1 Introduction

This monograph is concerned with issues of home and belonging amongst multiple generations of Palestinian refugees who have experienced prolonged and repeated displacement[1]. I set out to understand how refugees who, through homemaking practices, form bonds with spaces of exile, such as refugee camps and host communities, make sense of home amid secondary forced displacement. Through my findings, I illustrate how repeated displacements produce multifaceted notions of home, belonging and loss that transcend formal citizenship and traditional, linear conceptions of displacement. To understand the complexities experienced by Palestinian-Syrian refugees[2], I suggest, is only possible if we recognise the structural circumstances that condition the protracted and repeated displacement of Palestinian refugees. Hence, contextualising the experience through the study of history, law, and geography. Locating my research in the theoretical contributions of the spatial turn (Lefebvre, 1991), the approach this monograph takes is one of investigation and unravelling, as it aims to deconstruct dominant meanings and representations, juxtaposing them with lived experiences (Delaney, 2010; Bennett and Layard, 2015). My research is, therefore, multidisciplinary in its approach and methodology, bringing together historical, legal, and empirical research methods.

My first encounter with the question of the secondary displacement of Palestinians goes back nearly ten years from the date when this research came to an end. In early 2013, I participated in an introductory talk given by a member of staff at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Cairo office to a group of Legal Advisors (including myself) who had just started working on the resettlement of refugees based in Egypt. The talk was intended to give us,

[1] I use secondary, multiple, repeated and overlapping displacement interchangeably throughout the thesis.

[2] I use the term Syrian-Palestinian refugees to denote Palestinians from Syria, irrespective of their legal status. In humanitarian documents and public discourse, the term Palestinian refugees from Syria or PRS is frequently used to describe this group. While such terminology accurately captures the legal primacy of the Palestinian refugee status and highlights the importance of the Palestinian identity, the interlocutors in this study did not use this term to self-identify. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 6, hyphenated identities such as Palestinian-Syrian or Palestinian-Jordanian were regularly employed. However, for the purpose of accuracy, Palestinian refugees from Syria or PRS will be used when referring to data and policies that draw on this specific term. Equally, I am using the term Palestinian refugee throughout the thesis. However, where citing UNRWA data and policies I employ the term Palestine refugee.

newly arrived in the country, an overview of UNHCR's work. Having just completed my postgraduate studies, I was keen to gain experience 'out' in the field; yet, I was also still in the mindset of a student, constantly asking questions and critically reflecting on the information I was provided. I still remember very clearly when the UNHCR staff, on a side note, informed us that Palestinian refugees do not fall under the mandate of the agency. My mind immediately wondered, are there no Palestinians in Syria? How are they affected by the conflict? And what does this blank statement of formal exclusion mean to them? The answers I was given were clear; Palestinian refugees from Syria, or PRS as they are regularly referred to within the UN, do not fall under UNHCR's mandate in Egypt and, as a result, are not provided with protection in the country. This meeting at UNHCR's office in Cairo was the starting point of the research that has resulted in this doctoral research project. Thinking about the status of secondary forced displaced Palestinian-Syrian refugees in the Levant and North Africa, I embarked on a research journey aiming to unravel the underlying conceptions and norms that condition the exclusion of a group of displaced people from the international protection afforded to refugees.

1.1 Spatialising home

In this work, I explore the legal and geo-political landscape that has shaped the experience of displacement in the Levant since 1948. While focusing on the specific case of Palestinian-Syrian refugees in Jordan and the war in Syria[3]I situate my work in the wider study of the global refugee regime that emerged during the Second World War. Through this work, I offer a thinking of the ongoing and recurring experiences of displacements of Palestinians through the notion of home. Scaling down to conceptions of home, I argue, shifts our gaze away from the state-centric understanding of the refugee experience and allows us to focus on the embodied experience of displacement as fluid and overlapping, thereby embracing the nuances and in-betweens that may otherwise go unnoticed.

