizations**
Source: Author's archive



Figure 15. **Intervention by organizations**
Source: Author's archive



Figure 16. **Intervention by organizations**
Source: Author's archive



Figure 17. **Intervention by organizations**
Source: Author's archive

Interviewing Aboodi Salamih, a 26-years-old-architect, attending a Master at Beirut Arab University, I asked about elements of the Palestinian architectural tradition recognizable on the camp's built environment. He explained, from where he stands, the only feature directly connected with his culture is the presence of gardens, a Palestinian tradition. As far as he is concerned, the camp has a generic landscape, except for the perforated

concrete blocks with “arabesque” patterns used in the reconstruction buildings. Yet, he elucidated *“This is an Arabic tradition, not exactly a Palestinian expression”*.



Figure 18. **Perforated concrete blocks with “arabesque” patterns used in the new buildings**

Source: Author’s archive



Figure 19. **Private garden, a Palestinian tradition**

Source: Author’s archive

Notwithstanding, the depthless material representations does not reveal the real meaning of the camp for the community. After six decades of evolvement, working as a stage for generations, it became, symbolically, a permanent territory – a Palestinian territory inside Lebanon – helping to overcome transience, as discussed by Ramadan (2014:49).

They may be temporary spaces in which Palestinian refugees await their right to return, but they have nevertheless become imbued with meaning and significance over decades of Palestinian habitation and place making. [...] As the built environment was assembled into something more permanent, the slow accumulation of experiences and memories, births and deaths, built up a sense of place and meaning. (Ramadan, 2014:49).

The 2007 war rendered the significance of the camp explicit. The armed conflict heavily destroyed the physical structures, yet the families lost more than buildings. They lost the materialization of six decades of efforts, memories and a strong social fabric. Suffering the second displacement, this community was obliged to reconstruct their lives, facing the fragility of the refugee condition. The camp, their refuge, was erased, exposing the fact that Palestinians are still in transit, putting them, for the second time, in a position of dependence, in the need of once again converting a space into a place. Ghannam Salameh Abo Samir, a 20-years-old student of architectural engineer at the STC who is very calm and gentle, and takes part in local NGOs and factions, was emphatic when describing that life used to be considerably better before the war, when their lives resembled the life in the Palestinian villages. *“Our social life was much better. Everyone*

knew each other, loved each other. I could talk to my brother from my window; I used to meet him every day. Now, I almost do not see him anymore". The relevance of spaces and memories as bases for life, pointed by the interviewee, is explained by Hayden (1997:09).

Identity is intimately tied to memory: both our personal memories (where we have come from and where we have dwelt) and the collective or social memories interconnected with the histories of our families, neighbors, fellow workers, and ethnic communities. Urban landscapes are storehouses for these social memories, because natural features such as hills or harbors, as well as streets, buildings, and patterns of settlement, frame the lives of many people and often outlast many lifetimes. (Hayden, 1997:09)

Thus, the urban scale of attachment turned the camp into a mechanism to preserve and foster culture, and keep the collective memory alive. While people are faced with a series of limitations and challenges within the confinement, it provides an opportunity to live immersed the Palestine culture and allows them to keep their traditions alive. As Ramadan (2010) demonstrated, some residents expressed the fear of living outside the camp and gradually lose their identity. In parallel, the camp has also a symbolic meaning. It says to the world that this community is still suffering the consequences of the 1948 Nakba. Alexandra Tohme, a 29-years-old Lebanese raised in USA, who studied Political Science and is running the Azahir NGO, defended that not only the camp has this symbolic power, but also the term refugee works as an instrument. *"The term refugee is important! To make clear that you are out of your territory still waiting, and wanting, to go home"*.

Moving forward on the scales of attachment, the houses revealed to have a deeper meaning for the community. Ghannam Salameh Abo Samir, with all his maturity and taking some time to answer the question, stated when referring to the loss of your home. *"We lost what we built! I lost a part of my body!"*

The living room of Palestinian houses functions as collective space on the domestic sphere. Living with families during the fieldwork, it was my place on their homes. There, I was sleeping, working, interviewing and, essentially, sharing moments with them, such as dinners, an important moment of their routine. These places are designed and prepared to receive guests. They are always the largest space, with the best furniture

they can afford, with specific decoration and filled with elements that represents Palestine. It is worthy to say that the buildings itself does not follow this level of investment, creating rooms that completely differ from the urban landscape.



Figure 20. **Palestine details in a living room**
Source: Author's archive.



Figure 21. **Palestine details in a living room**
Source: Author's archive.



Figure 22. **Overview of a living room and the richness of its design**
Source: Author's archive.

The difference from living rooms to the other rooms in general, where all of them are completely private, is substantial. To clarify, I will detail how the simple act of going to the bathroom works for a guest. Whenever I needed, I had to talk to one of the men of the house. They would go inside and inform the family members I was going to use the toilet so the women would cover themselves as their religion mandates. He would also close a few bedroom doors, and then come back to only then welcome me in the house. Normally, they went until the bathroom door with me, and in some cases, stayed there to bring me back to the living room. This cultural behavior and the features of this space

are relevant to illustrate how the domestic sphere can be more significant than the public space.

Some of the interviewees' complaints were related to the new apartments provided by UNRWA. Basically, because of the severe reduction of area from the previous houses to the apartments, fundamental to increase the quality of the urban space, the living rooms do not provide an adequate space to practice the tradition of gathering guests and relatives. Although UNRWA invested in a robust participatory process including the consultation of every single family, the limitations of the methodology – mainly the difficult of establishing a dialogue using technical drawings – and the limitations imposed by the new construction regulations, prevented all demands from being fully addressed.



Figure 23. **An open and public space created on the reconstruction project**
Source: Author's archive.



Figure 24. **An open and public space created on the reconstruction project**
Source: Author's archive.

Therefore, previous assumptions were validated. Unquestionably, the urban environment and buildings plays crucial roles on the process of developing attachment with the territory. The urban scale of attachment as a symbolic Palestinian territory inside Lebanon, and their homes, as the essential place where the cultural traditions, in a domestic sphere, are practiced, have meanings related to emotional connections that embodies from the construction effort to the daily life, working as a tool to overcome transience, as summarized by Ramadan (2014:60).

To understand the destruction of Nahr al-Barid, it is necessary to see how the camp has become more than a humanitarian infrastructure of physical relief and welfare. In the camp, Palestinian social formations, cultural practices, political identities, and national consciousness can be produced and reproduced. Just as the Palestinian homeland is imagined both as a space (the land) and a time (before 1948), so too is the camp a space (of Palestinian life and meaning) and a time (transient, a passage to future return). While this Palestinian time-space

emphasizes displacement and transience, the camps have become meaningful places in themselves. Like the loss of the Palestinian homeland in 1948, the destruction of Nahr al-Barid has put at risk these processes and practices that constitute and bind together Palestinian society. (Ramadan, 2014:60)

Furthermore, houses are also storages of memories. The fieldwork has revealed that the objects that used to be stored at their homes are powerful elements to generate attachment with the territory. They carry their memories, working as symbols of a loved past, while representing hope in an idealized future.

Many interviewees explained that when the 2007 war started they faced exactly the same situation of the 1948 Nakba. Authorities informed that in two or three days they would be back home. They closed the door and left with a pair of clothes. Coming back to NBC after months of war, they found their homes completely devastated. Zeyad Shtewe, a man with around 75 years old, father of 10, living in terrible conditions in the containers for the past 11 years, was visibly tired when I met him for an interview. His battered teeth, unshaven beard, red eyes and dark circles intensified the sense of suffering that his image presents. It is worth to say how gentle he was, buying us juice, completely open to share his stories, smiling even when talking about a difficult reality and telling me *“you are very welcome, because I love Brazil, and sorry for my terrible English, I left school to work when I was a kid”*. His voice quavered and tears came to his eyes as we talked about the experience of being displaced for the second time and losing his objects.

