Developmentalising Humanitarian Space
The (Anti-)Politics of International Aid for Refugees in Jordan

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Abstract

Entering its ninth year, the Syrian war and the resulting mass displacement have engendered the deployment of a complex international humanitarian regime in neighbouring countries. With dwindling humanitarian funding and Western states’ reluctance to relocate refugees, old debates about achieving a sustainable humanitarianism by linking it to development have re-emerged. In 2016, the European Union and the Jordanian government have negotiated a Compact, exchanging Western donor money against Jordan’s commitment to grant refugees access to its labour market. Presumably paving the way to refugees’ independence from assistance, the policy falls into a broader trend of substituting humanitarian responses with development agendas in refugee-hosting countries of the Global South. While scholars have drawn attention to the increasing rapprochement of humanitarian and development aid, discussions remain focussed on normative implications, and less is known about the empirical and constitutive effects of this shift.

Based on five months of qualitative fieldwork among humanitarian and development actors in Amman, this thesis investigates how the policy transformed Jordan’s humanitarian spaces as well as the identity, role and practices of its actors. I examine how international humanitarian organisations were pushed towards development programming, aimed at enhancing Syrians’ economic activities as well as those of Jordanians deemed similarly ‘vulnerable’. In reaction, they positioned themselves as brokers between refugees and the private sector, striking an impossible balance between their desire to engage in development, while rejecting responsibility for job creation. Due to the persisting difficulty to integrate Syrians into sustainable employment, hybrid humanitarian-development projects have emerged, aimed at satisfying Jordan’s development goals through the provision of short-term labour.

Mainly drawing upon anthropologies of humanitarianism and development policy, I argue that this attempted humanitarian-development nexus created a state of technocratic governance in which the meeting of national development objects and quantifiable targets outweighed the humanitarian goal to alleviate suffering. It furthermore depoliticised refugees’ plight, not only obscuring the political reasons for their flight but also for their unemployment. Instead, ambiguous regulations and frequent policy changes maintained the temporariness of Syrians’ governance, which was ultimately informed by the expectation of their timely return to Syria.
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Abbreviations

ACF  Action contre la Faim (Action against Hunger)
ARDD  Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development
BMZ  Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CfW  Cash for Work
CRP  Collateral Repair Project
DRC  Danish Refugee Council
EBRD  European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EU  European Union
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
GIZ  Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GoJ  Government of Jordan
HBBs  Home based businesses
hr  human ressources
IFC  International Finance Corporation
ILO  International Labour Organisation
IMF  International Monetary Fund
INGO  international non-governmental organisation
IO  international organisation
IMF  International Monetary Fund
IOM  International Organisation for Migration
JC  Jordan Compact
JD  Jordanian Dinar
JIF  Jordan INGO Forum
JORIS  Information System for Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis
JRP  Jordan Response Plan
KFW  Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
LWG  Livelihood Working Group
LWGM  Livelihood Working Group Meeting
MC  Mercy Corps
MoL  Ministry of Labour
MoU  Memorandum of Understanding
MoPIC  Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
MSF  Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders)
NEEP  National Empowerment and Employment Programme
NGO  non-governmental organisation
NRC  Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA  United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
REF  ‘Refugee Pillar’
RES  ‘Resilience Pillar’
SAVE  Save the Children
SEZ  Special Economic Zone
SME  Small and Medium Enterprise
SOP  Standard Operating Procedures
UN  United Nations
UNICEF  United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
UNDP  United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA  United Nations Population Fund
UNHABITAT  United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR  United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA  United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
VAF  Vulnerability Assessment
WASH  Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP  World Food Programme
WV  World Vision
Chapter 1

Introduction

In what is framed as an ongoing ‘global refugee crisis’ where protracted rather than short-term refugee situations are increasingly the norm, governments and international organisations are attempting to reform the way refugee protection is conceived and delivered\(^1\). As Western states are becoming more and more reluctant to resettle and grant asylum in their territories, ‘local integration’ in the ‘region of origin’ has become prioritized as the “forgotten solution”\(^2\) (Stepputat 2004). With the aim of creating what the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi calls “win-win-situations” (Newsdeeply 2018) for both refugees as well as hosting countries, the former are presented as potential drivers of the host countries’ economic development – if only they are allowed to work (Betts and Collier 2017). Recent policy shifts and international agreements aiming at refugees’ local integration take the form of ‘Refugee Compacts’ between industrialized (Western) states, international organisations (IOs) and refugee hosting states in the Global South. Particularly the Jordan Compact (JC) between the European Union (EU) and the Government of Jordan (GoJ), announced at the London Conference ‘Supporting Syria and the Region’ in February 2016, has attracted international attention (EU-Commission 2016). The agreement exchanges grants and loans against political reforms in Jordan, allowing Syrians the right to work through Jordan’s commitment to create 200,000 job opportunities in the following years.

\(^1\)The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines a protracted refugee situation as “one in which 25,000 or more refugees from the same nationality have been in exile for five consecutive years or more in a given asylum country” (UNHCR 2017: 22) with no prospect of a solution. According to this definition, two thirds of the global refugee population, 13.4 million, were living in such a situation in 2017 – two million more than in 2016 (ibid.).

\(^2\)The UNHCR considers three “durable solutions” to the situation of refugees in a hosting state: voluntary repatriation, resettlement to a third country and local integration (UNHCR 2017)
The initiative falls within a broader shift in the international refugee regime, moving from humanitarian responses towards development ‘solutions’ to refugee needs. This fundamentally transforms humanitarian governance on the ground, with humanitarian actors changing their practice of traditional humanitarian assistance and service delivery to interventions aiming at the integration of Syrian refugees in the formal labour market. The policy also includes new actors from the development field as well as the private sector in the humanitarian arena (Lenner and Turner 2018). Hence, the JC can be seen as yet another attempt to bridge the ‘humanitarian-development divide’ in protracted refugee situations by altering the established system of humanitarian governance, incorporating development actors and connecting their programming to refugee assistance. In that sense, it turns refugee assistance into a development project itself.

Analyses of past attempts to link refugee assistance to development have shown how the diverging interests between outside donors and hosting countries’ governments have prevented those policies from alleviating refugees’ woes (see Crisp 2001). The aim of this study is thus not to assess if the JC initiative ‘worked’. Indeed, as has been shown, the scheme has run up against structural issues of the Jordanian labour market and has so far produced limited results (Lenner and Turner 2018). The aim of this study is rather to understand how the JC changes the nature of humanitarian governance by taking an anthropological approach to policy that does not ask how a policy affects people but “how people engage with policy and what […] they make of it” (Shore et al. 2011: 8).3

Since the outbreak of the civil war in Syria, Jordan has received over 600,000 Syrian refugees, most of which live in urban areas – dependent on humanitarian assistance (UNHCR 2019a). Until the JC, Jordan’s response to the crisis has been shaped by securitising refugees in camps and isolating them from the local labour market, relying on international aid agencies for their humanitarian assistance (Turner 2015). This not only led to a proliferation of humanitarian international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) in the country but also to an extensive body of research about refugees. While there have been numerous studies assessing the impact of different interventions, the expanding network of actors involved in refugees’ governance and their shifting practices has received little scholarly attention. As literature on development projects shows, there is a need to understand the actions and interpretations of the actors implementing development policy (see Mosse 2005), justifying an actor-centric approach taken in this

3 In order to critically examine humanitarianism and development, I do not see their ubiquitous terms such as the ‘international (community)’, ‘beneficiary’, ‘vulnerability’, ‘crisis’, ‘solution’ etc. unproblematically but as part of a specific discourse that forms governance. I therefore refer to these terms in single quotation marks, double quotations are used to directly quote from interviews or the literature
This exploratory study is based on empirical fieldwork in Jordan and builds mainly on qualitative in-depths interviews with humanitarian, development and governmental actors involved in the implementation of the JC with the aim to understand their interpretation of and engagement with this policy. As such, this research does not claim to generate generalisable results that can be transferred to other situations where humanitarian and development policies become blurred. Building on theories of refugee governance, humanitarianism and development policy, I suggest that the JC is part of a broader policy shift from humanitarianism to development, leading to a developmentalisation of humanitarian spaces, a transformation of humanitarian actors, and a humanitarianisation of development practices in Jordan.