There are many ways to critically approach and engage with the global refugee regime. For example, through the historical lens focusing on the euro-centricity origins and outlook of the regimes and the centrality of the state in the construc-

[3] At the time of writing the war is still ongoing.

tion of the modern refugee (Haddad, 2008; Gatrell, 2015; Soguk, 1999) or through a rights-based approach that critically engages with the concept of 'refugee protection' (Akram, 2002). For this work, I chose a spatial approach, centring my work on notions of home. The notion of home, or as I suggest 'homescapes', encapsulates many aspects that are crucial in understanding the overlapping displacement of Palestinian refugees and their situation within, or rather outside, the international refugee regime.

The natural starting point to define home is through the linguistic meaning of the word. However, solely adopting a linguistic approach to home is inadequate, since the scope and meaning of the word differ greatly, depending on the language in which we communicate. Instead, I want to invite us to think of home through the concept of homescapes. Adding the suffix '-scape', I take my cue here from Appadurai, who draws out that the use of the suffix highlights a relational production as "deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: national-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as subnational groupings and movements (whether religious, political or economic), and even intimate face-to-face groups, such as villages, neighbourhoods, and families" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33). Thus, abstracting the term and moving beyond the linguistic conception and understanding of 'home' and introducing an analytical framework that underlines the spatiality of home as multi-levelled, fluid and political.

Approaching home through its spatiality, I draw centrally on Henri Lefebvre's conception of mental, social and physical space (Lefebvre, 1991). Thinking 'homescapes' through Lefebvre's triad of space is particularly helpful as it allows us to critically engage with the interconnectedness of spatial productions and their politicisation. For Lefebvre, the space as a natural reality, empty and static, is nothing more than a representation employed by 'professionals', such as urban planners. Hence, space is intrinsically political and the product of power structures. Such hegemonic spatial knowledge (spatial representations), produced and employed by governments, privileges a conception of space, thereby repressing lived space. Yet, space is also contested, as counter-hegemonic spatial knowledge (lived spaces) is simultaneously produced outside or in opposition to spatial representations.

Approaching the spatial conception of people on the move through the notion of 'homescapes', therefore, enables us to challenge the state-centric representation

of the space of refuge defined by the international refugee regime as constructing the refugee figure through its location within a bounded territory, and allows us to consider and deconstruct the fluid and overlapping experience of displacement and spatial belonging. From an epistemological standpoint, we, therefore, avoid the 'territorial trap' (Agnew, 1994; Agnew and Corbridge, 1995) and are able to think beyond the 'national framework' (Salih, 2018).

1.2 The secondary forced displacement of Palestinian refugees and why it matters

In 2014, a picture circulated around the world depicting camp dwellers queuing for humanitarian aid after months of being inaccessible to humanitarian agencies. The image shows a seemingly never-ending crowd of people standing among the rubble of destroyed houses in Yarmouk, the Palestinian refugee camp in the suburbs of Damascus in Syria (Steele, 2015). The sheer number of people in desperation for humanitarian aid, contrasted against the backdrop of the destroyed neighbourhood, made visible the unimaginable fate of Palestinian refugees in Syria as a population trapped in a conflict with nowhere to go.

The history of dispossession and displacement for the Palestinian people, however, begins seven decades earlier. In 1948, over 750,000 Palestinians were expelled and fled their homes and villages (UNRWA, 2021). The displacement was the consequence of the violence that had intensified following the partition of the British Mandate Palestine by the United Nations in 1947 on the basis of UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (II) and the declaration of Israeli independence on 14 May 1948, a day commemorated by Palestinians as the Nakba - Arabic for catastrophe (Masalha, 2008). While political and diplomatic leaders have failed to negotiate an end to the conflict for over seventy years, Palestinians have been resisting and persevering as a people in the confined spaces of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and what is now the state of Israel, but crucially also as refugees in exile in the Levant and beyond (Halper, 2006; Khalili, 2007; Richter-Devroe, 2011). As of 2021, over five million Palestinian refugees are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in the Near East (UNRWA) (UNRWA, 2021). Within the Levant, the situation of Palestinian refugees ranges from citizenship in Jordan to citizenship-like treatment but statelessness in Syria and social and economic segregation and confinement in Lebanon. Amid international political neglect and apathy, demographic and spatial