When I came back to my home, everything was destroyed. I tried, but I could not find a single thing. I lost everything, all my memories, my history. I lost the key of my home in Palestine. I was keeping this key for 70 years! I lost my hope to come back to Palestine! I lost everything that could represent Palestine for me. Life just do not make sense anymore. I am just struggling to survive.

Nawal Mohamed Hasan, a very strong woman with long grey hair and a hoarse voice whom compulsively smokes, founder and leader of the Najda NGO, touched in the same point. She explained that because she lost her *“library of memories”*, for the past ten years she is “collecting” objects that makes her remember Palestine, from sculptures to paintings, from wood boxes to plates, even souvenirs, to restore her library.

However, the most significate experience happened when I was taking a walk with Aboodi Salamih, the talkative, playful and extremely affectionate young; it goes without

saying that he simply said *“come with me, I wanna show you something important”*. We arrived in an empty plot, by the sea, with an amazing view. It was around 6 p.m. and the sunset at the camp was amazingly beautiful. When we stepped into a destroyed concrete slab, he told me *“welcome to my home! And sorry for not being able to offer you a cup of tea”*. We were in the ruins of his house, destroyed by the war. The slab used to be the roof, expecting for the second floor. He described with passion the evenings with the family at the balcony, chatting, smoking *nargile*, sharing food, and enjoying the view. After some minutes of silence, he declared.

After so many years, I do not feel so bad coming here anymore. Nowadays, it is just concrete. But when I was 15, coming back for the first time, was really hard, really sad. I took a piece of concrete and saved it to remember my home. What would make me really happy would be the removal of these rubble, because I am sure that my memories are down there! I would love to retrieve my childhood photos. I have nothing to remember that time. When we have nothing to remember our history, we feel as if our past does not exist.



Figure 25. **Aboodi Salamih’s old house ruins.**
Source: Author’s archive.



Figure 26. **Aboodi Salamih’s old house ruins.**
Source: Author’s archive.



Figure 27. **Aboodi Salamih's old house ruins and its amazing view**

Source: Author's archive.

My argument about the power of objects on the processes of attachment, based on these testimonials, finds resonance in academic studies. Belk (1990:02) explains that the relationship between individuals, space and time can be mediated by objects, which acts as extensions of the body that occupy the space while they dialogue with time, as reminders of the past.

The role of possessions in these cases is not only to act as ballast to keep us stable, but to serve as familiar transitional objects that, like the child's security blanket, provide us a sense of support as we confront an uncertain future. It is this apparent function that caused the boom in World War II photography as servicemen were provided and sought to carry with them snapshots as memorabilia of "the girl back home," their families, and their lives in prior times of peace (King 1984). These objects also served as hopeful reminders that war only temporarily ruptures the "flow" of time and that someday "normal" peacetime, loved ones, and familiar activities would be regained and the river of time returned to its proper channel. (Belk, 1990:02)

The experience of displacement, being settled in a sterile space, in a new territory and labeled as a refugee is a process of depersonalization and deterritorialization. In that sense, personal objects tied to individual history and memory helps to restore identity and individuality. As defended by Parkin (1999:304), objects also work as connections between past and future. As materializations of memory, they allow the individual to

maintain alive their origin, while keeps alive the perspective of a future, considering that the objects will be vital to reestablish life when arriving back to their original territory.

Dramatic and less metaphysical expressions of human-object movement occur in the increasingly documented cases of human displacement, including those of refugees, in which peoples carry not only what they need for subsistence and exchange purposes but also, if they can, articles of sentimental value which both inscribe and are inscribed by their own memories of self and personhood. While art, artefacts and ritual objects are conventionally located in predictable contexts of use, items taken under pressure and in crisis set up contexts less of use and more of selective remembering, forgetting and envisioning. (Parkin, 1999:304)

In conclusion, the fieldwork findings provided the substance to define the three scales of attachment. More importantly, the research concluded that the private scale of attachment – the objects – are decisive. Impregnated with history, memories and feelings, objects are converted into symbols, if not, in Palestine itself. The refugee status means, in practice and conceptually, individuals and populations in a permanent transience condition. The Nahr el-Bared community, after suffering the Nakba twice (1948 and 2007), facing violent conflicts that exposes the fragility of their presence in the current territory, places in its most symbolic objects, its memory, and its hope. These elements, then, more than representations, are tools to survive in the extreme conditions of being waiting for the next move. By carrying small, simple but meaningful objects, it is possible to carry their own lives. The key of his home in Palestine, brought by Zeyad Shtewe's family after locking the door and fleeing, is the best expression of this scale.



Figure 28. Objects received from the families I stayed with. When giving me, they said. "Do not forget us! Do not forget Palestine!"
Source: Author's archive.



Figure 29. Objects received from the families I stayed with. When giving me, they said. "Do not forget us! Do not forget Palestine!"
Source: Author's archive.



Figure 30. Objects received from the families I stayed with. When giving me, they said. "Do not forget us! Do not forget Palestine!"

Source: Author's archive.

5.3 The Economic Issues and the Visible and Invisible Barriers

As pointed in the methodology, the study of Nahr el-Bared included the analyses of the 2007 war as a case of urbicide. Ramadan (2009:159) defended that the space of exception where the camp is settled opened the doors for actions that extrapolated the military necessities to fight the radical group.

And the state of exception in which the camp existed, coupled with Lebanese discourses of the camps as impenetrable security islands and threats to the Lebanese body, and Lebanese demographic anxieties, allowed a course of action that seemed to maximise the physical destruction of the camp. Particularly after the eventual defeat of Fateh al-Islam, when for a month the destruction continued with looting, arson and vandalism, Nahr el-Bared was erased by urbicide. (Ramadan, 2009:159)

The arguments presented were confirmed, mainly through the testimonies about the level of destruction of the houses. Alternatively, the fieldwork findings brought a new interpretation of the event, not opposed to the thesis of urbicide, but complementary: the

2007 war could have been planned. This discussion was first introduced by the architect Nadine El Marouk, the coordinator of UNRWA Head of Design Unit, in Tripoli, a very kind and self-confident woman, leading a team that frequently interrupted our conversation to ask for her support. When discussing the urbicide, she stated.

Is the Government happy with the destruction? Yes! The Government of Lebanon has always this idea of a refugee camp as a point of attraction for 'outlaws'. There is even a rumor that the war in Nahr el-Bared would be just the first one. All the other 11 camps would face the same. It is a strategy to facilitate interventions, to improve control, and generate businesses. The war opened the doors for a process of formalization, modernization through the reconstruction. The camp finally became a city.

However, it was Abdelnasser Al Ayyi, a very calm man, who speaks slowly and with a low voice, which detailed the thesis. He is an architect who developed his Master thesis on NBC and is currently working at the LPDC, a department of the GoL.

I fully agree with the theory about the war as a planned event. Some conflicts, even against Israel, does not have an ideological or political reason. They keep the war alive because the economic system depends on it. To understand how a camp works you have to understand the space of exception. The camp is a cycle. It evolves from tents, grows, is densified, structured, than it is destroyed, reconstructed, and a new phase of structuring begins. And repeat. Some camps have been destroyed and no one talks about it. It all depends on how do they label the conflict, what is, obviously, based on interests. If they do not recognize as a war, there is no reconstruction. Everything is temporary and works in cycles of construction and destruction. That is the nature of a refugee camp!

The nature of a refugee camp presented – cycles of construction and destruction – is a perfect example of Creative Destruction, the perverse logic of the capitalist system. Capitalism has, as a basic characteristic, the constant change. The system can never be stationary, and to keep evolving, it is necessary to destroy itself, in order to create something new, a cycle of destruction and construction. Elliot (1980:47), summon Schumpeter to bring a clear definition. *“The innovational process incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one. This process of Creative Destruction is the essential fact*

about capitalism”. NBC, consequently, has been suffering the consequences of cycles of destruction in the most aggressive possible way: the war. Since the 1948 Nakba, this community has been fighting against cycles, being compelled to rebuild their lives, since the process of destruction goes far beyond the economic dimension. Undoubtedly, cycles of Creative Destruction have always their beneficiaries, from the most obvious ones, those able to sign contracts for the reconstruction for instance, to the most subtle, such as community members that arises as leaders in tragic moments.