Humanitarians’ operational space has been extended to include more interventions outside of camp settings, but has been developmentalised as donor money has become increasingly allocated to developmental initiatives, especially aiming at increasing Syrians’ formal employment. These developmental programmes have become subject to enhanced scrutiny from the GoJ – requesting that schemes benefit primarily Jordan’s development goals. While previously, humanitarian actors were tasked to support Syrian refugees, both Syrians and Jordanians are now condensed into the category of the ‘vulnerable’ in need of support. This has anti-political effects as it eliminates any political differences between both groups, specifically Syrians’ refugee rights that are not fully respected by the Jordanian state. It also shifts the state’s responsibility for developmental problems such as the high unemployment after decades of neoliberal reforms towards the international community.

Presented with such a task that is not part of the usual repertoire of humanitarian responses, humanitarian actors have transformed in two ways: Externally, they have changed from being service providers to seeing themselves as ‘facilitators’, brokering work contracts between Syrians and employers, and to becoming employers of refugees themselves through labour intensive infrastructure projects. They also transformed internally, increasingly hiring staff with a background in the development and private sector in order to succeed in their economic interventions. These managers have become crucial translators between employers, humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Syrian workers and powerfully shape the nature of projects.

At the same time, development actors try to integrate refugees in their portfolio of interventions formerly restricted to Jordanian nationals. Taking the case of the German
development agency Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), I analyse two characteristics of these emerging humanitarian-development interventions: First, I argue that instead of aiming for any kind of ‘human development’ of Syrians, these interventions are targeting the infrastructural development of Jordan through humanitarian modalities. This reveals itself in the scheme’s short-term rationality in which the number of people reached takes precedence over any sustainable labour market integration.

As such, the shift towards a developmental refugee response did not lead to an integration of Syrians into the Jordanian society and national development agendas, but creates a whole new labour market regime reserved for Syrian refugees, heavily dependent on international actors and donor money, and precariously subject to destruction in a volatile policy environment. As such, it echoes theorisations of Jordan’s refugee spaces as governed by differential inclusion, a juridical inclusion through the provision of the limited right to work, paralleled by an administrative exclusion through certain regulations and treatments (Oesch 2017). I conclude that developmental labour market interventions do not turn humanitarian aid sustainable for refugees as they are still trapped in short-term rationales, justified by governing actors’ claim of ‘not-knowing’ whether refugees will return to Syria in the near future. This claim is productive as it justifies an on-going humanitarian project mentality characterised by short-term project cycles. The shift towards more developmental interventions does, however, make humanitarian actors’ presence in Jordan more durable, as they are increasingly turning into development actors targeting more and more Jordanian ‘beneficiaries’.

This thesis makes a contribution to the study of humanitarianism in that it analyses the empiric consequences of the policy aim to connect humanitarian and development aid in protracted refugee situations. As such, it especially sheds light on the role of the host country’s government, often times neglected in the study of humanitarian refugee governance. Following this introduction

Chapter 2 lays down my my theoretical framework, bringing together literature on humanitarian refugee governance and anthropological perspectives on development cooperation. In order to address how humanitarianism and development became increasingly blurred I focus on the notions of humanitarian space, actors and practices, combining a Foucauldian analysis with an actor-centric perspective of international aid. The chapter also introduces the context of Jordan, the country’s evolving refugee regime and maps out my main theoretical concepts. Building on the theoretical discussion and the local context, I then present my conceptual
framework, my research questions and the operationalisation of my concepts.

**Chapter 3** describes my research approach and qualitative methodology as well as my positionality as a researcher in the field. It also addresses ethical considerations and limitations of my research.

**Chapter 4** introduces my empirical findings with an analysis of the transformation of humanitarian spaces in Jordan after the JC. It describes how donors’ increasing interest in developmental interventions changed agencies’ operational spaces, as they were pushed towards substituting traditional forms of assistance with employment enhancing programming and increasingly intervened outside of camp settings. Geopolitical dynamics, the opening of the border to Syria, furthered this process as it allowed to justify reduced humanitarian funding. The enhanced control of the GoJ over aid interventions also changed the relationship between organisations and the government. It mainly affected interventions’ target populations that became increasingly made out of Jordanian beneficiaries.

**Chapter 5** takes an arena perspective to humanitarian space, analysing how aid workers strategically perform their humanitarian identity in order to negotiate access to developmentalised space as well as to justify initial failures of programmes. Humanitarian organisations positioned themselves as brokers between Syrian job seekers and employers. While desiring to engage in the development domain of employment programming, they tried to prevent being seen as responsible for development – a delicate balance that seemed impossible to uphold. The chapter also shows how livelihood managers answered the task of integrating Syrians into the labour market by trying to establish good relationships with employers. As such, projects needed to be translated according to market logics, with the consequence of humanitarian organisations ending up substituting companies’ lacking human resources (hr) departments.

**Chapter 6** then turns to a change in practices of development organisations, taking the case of Germany’s development agency GIZ. Exploring the development of Cash for Work (CfW) as a humanitarian intervention that has been graduated into the realm of development, it argues that it represents a humanitarian-development hybrid which combines short-term aid for Syrians with longer term developmental benefits for Jordan’s infrastructure. As such, the humanitarian logic of reaching as many people as possible prevails over any durable impact for Syrians’ livelihoods. Discussing the means of this graduation, it argues that the measurement of work
permits, far from indicating employment or favourable working conditions, created a governance by numbers, where actors are more focussed on producing countable indicators than on alleviating human suffering.

Chapter 7 concludes this thesis by discussing the empirical findings in light of the effect the shift towards development had on refugee governance in Jordan, thereby answering my main research question.
Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework and Context

2.1 A changing Landscape of Refugee Governance

A large body of literature deals with the administration of refugee populations, largely from a political science (international relations) perspective (Malkki 1995; Lippert 1999; Betts 2009). It describes the emergence of an international refugee regime, defined as the “norms, rules, principles, and decision-making procedures that regulate actor behaviour” (Krasner 1983 cited in Betts 2009: 37) and emphasises legal and bureaucratic procedures determining the treatment of refugees. It developed during the postwar period of the 20th century when the large number of European refugees entailed the creation of a formal category, the creation of the UNHCR and the establishment of the Geneva Convention related to status and rights of refugees (see Lippert 1999 for a historic discussion). While a regime perspective emphasises the rules and laws determining the status of refugees, the concept of governance is used to account for the different political and social actors involved in the administration of refugees, especially in non-Western societies where a specific juridical state-led regime is lacking (Barnett 2011). Governance is distinct from government as “there is no single authoritative rule maker. Rather, it is a negotiated and contested process involving multiple actors, often with difference in power” (Betts 2009: 102). They reside at multiple levels of society and are affected by politics at local, national and international levels. The governance of refugees involves governments of the ‘hosting’ states, IOs such as UNHCR, international and national NGOs, community-based organisations as well as its major donors of humanitarian aid, local society and the refugee populations themselves (Cottrell 2015). They form what has been termed
humanitarian governance: Encompassing “rules, structures and institutions that guide, regulate and control social life, features that are fundamental elements of power” (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 2). It is “the increasingly organized and internationalized attempt to save the lives, enhance the welfare, and reduce the suffering of the world’s most vulnerable populations” (Barnett 2013: 381).