control coupled with territorial expansion by the Israeli state and politics of separation and exclusion by hosting states, the Syrian conflict, and the immobility of Palestinian refugees brought to the forefront the ongoing force of the Nakba. Seventy years on, the Nakba is being (re-)experienced as continuous, rather than as a single event of the past (Al-Hardan, 2016).

Following the initial displacements in 1948 and 1967, over half a million Palestinian refugees had been living in Syria for multiple generations (UNRWA, 2018). With the onset of the war in 2012, these refugee communities have been directly affected by the conflict. Yet, due to regional politics of Palestinian exceptionalism, rationalised through their unique status under international law, Palestinian refugees have been widely barred from seeking safety in the immediate neighbouring countries. In Jordan, however, a small number of around 17,000 PRS have been recorded (Albanese and Takkenberg, 2020, p. 207). Such newly arriving Palestinian refugees often live alongside the long-standing Palestinian community in the country in refugee camps established in '48 and '67.

When thinking about displaced populations, academic discussions regularly approach the matter as the movement of people from one 'place' to another (Brun and Fábos, 2015). In legal terms, for example, as defined in the *United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* of 1951 (hereafter 1951 Convention), the displacement takes place as a cross-border movement between the country of nationality and the country of asylum. As a product of the First and Second World Wars, the modern conception of the refugee has developed in a time of statecraft marked by exercises of territorial demarcation (Haddad, 2008). With the increasing importance of state sovereignty, executed through, for example, border controls, the refugee was constructed as a problem that ought to be corrected (Gatrell, 2015). Hence, amid the Second World War and the codification of the refugee under international law, the concept of territoriality is tightly woven into the modern understanding of the refugee (Soguk, 1999). To correct this 'problem' to the 'national order of things' (Malkki, 1995), the refugee body ought to be 're-territorialised' through repatriation, integration or resettlement. As a result, the period spent in asylum is understood as 'in waiting' to return to a territorial 'home' (Brun and Fábos, 2015).

For Palestinian refugees, this state of in-betweenness has lasted for over seven decades. While normatively on hold, their everyday life moves on. Following sociological, geographical and anthropological interjections into the study of

forced migration, it is well acknowledged and understood that refugees do not experience their lives in limbo as passively waiting for return, but actively produce spaces of home and belonging, beyond or even against the territorial homeland (Brun and Fábos, 2015; Doná, 2015; Čapo, 2015). Though introducing more complex notions of home and belonging, literature on homemaking and displacement mainly focuses on a static situation in relation to the country or space of asylum and a linear idea of displacement. It asks how people make home in cases of 'prolonged displacement' while being indefinitely exiled (Doná, 2015). Although the place of departure, such as the physical house, the community, and the country that the refugee had to leave behind, plays into these analyses, it is usually linked to a single place, the 'homeland', and does not account for ongoing mobilities and displacements. The Palestinian refugee experience from Syria, however, highlights further complexities of home and homemaking that come into play when multiple forms and events of displacement overlap. These have gone understudied to date.

1.3 The research journey: Research questions and approach

As I embarked on the journey aiming to understand the legal position of secondary forced displaced populations, my research evolved. What started as a predominantly doctrinal investigation into the international protection gap faced by Palestinian refugees soon led me to a point where I could not find answers within the international system as it exists.