Figure 31. **Houses in ruins: the living memory of the 2007 war**
Source: Author's archive.



Figure 32. **Houses in ruins: the living memory of the 2007 war**
Source: Author's archive.



Figure 33. **One of the reconstruction sites: business and contracts**
Source: Author's archive.

Another interviewee, that requested to not have his name published, believe that the GoL planned the war to reduce competition. His assumption exposes the concept in practice. *“The camp used to be the ‘China’ of Lebanon. Now that the war killed our economy, people goes to Tripoli to buy stuff. That was the idea. Take care with this information; it*

can be dangerous for me”. To create a new market – or improve Tripoli’s one – the “old market” needed to be destroyed.

The fieldwork exposed one of the faces of the war, economy. The war and the consequent process of reconstruction generated a significant amount of business, mainly through contracts with construction companies. In parallel, it is fundamental to understand that the war creates a new emergency situation, resulting in the arrival of INGOs and NGOs, which injects money on the local economy and usually hire locals, and most importantly, it results in a new phase of funding and donations for Lebanon. This perverse mechanism of generating economic evolution through destruction, a practice fully adopted by the contemporary wave of neoliberalism, has always-devastating consequences for the weakest players of this game, as well stated by Harvey (2007:39). The NBC community is definitely a victim of this mechanism, being affected not only by a process of impoverishment, but also by the gradual loss of its attachment with the territory, once this place does not represent anymore a safe space for their development.

The redistributive tactics of neoliberalism are wide-ranging, sophisticated, frequently masked by ideological gambits, but devastating for the dignity and social well-being of vulnerable populations and territories. The wave of creative destruction neoliberalization has visited across the globe is unparalleled in the history of capitalism. (Harvey, 2007:39)



Figure 34. The new buildings are identified with the origin of the funding/donation
Source: Author's archive.



Figure 35. The new buildings are identified with the origin of the funding/donation
Source: Author's archive.

The other side of this equation is how, in a country where it is estimated that refugees represents 25% of the population (Charles, 2018), this community became a resource, as believed by Melad Sameer Salameh, one of the most important community leaders,

and a reference for the youth. He is a psychologist, currently working for the Netherland's War Child INGO, and extremely self-confident.

When the living conditions of refugees starts to get better, the donors starts to reduce the amount of money they send to Lebanon. Obviously, the Government starts to complain, and starts to look for 'reasons' to justify donations, like a new emergency. So I ask you. Do you really believe that they want us out of the country? They need us!

This affirmation leads the discussion to another economic aspect of the relationship of Palestinian refugees and Lebanon, the host country. Refugees are allowed to attend colleges and universities, reaching academic titles. Nonetheless, they are legally prevented to work in 36 specific professions on the public sector, and when they find an opportunity on the private sector their average wage is around 20% less than a Lebanese worker in the same position (Charles, 2018). According to the interviews, the majority of the young Palestinians who find a job work informally, without the rights established by law, an unstable condition. Abedel-Rahman Khaled Alrhim, showing his calloused hands, declared.

I am an engineer! What should I do when I complete my studies? Work as an engineer! However, we work at civil construction sites. Look to our hands! We really want to work as the Lebanese people works. We do not want dusty in our hands. I do not want discrimination anymore! We are brothers living here. Even if I am a Brazilian. We are all brothers! Humanity is better than a religious thing! You know that!

Tarek Ibrahim Ghuneim, 20-years-old, who studies architectural engineer at the STC, is an easygoing man, passionate for books, with a deep interest on the concept of communism, and always ready to debate politic issues. He confirmed the discriminatory conditions of work *"My father is a doctor and he can make around US\$ 800 because he is Palestinian. A Lebanese doctor would make at least US\$ 2.000. That is how it works for us"*.

This reality portrays a paradoxical situation: the presence of refugees are important for the GoL as an economical resource at the same time that they represent competitiveness on both the labor and sales market. Palestinians' economic condition, then, is a consequence of a strategy to avoid a definitive integration, maintaining its transitory character, as explained by Ramadan (2009:158).

Living in the camps is not mandatory for Palestinians nor is it prohibited for non-Palestinians, but Palestinians' lack of access to employment, property, and healthcare, educational and social services outside the camps effectively compels many people to reside there. Keeping Palestinians in refugee camps, separate from the rest of the Lebanese body, is part of a strategy of maintaining the transient nature of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon. (Ramadan, 2009:158).

Evidently, the debate about economic issues is very broad, and multiple challenges faced by the community arose in the fieldwork. Foremost, the decrease of the economic activity after the war deeply impacted the living conditions inside the camp, once the lack of employment opportunities and the Arabic tradition of trade push them to develop their own business, mostly shops. Observing the camp I was able to identify a substantial number of shops closed, as well as, shops completely empty of costumers in different periods of the day and week. Interviewing a simple man (he refused to give his name) who runs a tiny shop inside of the temporary shelters, a very amusing person, always making jokes with us and his few customers, explained that nowadays, with the arriving of Syrian refugees and poor Lebanese families, and the financial problems faced by them, his business is almost collapsing, exposing how fragile the NBC economy is.

These people come to my shop, buy things, and do not pay for it! They tell me that they are hungry, that they need food for their kids. I cannot say no to them. But what I am going to do? I also need money to feed my family! I have this notebook, where I take notes of what they are taking, but I do not know why I keep doing it. It is useless. I know that they will never pay me back.



Figure 36. The main access of the camp, a commercial avenue, by the day
Source: Author's archive.



Figure 37. The main access of the camp, a commercial avenue, by the night
Source: Author's archive.

Additionally, the fieldwork findings about the war uncovered other consequences for the camp's economy: (i) The conversion of NBC in a military zone, imposing control through checkpoints, created a symbolic barrier, not prohibiting, but making it difficult for consumers to access; (ii) The majority of soldiers killed on the war of 2007 were from the Lebanese villages of the surroundings – their families blame the camp's community for the war, breaking their social ties and affecting their disposition to buy from the camp; (iii) The war, and the military presence, changed the way the camp is seeing, creating an image of an insecure space, reducing the number of visitors; (iv) The process of formalization of the camp generated an increase of taxes and costs with public services, reducing the competitiveness of the businesses, which usually sold cheaper than the stores located in Tripoli, for instance.

Notwithstanding, even after seven decades of history and the process of formalization, NBC is still characterized by a space of exception. This condition, featured by an unclear legal framework, also results in a complex system of governance, as defined by Ramadan (2009:158).

What we see in the camps today is not a total suspension of the law, but the suspension of its direct enforcement by the Lebanese authorities. [...] In place of Lebanese sovereign control, and since the expulsion of the PLO leadership from Lebanon in 1982, power is exercised by complex networks of institutions and organisations. One of the most important is UNRWA, which has many state-like functions including the registration of all refugees, births and deaths, and the provision of services. However, UNRWA's mandate is explicitly non-political and UNRWA cannot provide Palestinian refugees with the political protection function that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provides other refugee populations. (Ramadan, 2009:158)

Although the fieldwork adopted the strategy to consult a diverse group of community members and stakeholders, it is still difficult to establish how governance works. The roles of representativeness and management responsibilities, rights and duties, are not well defined, while the Lebanese legal framework is not fully applied, contributing for social inequalities and power imbalance. One of the critical consequences, from the economic perspective, is how, according to the interviews and my own observation, this panorama facilitates practices of corruption.

In order to illustrate the argument, two examples will be disclosed. Firstly, during the participatory process and negotiations, a practice of buying and selling square meters of the new flats provided by UNRWA was born. An interviewee detailed the practice, explaining that a square meter could cost US\$ 300 and be exchanged even between different packages of the reconstruction. In parallel, while refugees such as Zeyad Shtewe, the man who lost the key of his home in Palestine, is waiting for his flat for 11 years, another refugee, which clearly has a high level of power and access to institutions, proudly showed me, from his balcony, his other two flats, that he is renting for a Syrian refugee family and a Lebanese family, converting shelters in businesses.