The concept of governance has been criticised for paying too much attention to its structure – the actors and its interaction – and for not being able to explain the underlying logics and practices of governance (Sending and Neumann 2006). Researchers have therefore turned to Foucault’s concept of governmentality, that he defines as the “ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power” (Foucault 2007: 20). As such, governmentality supplements a governance perspective with the analysis of the underlying logics and rationalities of its actors as well as employed technologies of rule. In addition, it does not consider institutions such as the state or organisations as single-body entities with specific roles and responsibilities, recognizing that “a whole variety of authorities govern in different sites, in relation to different objectives” (Rose et al. 2006: 84). This seems useful in analysing governing institutions in refugee contexts as it allows to not only take into account their official mandate but analyse their practices on the ground. This applies specifically to NGOs that regularly present themselves as non-governmental, independent and neutral, but which take on influential governing roles in the administration of refugees (Lippert 1999: 311). Furthermore, seeing power not as possessed by and inherent to one actor but as relational, a governmentality lens allows to treat state and non-state governmentality within a common frame, without making pre-assumptions about their influence and reach in specific local contexts (see Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Governmentality has therefore been widely applied to analyse the changing international governance of refugees (Lippert 1999; Reid-Henry 2014).

2.2 Transformation of Humanitarianism and Blurring with Development

Starting in the 1980s, refugees’ humanitarian governance in developing countries underwent profound changes, moving beyond the paradigm of direct relief and assistance and incorporated liberal developmental agendas of capacity building and self-reliance (Lippert 1999; Pascucci 2017; Duffield 2007). Humanitarian actors have departed from
their once defining principles of humanity, independence, neutrality and impartiality by strategically integrating a human rights approach into their agenda, thereby assuming a more political role and legitimising interventions on ethical grounds (Chandler 2001). On the other hand, taking center stage in the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, voices called for a closer connection of and collaboration between humanitarian and development actors, and a bigger role for the state and private sector in humanitarian emergencies (WorldBank 2016; Zaman 2017). Contrary to agencies’ current presentation as innovative and novel, debates about how to make humanitarian aid for refugees sustainable are far from new (Crisp 2001). However, the protracted nature of the Syrian refugee crisis and Western states interest in curbing migration from that region have re-invigorated the turn towards development ‘solutions’ for refugee needs. Early debates about the humanitarian-development continuum focused on aid effectiveness, and on how humanitarians best phase out and hand over to developmentalists. Contemporary imaginations of the nexus reflect an increased blurring of the two domains, combining both in so called “integrated missions” intended to ensure conflict prevention, sustaining peace and development (Duffield 2010).

While the increased connection of foreign aid and security agendas has been subject to extensive scholarly scrutiny, resulting in concepts such as the securitisation of development aid (see e.g. Duffield 2001; Brown and Grävingholt 2014; Fisher and Anderson 2015; Shannon 2009), academic examinations of the humanitarian-development nexus are scarce. Contributions have mainly limited themselves to exploring normative concerns such as the loss of neutrality and independence for humanitarian actors and a resulting fear of shrinking humanitarian space (Scott-Smith 2018). Other researchers simply argued that the line between both types of aid dissolved, and that humanitarianism now also encompasses development (Barnett 2011; Turner 2018). While the division between humanitarianism and development can be, in some cases, blurred or even artificial (Slim 2000), my research wants to show the merit in closer analysing the attempted connection between both fields – and its political effects. Notable exceptions have addressed the shifting nature of humanitarianism in the case of the protracted displacement of Palestinian refugees (Feldman 2018; Gabiam 2012; Oesch 2017; Feldman 2012b). Scholars have discussed humanitarian spaces of refugee camps and their ambiguous inclusion in national and international development schemes (Oesch 2017; Gabiam 2012). Feldman argues that the protracted nature of both refugees’ and aid workers have been caught in the shifting interplay between what she terms the “humanitarian situation” – the emergency that presents itself as pressing
and mobilises a humanitarian machinery; and the “humanitarian condition” – the less acute, but no less fundamental, experience of living and working in circumstances of longterm displacement and need (Feldman 2018: 15).

She argues that this shift between emergency assistance and post-crisis abandonment has led to “punctuated humanitarianism” (ibid.) not able to achieve durable support for Palestinians. While the political constellations surrounding Palestinians’ “humanitarian condition” (Feldman 2012b) are different from those of Syrian refugees, this literature suggests that a developmentalisation of humanitarianism affects humanitarian spaces, their actors and responsibilities, and ultimately their governing practices (Feldman 2012a; Oesch 2017; Gabiam 2012; Ilcan and Rygiel 2015). I therefore chose to focus on these three analytical categories that I want to explain in more detail in the following.

2.2.1 Transformation of Space

Space as Geography: Camps as Spaces of Ambiguity

Closely linked to humanitarian governance is the concept of humanitarian space. In the context of refugee situations, humanitarian space has mostly been applied to refugee camps as “the quintessential humanitarian spaces” (Ticktin 2014: 278). They have mostly been analysed through Foucauldian frame (Hyndman and Giles 2011; Lippert 1999), seeing them as technologies of “care and control” (Malkki 1992: 34) where working power manifests itself through governmental techniques of population counting, registration, selection, camp layouts, medical kits, supply lines as well as situation reports (Ticktin 2014; Reid-Henry 2014). Early theorisations have painted them as spaces of exception where refugees are devoid of citizens’ ‘political life’ and where humanitarian actors exercise sovereign power beyond the nation state (Agamben 1998; Agier et al. 2002). These claims have been contested, and it is argued that camps do not give rise to political powers outside the control of the state, but are instead forms of state power through indirect means (Nassar and Stel 2019). Instead of seeing camps as spaces of exception, more recent scholarship has shown how camps represent complex spaces of differential inclusion into host societies, producing new forms of social and political life (Feldman 2011; Malkki 1995; Dunn 2012). In his work on Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, Oesch argues that the camp presents a ‘zone of indistinction’ between exclusion and inclusion and that this very creation is “a deliberate politics of ambiguity” 2017: 111. Refugees in urban camps are included on a juridico-political level, but administratively excluded by
special regulations and bureaucratic treatments (Oesch 2017).

Considering the spatial notion of humanitarian refugee spaces is useful for my research as the attempted connection of humanitarian aid and development has important spatial dimensions. It entails an abandonment of the camp as the primary “spatial technology of relief and security” (Pascucci 2017: 334), refocussing attention on what has been termed ‘host communities’ in urban areas (Kelberer 2016). In discussing the CIW programmes I trace how certain modes of humanitarian governance, blueprints that have been introduced first in camp settings, travel and became applied beyond its fences. As such, camps need to be seen as “laboratories of social transformation” (Fresia and von Kanel 2016: 251, cited in Oesch 2017: 112) where new modes of humanitarian governance are developed.