Palestinians are a people without a legally recognised territorial homeland; yet their collective identity is deeply embedded in transnational localities of, for example, refugee camps as the spatial manifestation of the lost 'homeland' (Peteet, 2005). The complex and fluid experience of secondary forced displaced Palestinians and their notion of overlapping belonging (Khalidi, 2010; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2012) appeared at odds with the very static legal notion of the relationship between people and space they inhabit, defined by territoriality and citizenship. I came to realise that the failure of the international system to protect Palestinian refugees, in general, stems from political unwillingness and apathy to provide a durable solution to the Palestinian refugee question (Albanese and Takkenberg, 2020). However, on a more structural level, the inability of the law and of the institutions implementing it to capture and respond to the complexities of the secondary displacement necessitates a more critical engagement with the

hegemonic meaning and codification of spatial concepts that form the base of our understanding of the world. The puzzle that I first encountered in Egypt, hence, guided me to more theoretical considerations on the relationship between the refugee body, space, and the law (Delaney, 2000).

Addressing this gap in the existing literature, I centrally ask how refugees understand home and belonging in cases of repeated displacement. To answer this overarching question, I derived three sub-questions. 1. What are the geographic and legal assumptions that condition the secondary forced displacement of Palestinian refugees? 2. What role do legal conceptions of territorial homelands and belonging play in the experience of home amid secondary forced displacement? 3. What other forms of home and belonging are expressed and experienced?

I approach these questions through the case of Palestinian-Syrian refugees in Jordan. Hence, my geographical focus shifted from Egypt to Jordan as a host country, largely due to the deteriorating security situation for researchers in Egypt (Noralla, 2021). However, as I will un-layer in the following pages, with its rich and complex geographic and political history in relation to Palestine and as host of the largest Palestinian refugee population, Jordan provided a particularly intricate case. The research challenged my own underlying dichotomous notions of 'home' and 'away', 'citizen' and 'non-citizen', and 'host' and 'refugee'.

1.4 Outline

The thesis is divided into seven core chapters, which can be broadly clustered into three parts. The first part, consisting of Chapters 2 and 3, provides the context of the research, offering a review of existing literature and research methodology. The second part, consisting of Chapters 4 and 5, offers a critical appraisal of the historical and legal conditions this thesis addresses. The final third part, consisting of Chapters 6, 7 and 8, builds on my empirical research, discussing the specific case of Palestinian-Syrian refugees in Jordan. The thesis investigates displacement and the notion/ construction of home and belonging through different geopolitical scales, which are reflected in the chapters (international, regional, national, and sub-national).

Chapter 2, 'Home and Forced Migration Studies', embeds this research in the existing literature. Introducing scholarly discussion on home and displacement,

the chapter starts with defining and discussing the notion of home more broadly, before delving deeper into the scholarship problematising a nationalisation of home, the production of space and homemaking.

Chapter 3, 'Reflections on the Research Process', then offers some critical thought on my fieldwork and my positionality in this research. Providing the methodological foundations for this research, this chapter presents some thinking on spatialised research in social science and legal studies. Following on from this, I reflect on the empirical data collection and the research process, before concluding with a brief discussion of archival and legal research methods.

In Chapter 4, 'Spatial Histories and the Making of the Palestinian Refugee', I examine the historical geographies of the Levant since the Ottoman period. Locating my research in the historical developments of the region, I explore how the present-day 'map' of nation-states was predominantly drawn during the French and British mandate period. In a time of nation-building, the Palestinian national consciousness developed in the absence of a territorial nation-state. Thus, it developed within, and in exclusion from, 'diasporic' spaces - such as Jordan, Lebanon and Syria - that were engaged in their own statecraft and national identity formation. To engage with the spatial histories of the region, I argue that it is imperative to disentangle the complex identities of Palestinian refugees today, not only in relation to the lost Palestine but also in relation to the host-countries in which they have been living for the past seven decades.

In Chapter 5, 'The International Space: Legal and Humanitarian Protection', I go on to demonstrate how the international legal and humanitarian order is intrinsically built on territorialised conceptions of the home-space as nation-states. In doing so, I highlight how the Palestinian refugee population, as a protracted refugee community defined by the absence of a nation-state/homeland, has been constructed as an exceptional case within legal and humanitarian spaces of protection.