NAHR EL-BARED CAMP

Planned Sequence of Construction and Cost of Unfunded Lots



STATUS	FAMILIES
COMPLETED	2641
UNDER CONSTRUCTION	592
FUNDED	107
UNFUNDED	1599
TOTAL	4939

Construction Lot: 9 N28, N29
 Number Of Families: 148 7.2 m
 Block Numbers: Unfunded cost incl. Overheads in millions USD

The total unfunded value is \$105 million, including future infrastructure contracts and buildings in the UNRWA compound.

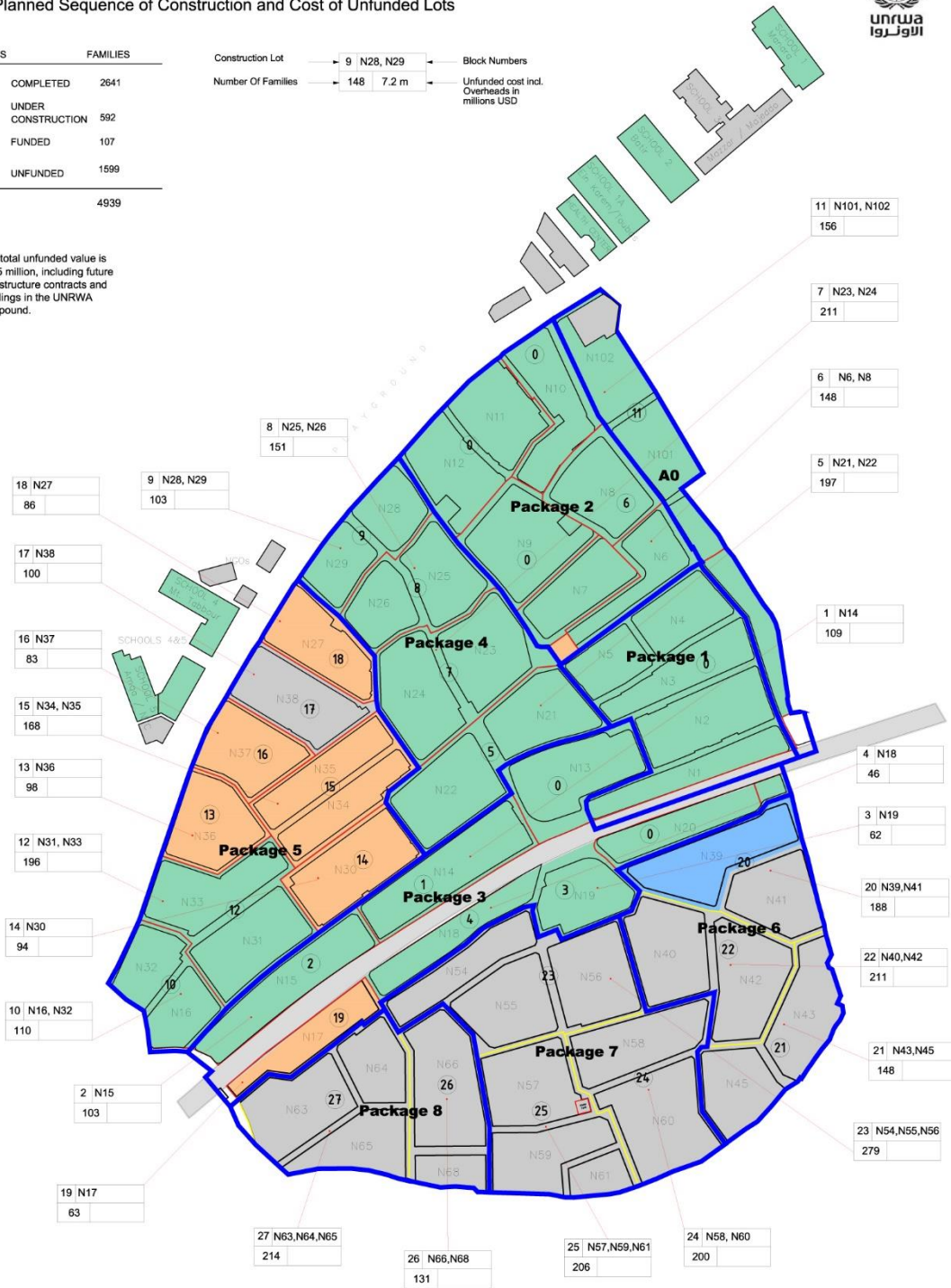


Figure 38. Status of construction progress and funding on February 2018.
 Source: UNRWA (Reconstruction Program)

To sum up, although the previous analyses pointed culture as an important issue, I suggest, the biggest challenge faced by NBC community is their economic condition. Zaynab, a smart 28-years-old girl, who gently opened the doors of her family's temporary

shelter, declared, clearly sad to say so, that she is dreaming with a life in another country (she has a sister living in the USA and another one in Germany). *“I really love my community, and I know that life in other countries is not easy, but at least we have perspectives there. Here, we fear the future. We cannot dream with a better life in this camp”*. Her words unmask how the economic conditions, despite their cultural integration with the host community, are deeply affecting these people and their attachment with this territory. If the place cannot provide the basic conditions for surviving and evolving, being a Palestinian territory can be not enough. Their future is outside.



Figure 39. Life at a temporary shelter
Source: Author's archive.



Figure 40. Life at a temporary shelter
Source: Author's archive.



Figure 41. One of the temporary shelter modules in Nahr el-Bared, located on a Grey Area
Source: Author's archive.

5.4 State of Control and its Multiple Forms

Refugee camps embody a hall of characteristics – conceptually and practically – which establishes them as a unique form of settlement. Control, the topic debated on this section, is one of the main characteristics, as explained by Herz (2015:57).

The camps are also conceived of as spaces of control, where the care of others more often than not transforms into a governing of others. Refugees are given water, food, and health care, but they are also kept in one place, without the freedom to move or settle elsewhere. Not allowed to express themselves politically, and without the right to take on work or employment outside of the camps, refugees are reduced to being recipients of welfare, condemned to a life of waiting, dependent on the actions of others. These conditions of exile, or humanitarian enclaves – where the refugees are reduced to liters of water and calories per day and are seen purely in their biological or physical state – is understood to have become the norm. (Herz, 2015:57)

The significant historical evolution of Nahr el-Bared, dealing with the concept presented by Herz (2015) and its level of informality, represented by a complex and unclear mechanism of governance, generates an idea of a community with a high level of freedom, capable of overcoming control. Nonetheless, control can be exercised in multiple forms, visible and invisible.

Firstly, after the 2007 war, NBC became a military zone, which means a rigid control by the LAF including five checkpoints to access the camp, where not only visitants, but also residents, have their documents checked, and sometimes, cars and backpacks are inspected. LAF accumulates other functions of State, which extrapolate military matters, such as the establishment of construction regulations and the formalization of NGOs. Almost the totality of the interviews presented safe and security as an important benefit of the military presence. It was common to hear from inhabitants the comparison between NBC and Beddawi, where it is possible to freely carry machine guns on the streets, what they nowadays consider a risk for the local community. In opposition, the disadvantages associated with the military presence, that vary from feeling overwhelmed or even living in a prison, for the loss of full right to come and go, to the economic decline of the camp caused by the difficulty of access of potential consumers, arose during the fieldwork as an important challenge faced by NBC community. It became clear that, for them, the camp would be better without the control operated by the LAF.



Figure 42. **A faction's soldier holds a machine gun during a demonstration at Beddawi**
Source: Author's archive.



Figure 43. **A faction's demonstration at Beddawi, with the participation of children**
Source: Author's archive.