**Space as Operational Space**

Besides its geographical dimension, humanitarian space also describes agencies’ operational capabilities to access populations. It is defined as “the physical or symbolic space which humanitarian agents need to deliver their services according to the principles they uphold” (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010: 1117). As principles differ, it is defined and used differently by different actors. The term’s broader usage emerged in the 1990s when the former President of Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) used “espace humanitaire”, to describe the domain where humanitarian agencies are able to operate without external political agendas (see Brassard-Boudreau and Hubert 2010 for a historical discussion of the term). Oxfam takes a human rights approach to it, seeing it as the operational space where organisations respond independently and neutrally to the right of populations to receive assistance (Abild 2010). The United Nations (UN) views it more pragmatically without the emphasis on independence from political actors (Abild 2010). The term humanitarian space has been politicised by agencies themselves, using it to decry a perceived shrinkage in humanitarian space due to the increased blurring of humanitarian interventions with foreign security policy goals especially after 9/11. Partly due to the ubiquity of the term, the claim for a global shrinkage of humanitarian space cannot be sustained (Hubert and Brassard-Boudreau 2010). Rather than measuring an expansion or shrinkage it would therefore be more fruitful to analyse changes to humanitarian space due to an increased blurring with development agendas. While analyses have mainly focused on access in war and conflict situations (Feldman 2018), my research draws attention to how humanitarian space transformed in the contest of protracted crises. It focuses on
changes in the geographical spaces of agencies’ interventions, their capacity to deliver services and reach population according to assessed needs, and the type of population that is reached.

2.2.2 Transformation of Actors

Humanitarian Space as Arena

The notion of humanitarian space has been criticised for painting an ideal-typical scenario of humanitarian aid, detached from everyday politics (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Collinson and Elhawary 2012). As an alternative, Hilhorst proposes the concept of humanitarian arena in order to shed light on the everyday negotiations of aid workers to access and maintain operational space. The idea of an arena assumes that “social actors reflect upon their experiences and what happens around them and use their knowledge and capabilities to interpret and respond to their environment” (Long 2003 cited in Hilhorst and Jansen 2010: 290). This calls for an actor-centric approach to the analysis of humanitarian governance, taking into consideration their perspectives, understandings of reality as well as day-to-day practices. It does not take preassumed characteristics of humanitarian space, principles or the distinctions between humanitarianism and development for granted, but pays attention to how different actors use these terms. As such, an actor-centric perspective allows analysis of a changing system of refugee governance where roles and responsibilities have been subject to important changes.

Initially, aid provision to refugees was seen as a private philanthropic endeavour where UNHCR had only a coordinating role without operational mandate and budget. It later became the main operational agency in the field of refugee assistance, and is financed by donations from Western states (Lippert 1999). Starting in the 1980s, refugee governance in developing countries underwent profound changes, adopting neoliberal rationalities such as accounting and audit as preferred forms of knowledge as well as ‘partnerships’ as the discursive construction of associations between authorities. The change in rationalities also entailed a shift of responsibility for aid provision and insurance of survival to ‘the local’, ‘the community’ and the individual subject (Lippert 1999). Interventions aimed at moving beyond the paradigm of direct relief and assistance and embraced liberal developmental agendas of capacity building and self-reliance (Pascucci 2017; Duffield 2007). This research therefore aims at not taking the normative frames of what humanitarianism ‘is’ and ‘does’ for granted but pays close attention to how different actors understand their
role and their relations with each other for providing humanitarian assistance (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010).

In her analysis of humanitarians’ reaction to a shift of focus towards development interventions in Sudan, Drazkiewicz shows how ‘neutrality’ as one of humanitarians’ key principles underwent changes. While political neutrality used to be a tool for humanitarians in order to access civilians in contexts of political conflict, she argues that humanitarians started using it as an identity marker in order to separate themselves from any state agenda. As such, they used their claim to neutrality in order to legitimise an unwillingness to cooperate with the government in the implementation of infrastructural developmental projects affecting their own office building (Drążkiewicz 2017). Practitioners continue to separate themselves from the realm of politics, although research has clearly shown the involvement of humanitarians into politics (Fassin 2011; Turner 2018) – a tendency only increasing with a closer connection to development aid (Barnett and Duvall 2005). The tension between humanitarians’ desire to engage in development work and their refusal to lose their apparent non-governmental nature and take on responsibility for development emerged as a key tension in my research.

**Humanitarian-Development Brokers and Translators**

The actor-centric approach to humanitarianism can be compared to ethnographic work on development, calling for the necessity to study aid practitioners’ day to day practices and negotiations in order to make sense of how interventions work. It is therefore fruitful to consider the concepts of development brokers and translators in the realm of humanitarianism (Lewis and Mosse 2006).

Brokers are conceptualized as operating at the ‘interfaces’ of “different social fields, domains or lifeworlds where social discontinuities based on differences in values, social interests and power are found” (Lewis 2014: 295). As such, they are actively involved in “gaining access, negotiating roles, relationships and representations” (Lewis and Mosse 2006: 10). They are creating new project realities, often with their own interests in shaping the projects (Bierschenk et al. 2002; Lewis and Mosse 2006). Stovel et al. (2011) define brokers as actors who “(i) bridge gaps in social structure and (ii) help goods, information, opportunities, or knowledge to flow across those gaps” (Stovel et al. 2011 cited in Hönke and Müller 2018: 5). Brokers derive their power from their capacity to identify and access resources such as goods, contacts, knowledge or information, which one actor needs and that another one can provide: “The broker gains power from the fact that
without her cooperation neither group will get what it wants or needs” (Stovel and Shaw 2012 cited in Hönke and Müller 2018: 5).

The concept of translation has been added to the theorization of brokerage and its key metaphor of ‘interfaces’ – criticised for essentialising different ‘lifeworlds’ which are not clearly separated in reality (Hönke and Müller 2018). The concept of translation therefore builds on a relational ontology, meaning that brokers translate a project’s policy always in relation to the specific stakeholder they want to reach. Translation is defined as the “enrolment and the interlocking of different actors’ interests” (Lewis and Mosse 2006: 13) by reading “the meaning of a project into the different institutional languages of its stakeholder supporters” (Mosse 2005: 9). It encompasses the production of a seeming congruence between problems and interventions and the coherence of policy logic (Mosse 2005: 9), the “establishment of an ‘epistemic link’, defining common objectives and practices that donors and recipients refer to” (Hönke and Müller 2018: 4). While brokerage concerns the outreach to potential new stakeholders, translators are tasked with preserving a congruent appearance and discourse of the project towards the outside. This discourse takes centre stage in Mosse’s argument that the main focus of development workers is not “whether a project succeeds, but how ‘success’ is produced” (Mosse 2005: 8). This requires a close attention to how projects are presented to the public as well as to the indicators with which they are evaluated.