Chapter 6, 'The National Space: Citizenship, Statelessness and (Im)Mobility', the first of three empirical chapters, then offers a critical engagement with static, legal conceptions of the body and space relationship, drawn out in chapter 5, through the case of Palestinian refugees displaced from Syria in Jordan. The chapter discusses the lived experience of citizenship and statelessness in the case of multiple displacements. Centrally, I argue that we ought to go beyond an in-

dividualised legal concept of citizenship, understanding home and belonging within the context of a collective experience of (im)mobility.

In Chapter 7, 'The Camp Space: Jordan', I scale down as I introduce the camp space in Jordan as an alternative space of homemaking and belonging, critically reflecting on the conception of refugees in waiting. Approaching the camp through the lens of urban informality, I illustrate how the boundaries between inside and outside, camp and nation-state, home and away, and citizen and refugee are blurred and, therefore, only provide an incomplete, single-dimensional understanding of the relationship between the refugee-body and space.

The final substantial chapter, Chapter 8, 'The lost home: Syria and Palestine', acts to complement the legal and spatio-social discussion of home and belonging, discussed in chapters 6 and 7, through the discussion of the lost home and memory. For Palestinian-Syrian refugees, I argue, the conceptions of 'home' and 'homeland' are fundamentally linked to the experience of loss, displacement and the spatial memories of both Palestine and Syria. While having made home in Syria for over seventy years, these home-spaces, such as the Palestinian refugee camp Yarmouk, are closely linked to, and representational of, the lost Palestinian home. As such, the displacement from Syria must be understood within the experience of an ongoing Nakba and the denial of the right to return, but it must also be approached and understood as a loss of a home in its own right, beyond the legal category of citizenship.

These core chapters are then followed by a Conclusion. In this chapter, I highlight the core findings and the contributions they make to the field of (forced) migration studies, before offering some concluding thoughts on the issue.

2 Home and Forced Migration Studies

2.1 Introduction

> "The material habitation, the dwelling, the fact of settling on the ground (or detaching oneself from it), the fact of becoming rooted (or uprooted), the fact of living here or there (and consequently of leaving, going elsewhere), all these facts and phenomena are inherent in what it is to be human" (Lefebvre, 2003, p. 123).

'There is no place like home'! Phrases such as these express a very essentialist sense of belonging and identity. They encompass a rootedness in a place called 'home' that is common in its traditional understandings (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). As such, these homes are understood and conceptualised as fixed. Scholarship on the conception of 'home' from the field of geography (Massey, 1994; Massey, 2005; Porteous and Smith, 2001; Blunt and Dowling, 2006), as well as scholarship on the loss of home and forced migration (Malkki, 1992; 1995), has long challenged such fixed and physical conceptions of home and place.

Two of the most recent and comprehensive theorisations have come from Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling (2006), in their monograph *Home*, and from Douglas Porteous and Sandra Smith (2001), in their monograph *Domicide – The Global Destruction of Home*. Both contributions build on the core argument that home is more than a mere place of dwelling but must be understood as an abstract conception encompassing feelings and emotions. Drawing on a wide range of literature engaging with different 'senses of home', Blunt and Dowling (2006) develop a critical geography of home. They define home both as "a site in which we live" and as "an imaginary that is imbued with feelings", as well as the relation between the two (2006, p. 2). In doing so, they argue for a spatialised as well as politicised understanding of home and the powers at play. Approaching home through the lens of destruction and loss, Porteous and Smith (2001) draw out that home is a "spatial, psychological centre in which at least a portion of an individual's or group's identity resides" (p. 61). Their holistic approach separates two foci of home: "*home as centre* – a place of refuge, freedom, possession, shelter, and security" and "*home as identity* – with the themes of family, friends