Secondly, the community is overwhelmingly Muslim, which, obviously, directly interferes on their behavior. Traces of control imposed by religious dogmas are expressed in a range of details, from specific vestments for women to the prohibition of drinking alcohol. However, the fieldwork findings brought to light how conservative the NBC community is, affecting their behavior more deeply. Taking a walk through the camp with three young refugees (I will not expose their names); they showed me one of the historical ruins. Completely abandoned, the space became a point for consumption of alcohol and other drugs. At this point, they told me that they also like to drink. *"I like to have some beers, but I prefer other places, or to stay in a car at the waterfront. Are you a good player?"* One of them asked. The oldest also shared his strategy. *"When I want to drink I go to Tripoli. I love the bars there and I love to get drunk. But I only do that when I can stay at a friend's place"*. Their recommendation though, knowing that I also drink alcohol, was to be very careful to avoid people seeing me drinking, and to not touch in this topic with elderly people, otherwise they could have problems because everyone knows each other.



Figure 44. **An abandoned historical ruin, nowadays used for socially condemnable practices**
Source: Author's archive.



Figure 45. **A part of the seafront, nowadays used for socially condemnable practices**
Source: Author's archive.

It is worth to say that, despite the youth questions and adaptations on how to follow its religion, they still have a high level of respect and identification with it. Alaa Abdulal, a 23-years-old Palestinian refugee whose mother is Lebanese, is an architectural engineer fighting for a visa to study in Australia, after being accepted by a university. He was extremely gentle, spending a whole day in Tripoli with me before accessing the camp, when he invited me to visit the Taynal Mosque, a marvelous mamluk historical building constructed between 1326 and 1336. There, he did his prayers and while he explained many details, I could observe how proud he was to share with me his faith and traditions, and how connected he is with the Muslim religion.



Figure 46. Alaa Abdulal performs his prayers at the Taynal Mosque
Source: Author's archive.

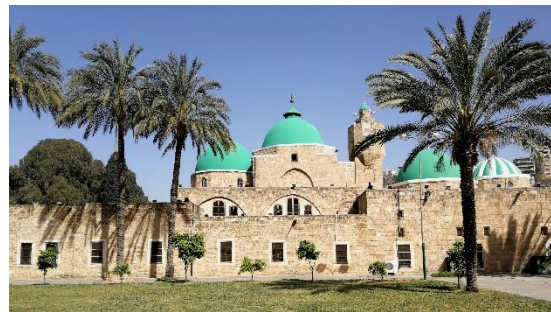


Figure 47. The Taynal Mosque located in Tripoli
Source: Author's archive.

The fact that the image that the community has of each member and how it affects their relationships, their position on the society and their behavior, I suggest, is a powerful invisible mechanism of control. This was confirmed by Zeina Hawa, a young Lebanese activist who studied in Denmark and England. She is developing a bike-sharing project for the camp, through a partnership of her NGO – The Chain Effect – and Azahir Organization. Discussing this project, she explained that girls from Nahr el-Bared usually goes to Tripoli and rent bikes there, just as tourists do, to enjoy the waterfront in La Mina, for instance. Yet, they do not ride bicycles inside the camp. She expressed her perception about it.

Girls and women do not ride a bike inside the camp because it is not socially acceptable. We are talking about a highly conservative community. Even men have some difficulties, because they can be seeing by society as someone poor. Bikes can be associated to an underprivileged condition. That is why I believe that this project can break some barriers and bring to them, mostly the girls, a little more freedom. We are looking for social cohesion.

The presence of factions can also result in a hidden control. Factions are an important and historical weapon of the fighting for the Palestine liberation. However, according to interviews, these groups are gradually losing the community's support, that does not fully agree with the violent tactics, resulting in their role in the camp becoming uncertain. Nowadays, even with relative loss of relevance, faction leaders and fighters, in general, are still in a position of power and respect, influencing the community behavior, especially among the youth, that can see them as heroes, as Tarek Ibrahim Ghuneim confessed when pointing a poster of a fighter in a faction's headquarter *"I love this man! He killed many Israeli! Every time that an Israeli kills a Palestine he goes there to give them a response, what they deserve!"*



Figure 48. **Poster at a faction's headquarter**
Source: Author's archive.



Figure 49. **Poster at a faction's headquarter**
Source: Author's archive.

Observing the level of influence of these groups, and understanding that factions are completely inserted in the daily life of Palestinian refugee camps, became clear through the fieldwork that is extremely difficult to define if their existence should be considered a trace of culture, or if it should be considered an instrument of power and control. As Sikka (2012:58) proposes, we need to question if this historical movement is an important part of the Palestinian culture or, alternatively, they exist as an instrument to benefit a few. The fact that its members have no professional activity and are supported by resources from the Palestinian Government is a strong indication.

In fact, the very idea of values or ethical propositions as being in some sense relative to a 'culture' obscures the truth that moral systems and

conventions are almost always produced and reproduced by powerful groups within a society, who have their distinct perspectives and interests: men, clerics, landowners, aristocrats and so forth. (Sikka, 2012:58)

Consequently, the position of power where factions are settled, and its capacity to influence the camp's society, both as a historical tradition, and as political organizations, result in a mechanism of control, in the sense that they are still able to dictate, mainly among young people, ways of acting. Observing individuals dealing with their own roles in this society, which means being under different forms of controls and exercising their capacity to manage the plurality of its identities according to the context, I recognized in practice what Sökefeld (1999:429) entitle the ability to manage multiple identities.

We may arrive, then, at the conclusion that to be or not to be a person is less a question of cultural concepts than of particular ways of interaction between individuals positioned in a complex system of power relationships who struggle to maintain or to improve their position with regard to others. (Sökefeld, 1999:429)

The fieldwork unveils another invisible form of control, the NBC boundaries. Preparing the graphic material became clear the geographic division between the "old camp" and its expansion. Discussing the theme with Nadine El Marouk, it became clearer. According to her, the mandate (or jurisdiction) of UNRWA covers, specifically, the Official Camp, whose limits are those established in 1948. The expansion of the camp, called "Grey Areas", does not receive assistance or services from UNRWA.



Figure 50. **The Official Camp highlighted in a map of public spaces and equipment as part of the reconstruction project. The gray areas on the surroundings are not considered.**
Source: UNRWA (Reconstruction Program)

Nonetheless, this clear boundary found on maps and, above all, on the definition of UNRWA mandate, does not exist in reality, physically speaking. Observing the built environment was impossible to recognize the frontier when crossing it. This was confirmed by observing the daily life of the camp. Although Palestinians who lives on Grey Areas does not receive assistance, they access the majority of services, such as schools and medical centers, at the Official Camp. Additionally, families are commonly spread, having houses of relatives in both areas, and obviously, inhabitants circulate freely through the whole camp. It is worthy to inform that, from the military and State perspective, the camp is not divided following the same pattern, as visualized on the security map.