The Role of the State: Institutional Ambiguity and its governing effects

Seeing humanitarian space as arena allows to consider a variety of actors entering, influencing or controlling humanitarian space, as it gets increasingly blurred with development governmentalities. One consequence is a strengthened role of hosting countries’ governments, often neglected in analyses of humanitarian governance. In the context of the Syrian refugee crisis, recent work has drawn on concepts of indifference and institutional ambiguity to make sense of governments’ often conflicting stances (Norman 2019; Nassar and Stel 2019). While political inaction following humanitarian emergencies has traditionally been attributed to governments’ lack of capacity (Bakewell 2008), legitimising the analytical focus on humanitarian agencies, recent work draws attention to unpacking these assumed manifestations of lacking capacity. Nassar and Stel (2019) argue that non-existing or ambiguous policy responses have political utility and therefore constitute a form of governance on its own. By mapping the “political economy of (in)formality” that is imposed on refugees in Lebanon and by “exploring who benefits from ambiguous
governance” (Nassar and Stel 2019: 53), the authors show how the prohibition of formal refugee camps, registration and residence push refugees into informality and illegality, benefiting governing elites who see themselves devoid of responsibility\(^1\) (Nassar and Stel 2019). Drawing on the concept of agnotology as ‘deliberate not-knowing’ or ‘claiming to not know’ as an important technique of ambiguous governance, the authors analyse government actors’ claimed ignorance about refugee populations as a useful technique to avoid responsibility and to justify non-action. Agnotology theory sees such claims as unequivocally constructivist and as actively ‘made, maintained and manipulated’ (Proctor and Schiebinger 2008: 9). Institutional ambiguity is then “an unpredictable, hybrid form of governance that emerges at the continuously shifting interface between formal and informal forms of regulation” (Nassar and Stel 2019: 44). Others have pointed to the risks of seeing all non-knowledge as deliberate ignorance, interpreting it as a conspirational mode of exerting power (Scheel and Ustek Spilda 2019) and have called for differentiating between different types of not-knowing (Aradau 2017). While I do not want to argue in favour of such a conspiracy in the case of Jordan, drawing on these theories allows to analyse the productive and political effects the claimed insecurity about refugees’ future return to Syria have. Such claimed ignorance had important consequences for maintaining the temporal rationalities of emerging humanitarian-development practices.

2.2.3 Transformation of Practice

The Creation of a “Displacement-Development Nexus”

Humanitarian practices, the governance of bodies and populations during aid delivery, have been theorised as a “politics of life” (Fassin 2007). They include the use of the refugee category as a tool to determine eligibility for aid, the procedures that determine access to this category, how aid is distributed as well as how it is withdrawn (Feldman 2018). As such, humanitarians do not only alleviate suffering, but by striving to do so, decide about the sort of life that people should live. The terms and conditions governing these do not exist in limbo, but are affected by changing ideologies, as well as by time and space. As such, the call for connecting humanitarian approaches focussed on relief with longer term development policies is especially apparent in the context of refugee crises – although, as Malkkii notes, only in reference to refugee situations in the Global South. She argues that “the settlement of refugees has shown a marked tendency to

\(^1\)on the deliberate production of informality see also Roy (2005)
be absorbed into well-established forms of development discourse” (Malkki 1995: 507), arguing for instead of providing immediate emergency relief, agencies should concentrate on setting up mechanisms for long-term development aid in order to improve conditions for everyone in the country. The “development discourse on refugees” (Malkki 1995; Lui 2004; Stevens 2016: 507) has been criticised for contributing to the depoliticisation of refugee movements, shifting the focus away from their rights and the political and historical processes that lead to mass displacement (Malkki 1995). Gabiam (2012) shows how infrastructure development interventions in Syria’s Palestinian camps have therefore been resisted by refugees who aimed at upholding their humanitarian situation and the need for a political solution – in this case, their right to return to Palestine.

Hence, development is indeed different to humanitarianism, although as stated above, the line is not always easy to trace. A major difference is that while humanitarian actors construct themselves as ‘apolitical’, sidestepping the host country’s government, development actors are working closely together with the state. As argued by Ferguson, development relies on two meanings that are often conflated: it means a process of transition “toward a modern, capitalist, industrial economy through the development of the forces of production” (Ferguson 1990: 15). It can also mean any form of intervention aiming to improve quality of life and alleviate poverty. Guinote (2018) argues that current distinctions between humanitarian and development practice – such as short-term versus long-term – are not useful. Instead, he suggests that humanitarian practice should be differentiated from development on the basis of its modus operandi: The goal of humanitarian actions should only be the alleviation of suffering, while developmental action also attempts to strengthen the state (Guinote 2018). A focus on projects’ underlying rationalities and goals therefore needs to take center stage in the analysis of humanitarian-development practices. As such, there is a need to differentiate different actors’ motivations of ‘amelioration’ by development agendas and its targeted objects: Lie (2017) traces how a shift from humanitarianism to development in the response to internally displaced people in Northern Uganda was not aiming at or leading to improvements of livelihoods. It was rather part of the government’s ambition to reclaim political control over externally funded actors in order to embark on its own development goals. Referring to UNHCR’s policies over the last decades, Crisp therefore argues that on a global level, “the refugee aid and development approach proved to be seriously flawed” (2001: 3). Besides the lack of funding, this was due to the essentially ambiguous nature of its objectives: “Is its purpose to promote the settlement and eventual integration of refugee populations in countries of first asylum? Or is the aim to ameliorate the situation
of refugees, the host community and state, pending the day when those refugees returned to their country of origin?” (Stein, 1994 cited in Crisp 2001: 2). The latter objective took precedence in the eyes of most asylum countries that have seen the development approach as a means to secure large amount of aid without making efforts to alleviate the situations of refugees in their country – leading to a drop of this agenda. That it re-emerges now demonstrates that it is less important if development projects ‘work’, but how success is created (Mosse 2005). This demands attention to the logics and principles on the basis of which success is measured, as well as whose success counts.

The Emergence of Resiliency Humanitarianism

This thesis adds to recent literature showing how humanitarian rationalities vary, especially in contexts of protracted displacement. Since the 1980s, humanitarian practice has been affected by and absorbed into neoliberal rationalities. As such, the ideal of individual’s self-reliance, living independent from outside assistance, became humanitarianism’s primary goal (Field et al. 2017). It reflects changes in Western welfare systems, in which recipients are expected to work, thereby demonstrating their deservingness of assistance (Halvorsen 1998). As such, a ‘resiliency humanitarianism’ has emerged, paralleling the ‘classic’ form of humanitarianism (Hilhorst 2018; Ilcan and Rygiel 2015). Hilhorst argues that the Global Compact on Refugees, adopted by the UN in December 2018 and bearing many similarities to the JC in terms of promoting resilience of refugees and seeking solutions in ‘local’ contexts, presents a “game changer in the shift from classic to resilience humanitarianism” (Hilhorst 2018: 6). Instead of defending the undisputed status and rights of refugees as agreed in the Geneva Convention from 1951, the new aim is to create ‘resilient’ subjects, able – and pressured – to take responsibility for their economic survival. While previously, refugees were considered vulnerable qua their status and shared experiences, Sözer (2019) argues that UNHCR’s introduction of the Vulnerability Assessment (VAF) in the Syrian refugee response in 2014 made it thinkable to only care about a fraction of the refugee population, those deemed ‘most vulnerable’ according to set indicators – a move that translated into reduced operational costs. Organisations’ upward accountability to donors and not towards their beneficiaries has led to evaluations based on processual characteristics such as ‘efficient’ use of resources instead of project impacts; and technical indicators such as head counts or the project’s budget. This allows humanitarians to “secure an image of success as long as they have some amount of funding (irrespective of its source or use) and some number of beneficiaries (irrespective of projects’ actual impact on beneficiaries’ lives)” (Sözer 2019: 4) and ultimately results
in an increasing abandonment of refugees as objects of humanitarian care. Sözer argues that these changes are not primarily due to a lack of funding (cf. Field et al. 2017) or operational difficulties but to “a new way of imagining humanitarianism”(2019: 10): While the sector was born with the aim of ending human suffering, “contemporary neoliberal humanitarianisms promise has been, at best, increasing the resilience of those suffering” (Sözer 2019: 10).