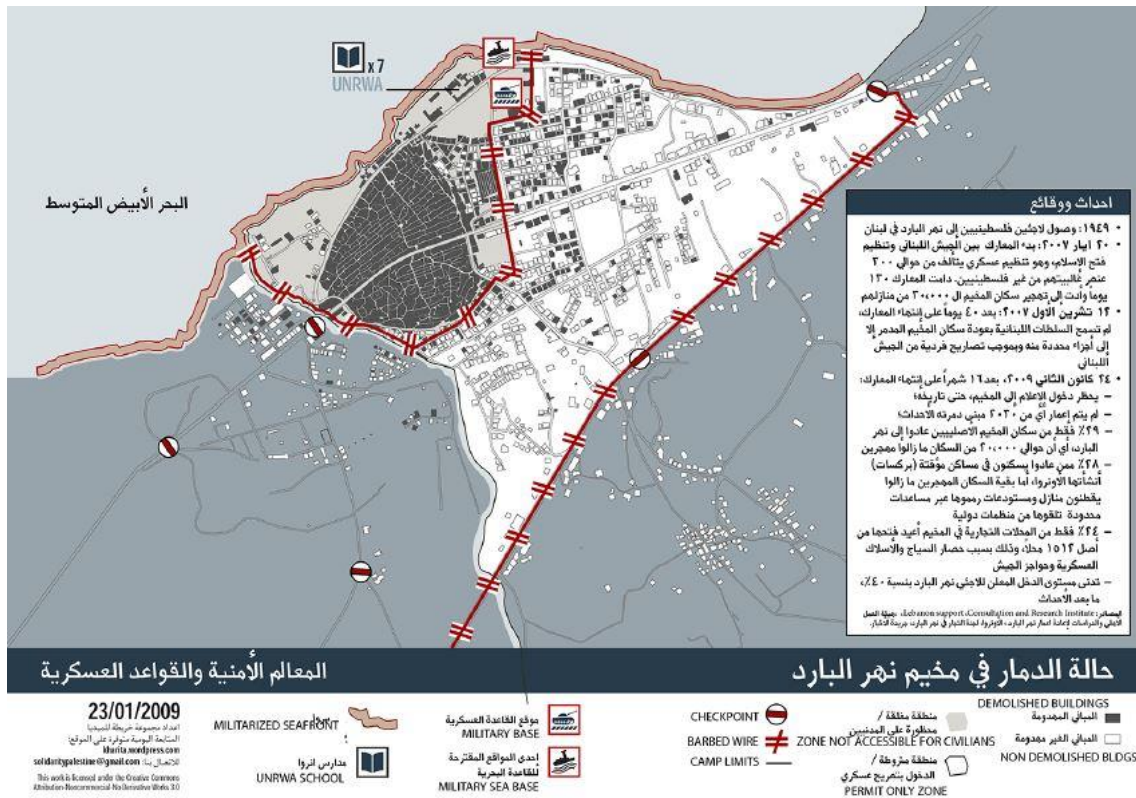


Figure 51. The Security Map of Nahr el-Bared
Source: <https://kharita.files.wordpress.com/2009/01/nahr-el-bared.pdf>

This uncovers not only an incongruity between the main actors of the camp's management, confirming the lack of clarity in terms of governance, but also tells about how specific interests of the State generate different approaches, an attribute of the state of exception.

Although the refugees seem to recognize the whole camp as a single Palestinian community, those outside the Official Camp are not allowed to access the complete scope of assistance provided by UNRWA. This form of control, based on political and economic interests generates an invisible division on NBC, what can directly contribute for social inequality and power imbalance. Using Call Sauer's definition of cultural landscape – “the essential character of a place” – and the Henri Lefebvre's interpretation that “every society in history has shaped a distinctive social space that meets its intertwined requirements for economic production and social reproduction”, Hayden (1997:19) defends that, examining spaces as political territories – bounded spaces with some form of enforcement of the boundaries – is fundamental to understand the spatial dimension of specific groups, such as “women”, and state that the social life defines the territory while the territory defines the social life. In that sense, ghettos, rural areas, working class neighborhoods and refugee camps must be analyzed as political contexts,

considering the enclaves that results from political divisions of the territory. In Hayden (1997:27) words, “*political divisions of territory split the urban world into many enclaves experienced from many different perspectives*”.

In conclusion, different forms of control – visible and invisible – utilize the urban environment or produces consequences on it. Above all, NBC community is under different forms of control, directly or indirectly affecting their rights, duties, behaviors, and aspirations, a process that, therefore, affects their attachment with the territory and imposes the necessity of managing multiple identities. The camp can represent Palestine for them, but can also work as a tool and a materialization of mechanisms of power and control.

5.5 Final Analysis of Results

Significant evidences presented by Ramadan (2009) – *looting, arson and vandalism* – confirmed by testimonials collected in the fieldwork, support the thesis of the 2007 war as a case of urbicide. According to the author, the war can be associated not only with an ethnic cleansing, but also with hidden interests to encourage Palestinians to migrate. However, the fieldwork findings brought to light a complementary thesis about the war – the war as a planned event. Many reasons were discussed, from the objective of the Lebanese Government to formalize the camp through modernization to its conversion in a military zone, improving security conditions mainly for the Lebanese cities and villages of the surroundings.

Nevertheless, the strongest argument to support the theory of a planned war is the application of a capitalist method, the Creative Destruction. Its definition “*the innovational process incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one*” (Elliot, 1980:47), founds resonance on the nature of a refugee camp, as stated by Abdelnasser Al Ayyi – *cycles of construction and destruction* – exposing how the destruction of the camp generated business opportunities, created a new emergency situation – attracting funding and investment –, and reorganized the market on the north region. I argue, then, that the war must be understood not only as a case of urbicide, but as a complex event, that involves interests and consequences related to cultural issues, economy, governance and security.

The complete destruction of Nahr el-Bared made clearer the meaning of the camp for the community, as proposed by Ramadan (2014:51). "*As the built environment was assembled into something more permanent, the slow accumulation of experiences and memories, births and deaths, built up a sense of place and meaning*". Unquestionably, NBC plays a significant role connecting the community, giving them the opportunity to live immersed in the Palestinian culture, evolving and acquiring it, and represents a Palestinian territory inside Lebanon, fundamentally important for the generations born in the camp. Nonetheless, the fragility of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon exposed by the war, the deep sadness of facing a second Nakba and losing everything built by them and, above all, the permanent temporariness that characterizes this community, affects their attachment with the territory. The visible and invisible barriers faced by the community identified on the fieldwork, resulting from the unclear system of governance, multiple forms of control and strategies to reduce their competitiveness on the work field, push them to dream with a life outside the boundaries of NBC. As stated by interviewees, the community loves the camp, it is Palestine for them, but the camp also signifies a high level of limitations.

Historically, this community proved to be able to overcome the physical and spatial limitations of the camp, by their own means, in a continuum process of improvement. However, dealing with the complexity of this environment in terms of limitations, visible and invisible barriers and multiple forms of control that affects their capability and possibility of personal and collective development, was possible to identify what Sökefeld (1999) defines as the individual ability to manage multiple identities. It is clear that community members adjust their behavior according to the context or situation, exposing not only how culture is an organic flux of creation and change, but also their desire to adapt in order to find better opportunities.

According to Hayden (1997), the public space works as a storehouse for social memories, playing a fundamental role on the process of generating attachment with the territory. The concept was confirmed, not only through material expressions of culture on the urban environment but also on the emotional connection related by interviewees. On the other hand, challenges faced by the community represented by the camp and the refugee condition, associated with the fragility of their permanence on this territory, reveals that the urban environment is not deeply connected with their culture and it is not the main element of attachment. Houses, converted in homes in a process of place making based on the most intimate cultural practices, plays an extremely important role as a mechanism of attachment.

Specially, I argue, the personal objects that carries their memories and are impregnated of meanings, became the most significate material element to generate attachment. For a population in a state of permanent temporariness, waiting for the next move, these objects works as tools to overcome transience, helping them to stay connected with their origin and culture, to reconstruct their identity in a new territory and to maintain their hope in a better future, back home, as defended by Parkin (1999:317) *“I suggest that, under the conditions of rapid and sometimes violent flight and dispersal, private mementoes may take the place of interpersonal relations as a depository of sentiment and cultural knowledge”*.

In conclusion, the analyses of the fieldwork findings leaded the research to what I denominated “scales of attachment” – the urban scale (public sphere), the domestic scale of houses (collective sphere), and the private scale of objects (individual sphere) – revealing that the mechanisms of attachment are complex and diverse, and works in a very specific way for in transit populations.

As a final contribution, it is clear that although the quality of the urban environment – infrastructure, equipment, public spaces – is fundamental to provide minimum standards of quality of life, the impetus of communities to improve and adjust the space to their needs and culture, normally through informal processes, make them able to overcome these difficult. On the other hand, the visible and invisible barriers not only deeper affects their living conditions but also represent challenges more difficult to overcome, once they are related to a bigger system. In that sense, planning, design, implementation and management of refugee camps should address, concomitantly and under the same value, issues of physical solutions and governance, obviously, always adopting participatory methodologies for decision-making. Autonomy, agency, and freedom become the key elements in these contexts, once the Nahr el-Bared community works as an example of capacity to overcome obstacles, exposing what, in the end, refugees wants – the possibility to evolve by themselves, becoming, through time, as independent as possible.