Reflecting humanitarianists’ power to decide which life people may or may not live (Feldman 2018: 4), not all means through which the poor choose to achieve such resilience are equally approved. There are tensions “between internationally acceptable forms of adaptive self-reliance and, arising from the impossibility (and for many the undesirability) of this form of existence [. . . and] those forms of adaptation, legitimacy and survival that exist despite, and often in opposition to, official aid efforts” (Duffield 2010: 68). The conflict between the aim of integrating Syrians into specific industrial jobs, and the latter’ preference for work provided by INGOs reflects such a tension.

As this literature shows, in order to understand changing humanitarian and development practices and its effects, it is necessary to pay attention to the types of interventions, their underlying goals, the way beneficiaries are selected as well as how projects are evaluated. Before I conclude this literature review by outlining my theoretical framework, I present how these theoretical concepts play out empirically in the context of Jordan.
2.3 Context: The Governance of Syrian Refugees in Jordan

2.3.1 Jordan’s evolving Refugee Regime

A country with one of the highest refugee-to-population ratios worldwide, Jordan’s political and social affairs have been shaped by the subsequent influxes of refugees since its independence in 1946 (De Bel-Air 2016). To understand how a change in refugee governance plays out among the different actors, it is therefore paramount to consider Jordan’s historical experiences with refugee populations and international aid (Lenner 2016). To prevent the more than 400,000 Palestinians fleeing to Jordan during the Arab-Israeli war from destroying the demographic balance of the young state, the ‘1948 refugees’ immediately received Jordanian citizenship (Davis et al. 2017). As a way to emphasise and defend their right of return, they were excluded from the operational mandate of the International Organisation for Refugees (IOR, predecessor of the UNHCR), and placed under the responsibility of a specific UN body, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Jordan’s support for refugees’ right of return also led its rejection of the 1951 Geneva Convention on the rights of refugees (De Bel-Air 2016). Today, Jordanians of Palestinian descent make up at least half of the 6,600,000 Jordanian citizens living in Jordan, and are restricted from certain entitlements that the so called “Transjordanians” enjoy. They are largely excluded from government and public sector jobs; but form a major part of Amman’s business elite. The perceived threat of Palestinians to the Jordanian identity informed the later decision to restrict access of Palestinian-Syrian refugees during the Syrian war. This shows how Jordan’s responses to following refugee influxes have been characterized by what Isotalo calls a “fear of Palestinization” (2014). Palestinians fleeing to Jordan after the six day war 1967 were no longer granted citizenship, like to all future refugee groups such as the large number of Iraqis fleeing the Gulf Wars from the 1990s onwards. In order to prevent yet another large group from altering Jordan’s demography, the GoJ rejected the establishment of formal camps and initially downplayed the number of Iraqi refugees and their dire humanitarian situation, referring to them as ‘guests’ (De Bel-Air 2016). After a terrorist attack on international hotels in 2005 the GoJ began restricting its access to Iraqi men, framing refugees more and more as a security threat (De Bel-Air 2016).

Overwhelmed by the uprisings in neighbouring Syria in 2011 and the beginning of a brutal war, Jordan pursued a relatively open door policy towards arriving refugees – excluding Palestinians, Iraqis and single men, who were denied access to the country. Throughout
2013, the government steadily closed its two border crossings to Syria, Naseeb in the West and Rukban in the East and, after a suicide attack on border police in summer 2016, shut them completely, leaving 75,000 Syrians trapped in the so called ‘berm’ – the border region which neither of the countries wants to take responsibility for (Davis et al. 2017).

Jordan’s internal refugee response has been shaped by its geopolitical and economic situation. Due to the country’s low industrial productivity, the influx of Syrians was perceived as a risk for the already struggling economy and strained labour market. From the end of the 1990s, neoliberal structural adjustment programmes under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had been causing a decline in welfare services and public employment – which still remains the most important employment sector for Jordanians (Lenner and Turner 2018). This has resulted in 44 percent of the whole labour market operating ‘informally’, defined as all economic activities that are “not registered under specific forms of national legislations” (UNDP 2010: 4). In light of a burgeoning youth population and unemployment rates of over 18 percent (WorldBank 2018), Jordan’s response to Syrian refugees aimed at shielding its citizenry from further competition on the labour market.
2.3.2 From Humanitarianism to Development

The Jordan Response Plan

In the early years of the Syrian refugee crisis, all international assistance was focused on humanitarian support to Syrian refugees. The introduction of the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) in 2015, which is led by the GoJ’s Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), presented a first attempt to include support for Jordanian ‘host communities’ as well. It therefore introduced a ‘Resilience Pillar’ (RES) pillar next to the ‘Refugee Pillar’ (REF) pillar of the ‘Response Plan’ (JRP 2015). As the only document under which all funding appeals are channelled, the plan is developed to span a two-year period and is revised on annual basis. The plan presents itself as constituting a ‘paradigm shift’ from traditional humanitarian and development interventions that used to run in parallel (JRP 2015). It adopted a resilience-based approach to respond to and mitigate the effects of the crisis on Syrian refugees and on Jordanian people and institutions by integrating humanitarian and development responses into one comprehensive vulnerability assessment and one single plan for each sector (JRP 2018: 8). The goal of using this development-oriented approach is said “to build resilience and reduce the need for humanitarian assistance over time” (JRP 2015: 25). One of the main differences of the JRP in comparison to earlier Refugee Response Plans led by UNHCR is an increased involvement of the GoJ. All assistance to Jordan is expected to be aligned with the government’s development agenda and with national systems for planning, programming and implementation (JRP 2015: 23).

The EU-Jordan Compact

To support this development oriented agenda, a significant policy shift was reached during the London donor conference in February 2016, hosted by the United Kingdom, Germany, Kuwait, Norway and the UN. Previously, as refugees’ right to work is not mentioned in UNHCR’s Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the GoJ, Syrians could legally enter the labour market only under conditions granted to other foreigners, in the sectors that are open to non-Jordanians. This meant obtaining a work permit which was conditional on residency and a Jordanian employer who had to pay the permit fees. As refugees are not provided with residency and as permit fees cost depending on

2 The sectors are agriculture, construction and manufacturing traditionally occupied by migrant labour force from Egypt in the former two and South-East Asia in the latter sector (Lenner and Turner 2018)
the sector up to several hundred Jordanian Dinars (JDs), this effectively meant that Syrians were unable to work formally, forcing them to work in the informal sector, mainly in agriculture and construction.