6. CONCLUSION

The present study explores the scales of attachment – urban environment, houses, objects – to demonstrate the elements that generates and affects attachment, the complexity of this process and how it is materialized, revealing the specificities of attachment for an in transit population. The thesis defended on this paper, that objects

are the most important element of attachment, is based on an extensive fieldwork developed on the Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp in Lebanon. Adopting an ethnographic approach and aiming to bring to light the individuals' perception of the case study, the fieldwork also presented how visible and invisible barriers and multiple forms of control having been affecting this Palestinian community. These challenges faced by the community are directly or indirectly related to the competitiveness they represent on Lebanon's labor and sales market, how they become a resource for the country in terms of funding, how complex and unclear is the system of governance, how conservative the social context of the camp is, how strict their religion can be, and how the military presence interfere on the daily life, among other factors. The identification of these aspects, combined with the identification of the historical ability of this community to overcome the physical and spatial limitations of the camp, made clear that the urban environment not only does not represent the most difficult barrier to conquer, nor is the main element of attachment, once after seven decades this community are still waiting for the next move. Further studies are necessary to go in detail on the analyses of each aspect of this complex context; however, this paper contributes for the academic discussion through a contemporary panorama, and complementing debates about relevant issues such as the 2007 war. The discussion proposed – scales of attachment – opens the doors for a new interpretation of how refugees deals with the territory, the buildings and the objects. Hopefully, the discussion will also resonate in new forms of thinking refugee camps and, above all, systems of governance, with the final objective to improve the community's freedom of choice, given them the proper agency and means to develop by themselves.

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ANEXXES

Annex I – Timeline of Nahr el-Bared in Satellite Images

Source: Google Earth.

DEC.2004



MAR.2010



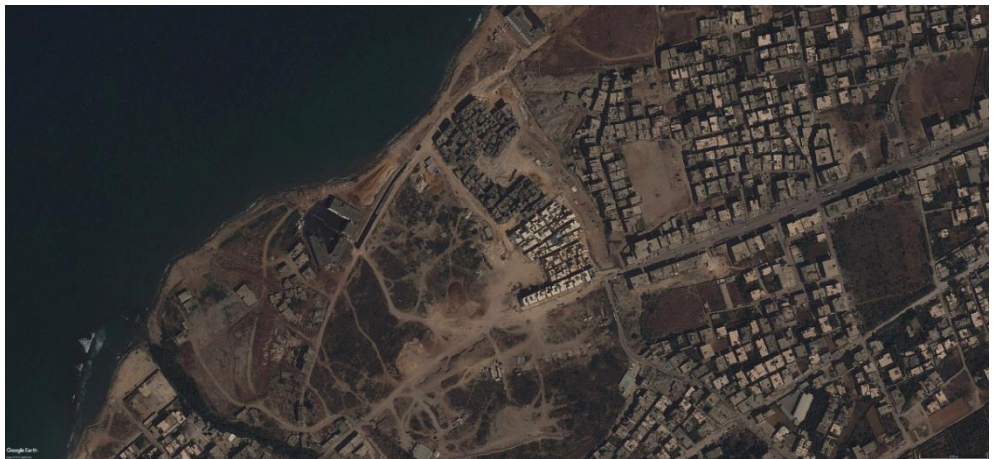
AUG.2010



MAR.2011



SEP.2011



SEP.2012



JUN.2013



AUG.2013



MAY.2014



OCT.2014



DEC.2015

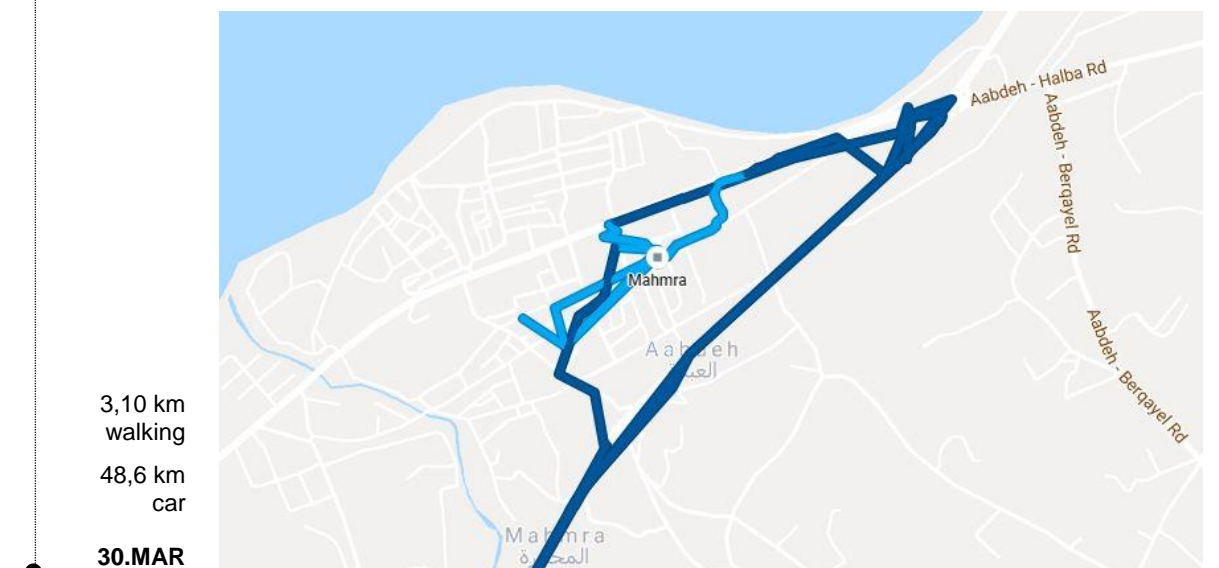
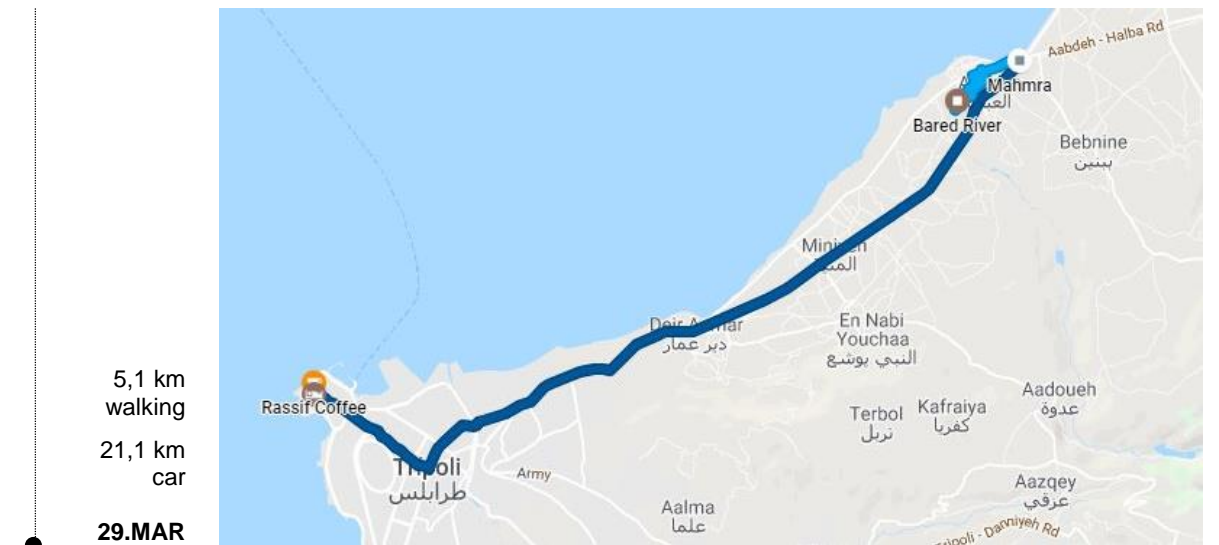