The Jordan Compact between the EU and the GoJ was therefore considered a milestone in the process of shifting the way Syrian refugees are governed from perceiving them as objects of humanitarian care to a more development-oriented approach, aiming at making them ‘self-reliant’ and thus less dependent on international assistance (Lenner and Turner 2018). Socio-economic integration of Syrians was presented as responding to their economic needs as well as boosting Jordan’s economy overall, and to reduce the numbers of Syrians trying to make the journey to Europe (Lenner and Turner 2018). Within the global framework of the Jordan-EU Mobility Partnership, the EU agreed to grant 1.7 billion Euro over three years to the GoJ to support infrastructure projects as well as a 10-year exemption from tariff barriers in exchange to Jordan’s commitment to create 200,000 job opportunities for Syrians in the country (EU-Commission 2016). The World Bank endorsed a plan to facilitate access to up to $1.4 billion of credit at rates typically only available to lower-income countries and signed a $300 million, 35-year loan in the months following the JC (Lenner and Turner 2018). In order to engender investments and job creation for Jordanians and Syrian refugees, the EU committed to simplify its rules of origin for a ten-year period for specific goods produced in Jordan’s 18 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and Industrial Areas, as long as these are linked to job opportunities under the same conditions for both Jordanians and Syrian refugees. The EU and Jordan agreed to involve international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the World Bank in supporting and contributing to the employment generation and future monitoring process (EU-Commission 2016).

Two years after signing of the Compact, its pitfalls have become apparent (Lenner and Turner 2018): The main strategies pursued to integrate Syrians into the labour market – attempts to expand investments, and thereby jobs for both Syrians and Jordanians, mainly in export-intensive industries in a number of SEZs, substituting Syrian refugees for other migrant workers in the garment industry, and the formalisation of existing Syrian labour in sectors such as construction and agriculture – did not deliver the success that was expected. They run up against the diverging interests of the actors involved: 1) against the interest of the GoJ to secure its domestic population from job competition, thereby opening only the low-skilled sectors agriculture, construction and manufacturing to refugees; 2) against the interests of employers in construction and manufacturing who relied on easily exploitable foreign labour which they did not want to substitute
with formalised refugee labour as well as 3) against the characteristics of the refugee population who were unable or unwilling to work in factories. Still, the Compact has attracted enough international consensus to make the policy ‘implementable’, branding it as “a policy success regardless of its actual effects on those supposed to be helped by it” (Lenner and Turner 2018: 25). It has allowed an increase in international funding with numerous donors supporting different development schemes intended to increase Syrians’ labour market participation, leading NGOs to move from ‘traditional’ humanitarian work toward labour market interventions.

2.3.3 Developmentalising Spaces: from Camps to ‘Host-Communities’

In addition to security concerns, economic protectionism of the Jordanian population have informed early government policies focussing on securitising Syrians in camps apart from the local population and preventing their integration into the workforce (Turner 2015). Increasing the public visibility was another motivation to keep refugees in camps. Zaatari camp was opened close to the northern city Mafraq in July 2012, currently housing almost 80.000 Syrians. Although less than 20 percent of registered refugees reside in camps (UNHCR 2019a), the international political, academic and media attention remains on the famous Zaatari, to which political delegates, journalists and celebrities are regularly escorted. The newer Azraq camp opened two years after Zaatari in April 2014. After one year of planning, it aimed at incorporating ‘lessons learned’ (UNHCR 2014) from Zaatari whose inhabitants gained the reputation of being chaotic and hard to control. Azraq, which is organised into different ‘villages’, is a heavily securitised space with limited mobility allowed to the 41,000 Syrian dwellers and restricted access for outsiders (Hoffmann 2017). In addition to these main camps, there are the smaller Emirati-Jordanian Camp, Cyber City, and King Abdullah Park, which are all located in the North of Jordan and host between hundreds and a few thousand Syrians (Turner 2018).

Rather than presenting camps as spaces of exclusion or of humanitarian governance outside of state power, Turner (2018) sees Syrian refugee camps in Jordan as zones of “graduated sovereignty” (Ong 2000: 57). They exist next to other spaces where differential rules and laws apply, such as the country’s SEZs or the Palestinian refugee camps that now form part of Jordan’s urban fabric (Oesch 2017). Decades after their establishment, the latter are seen as governed by humanitarian-development rationalities (Oesch 2017: 116) aimed at maintaining their provisional character in order to emphasise Pales-
tinians’ right to return – a provisional which already lasts for decades. As a consequence, these spaces and its populations are being differentially included through a system of variegated citizenship (Oesch 2017): As Jordanian citizens, Palestinian camp dwellers are “both included to some extent at a juridico-political and socio-economic level, while being excluded administratively and through spatial marginalisation” (Oesch 2017: 111).

The majority of Syrians who reside outside of camps are referred to as living in Jordanian ‘host communities’ – mainly in the large northern cities of Amman, Irbid, Mafraq and Zarqa. Humanitarian actors had difficulties shifting their interventions from the well-known camp context to urban refugee populations (Healy and Tiller 2013) and projects in ‘host communities’ have only recently began on a larger scale.

**Shrinking Protection Space**

All early state policies regarding Syrian refugees “support Jordan’s stance that the refugees’ stay in Jordan should be temporary” (De Bel-Air 2016: 2). Faced with the reality that the conflict in Syria would not end soon while the influx of refugees continued, from 2013 on the GoJ started restricting protection space for Syrians in the country. This manifested in deportations back to Syria, limiting free movement outside of the camps and restricting access to services by abolishing free medical care in November 2014. The GoJ referred to the extreme financial burden on Jordan as the reason for the decision, making Syrian refugees pay the same rates as uninsured Jordanians. In 2014, the GoJ began to return unregistered Syrians from urban areas to camps, while a decline in international funding led the World Food Programme (WFP) to significantly cut the amount of food vouchers it distributed to refugees, thereby driving impoverished Syrians to the camps, or even back to Syria. During the time of my fieldwork, 85 percent of Syrians in Jordan were assessed to live below the poverty line of 96 US-Dollars per individual and month according to UNHCR (2018). The idea to integrate development actors and funding into humanitarian aid through the Jordan Compact was therefore a direct reaction to a shrinking protection space for Syrians, and Western states’ fear of refugees’ resulting onward migration (Lenner and Turner 2018).

**2.3.4 Actors in the Arena: State versus International Community**

As a country without natural resources or significant industry, a big public and informal work sectors and therefore low tax revenues, the Jordanian state is known to rely on
foreign aid. Jordan historically benefited from its official status as a “frontline state” against Israel and received funds from the Gulf countries. Their development aid to Jordan reached as high as 25 percent of Jordan’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the mid-1980s, turning Jordan into a “rentier economy” (Brand 1992). Through the peace treaty with Israel in 1994, the king solicited substantial development aid from the United States, which are now one of Jordan’s most important allies.

The arrival of Iraqi refugees in Jordan during the first Gulf war led to a major shift in the international community’s presence in Jordan (Kelberer 2017): Previously, the UNRWA with its mandate limited to Palestinian refugees had been the dominant refugee agency in the country. With the arrival of Iraqi refugees, UNHCR began operating and established its first permanent office in 1997. Its MoU with the government gives UNHCR 1) the right to determine refugee status in the country and 2) the responsibility for their protection. It however also limits their service provision to those who register with the organisation – which does not equal the total number of refugees staying in the country.