DEC.2016

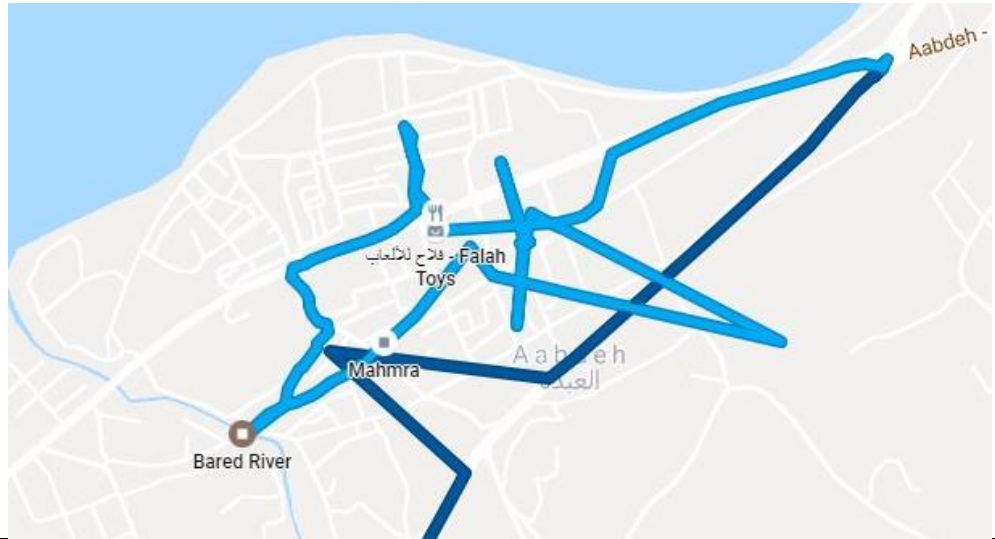


Annex II – Register of the Fieldwork Paths in Maps

Source: Google Maps 2018.

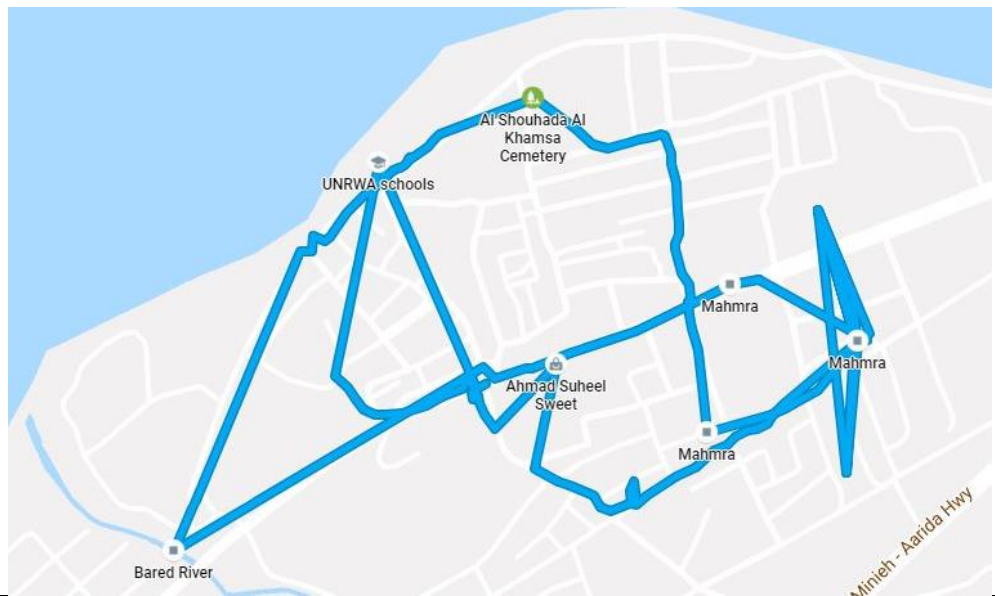


6,3 km walking
18,3 km car



06.APR

5,7 km walking



07.APR

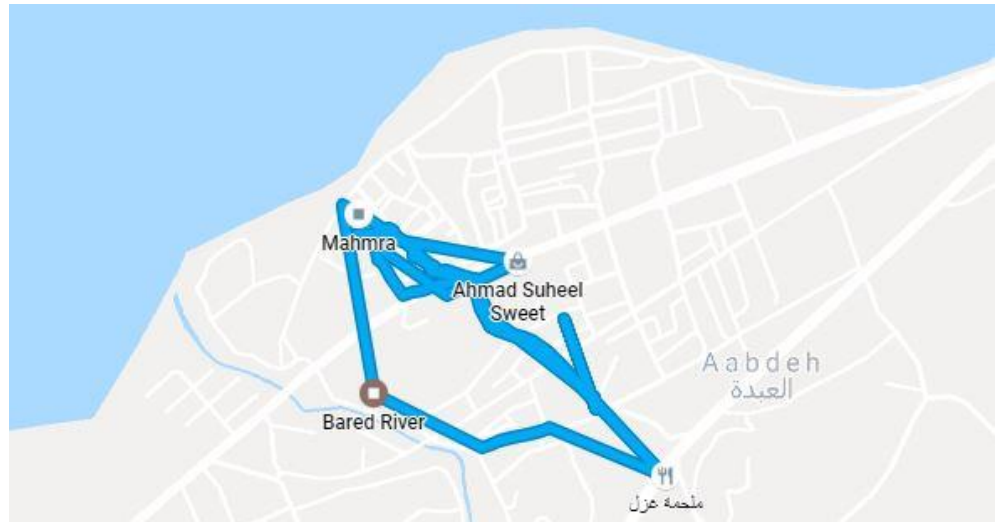
61, km walking



08.APR

4,8 km walking

09.APR



6,4 km walking

7,2 km car

10.APR



8,2 km walking

11.APR



6,3 km walking

12.APR

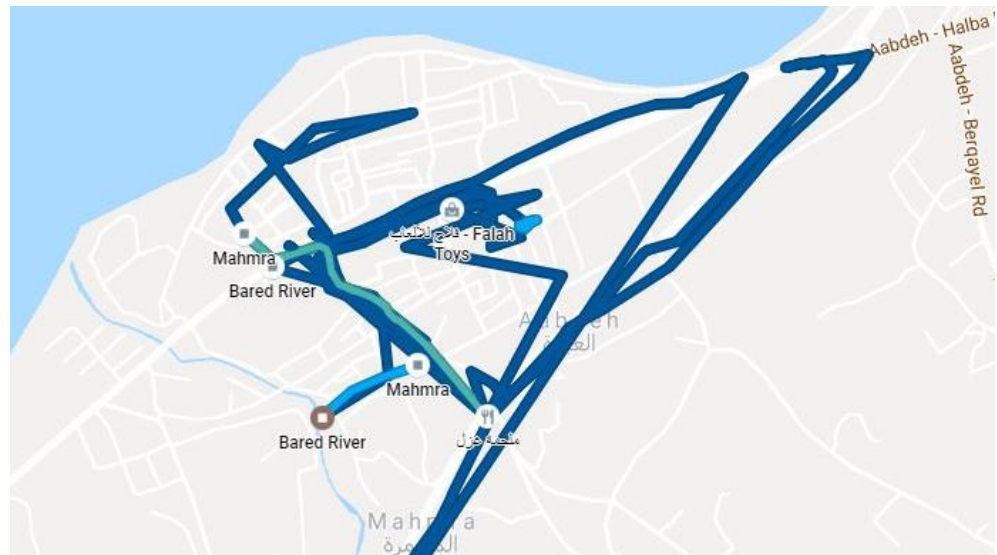


450 m walking

950 m scooter

51,7 km car

13.APR



450 m walking

950 m scooter

51,7 km car

13.APR