At the time of my fieldwork, from the overall refugee population of 762,420 including Iraqi, Sudanese, Yemeni and other nationalities, 671,600 Syrians were registered by the UNHCR as refugees. While not all Syrians registered officially, the contrasting figure put forward by the GoJ’s 2015 census, according to which 1.257 million Syrians reside in Jordan (JRP 2018), is contested by international actors and was described to me as ‘the statistical fight’ between the international community and the GoJ (I17). In the 2000s, at a time when international attention towards Iraqi refugees was high, Jordan exacerbated the number of Iraqis in the country in order to emphasise its burden and to increase international funding3. It is argued that the same reasons also apply for the big difference in numbers in the case of Syrian refugees (Lenner 2016; Turner 2018).

As a stability anchor in the region shaken by political turmoils, Jordan has attracted immense flows of foreign aid money, especially since the start of the Syrian war. Europe’s interest in keeping refugees in the region after 2015 has increased funds even more (Achilli 2015). In addition, the country saw an influx of an important number of international aid agencies, many of which also opened their regional headquarters in Amman in order to manage their intervention in neighbouring Yemen, Iraq and Syria. It is thus important to consider that Jordan does not only rely on international aid, but that international aid actors rely on Jordan’s operational space in order to carry out their activities – especially

3It claimed the number to be around 750,000, while study by the FAFO Institute in 2007 reports a much smaller count of 160,000 (FAFO 2007).
since their presence has become increasingly hampered in Turkey and Lebanon\textsuperscript{4}. As such, Jordan has used its refugee policies as leverage in international negotiations to lobby for increased access to aid, threatening to retract services if it is not delivered (Kelberer 2017).

**Jordan’s Humanitarian and Development Arenas**

In addition to the long-term presence of the UNRWA and UNHCR as key institutions in the country, international humanitarian and development actors have become increasingly important in assisting refugees both inside and outside the camps. At the time of my research, numerous UN organisations, development agencies of specific donor states, development banks as well as humanitarian INGOs were present in the country. While humanitarian INGOs only implemented programmes, UN and development agencies acted as both donors and implementors. The German development agency GIZ for instance both manages programmes as well as funds INGOs as implementors of their programmes. Table 2.1 provides a selection of the 19 UN agencies and 61 INGOs operating in the country\textsuperscript{5}, selected based on their relevance for my research.\textsuperscript{6} It is not meant to present organisations as homogeneous entities, as many differ in their size, operational mandate and understanding of humanitarian principles. It presents a rough categorisation according to how organisations identify officially. As will become clear in this thesis, many INGOs would contest to be put into the humanitarian category, arguing that their portfolio also involves developmental interventions. However, all of those listed adhere officially to the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality. They can be divided into those organisations that were already working in Jordan before the Syrian war, and those that came specifically in response to it. The former already worked with Jordanians on more developmental projects, shifted their programming towards serving Syrians and were slowly returning to their previous developmental work during the time of my research. The latter focussed for years on solely serving the Syrian refugee population and only recently started engaging with Jordanians and other refugee groups in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{4}In 2018, both countries have ordered UNHCR to stop registering Syrian refugees (HRW 2018). In addition, Lebanon has blocked UNHCR staff’s working visas, accusing the organisation of hindering Syrians’ return to Syria (DeutscheWelle 2018)
\item \textsuperscript{5}This list does not include the numerous national organisations, since my research focus, as outlined in the following chapter, is on international actors. The only exception is Save the Children, which, while operating internationally, is registered in Jordan as a national organisation (I19).
\item \textsuperscript{6}For a full list see appendix
\end{itemize}
Table 2.2: Jordan’s Humanitarian - Development Arenas

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<tr>
<th>Humanitarian</th>
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<th>INGOs</th>
<th>Mandate / Scope of work</th>
<th>Target population</th>
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<td>Relief &amp; Development</td>
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<th>Mandate / Scope of work</th>
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<td>DEVCO</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>GIZ.</td>
<td>National development (e.g. infrastructure, employment)</td>
<td>Mainly Jordanians</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>EBRD</td>
<td>KFW</td>
<td>DFID, SIDA</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

the country. This group present the majority of INGOs in Jordan, and their recent growth led to the foundation of the Jordan INGO Forum (JIF) as their coordination and advocacy platform (I16).

2.3.5 From Humanitarian to Development Practices

While ethnographic literature examining humanitarian and development organisations in Jordan is scarce (for exceptions see Turner 2018; Brun 2016; Pascucci 2019), one contribution examines how humanitarian actors dealt with the increasingly protracted situation of Syrians (Brun 2016). Paying attention to the notion of time she shows how aid workers, frustrated by the lack of formal policies regarding the future of aid provision and the political impossibility to engage in sustainable interventions, came up with informal, ad-hoc practices they deemed more durable and worthwhile. An investment in housing spaces for refugees, however, while benefiting them in the short run, risked putting refugees in more vulnerable situations in the long run as it increased chances of their eviction. My findings show that even though an engagement in developmental practices is now officially encouraged, the limitation of being stuck in short-term logics are still in place – sustaining the argument that “there is no future in humanitarianism” (Brun 2016).

In my interviews, respondents of the former often mentioned which a sense of pride that their organisation is not ‘one of those’ that parachuted into Jordan because of the Syrian war, but actually has a long tradition of supporting Jordan.
With its history of refugee flows, Jordan also has experienced previous developmentalisations of humanitarian refugee spaces. It is therefore insightful to consider the changing practices in and around Palestinian camps, established in the mid-20th century and nowadays ambiguously incorporated into Jordan’s urban fabric. However, they are still meant to maintain a difference between Palestinian camp-dwellers and the rest of Jordan’s citizenry, making the camp to “a lasting provisional” – “un provisoire qui dure” (Oesch 2012). Since the 1990s, Palestinian camps were included in nationwide urban development schemes as part of the World Bank’s poverty reduction programme. Palestinians living in camps were thereby assimilated to the urban poor (Oesch 2017). This bears resemblance to the shift towards a beneficiary selection based purely on vulnerability criteria in which Syrians and poor Jordanians are condensed into one group (see Chapter 4). Oesch (2017) argues that these development projects also reflected a broader restructuring of Jordan’s urban fabric, where external actors were brought in “to bear on traditional problems of government (e.g., economic and social development)” (Parker 2009 cited in Oesch 2017: 116). This resembles the introduction of external humanitarian and development actors to solve Jordan’s structural unemployment. A key characteristic of the humanitarian-development governmentalities in Palestinian camps, Oesch (2017) argues, is that interventions aimed at producing autonomous and productive subjects who could be included in Jordan’s society at least socio-economically. This is then also the key difference between humanitarian-development governmentalities directed at Palestinians and the ones now addressing Syrians: While it was accepted that the former will stay in Jordan, receiving some sort of graduated citizenship, the rationality of humanitarian-development projects for Syrians are ultimately informed by the expectation of their return to Syria.

2.4 Conclusion: Conceptual Framework and Schema

This literature review posits that refugee’s humanitarian governance is a contested process, not only determined by rules and structures such as laws and mandates, but by the multiple actors’ day to day negotiations. It has shown how concepts such as humanitarian space, actors and practices are useful analytical frames through which it is possible to examine a changing nature of governance. The notion of space as geography draws attention to spatial changes and differences of aid delivery as well as the differing rules and structures that guide these interventions. Operational space is used to analyse changes in agencies’ types of intervention, their capacity to deliver services and reach
population according to the assessed needs, as well as the type of population that is reached. Seeing camps as ‘laboratories’ where new modes of humanitarian governance are tested, allows to understand the expansion of governing techniques from the camp to the national level, as evident in the expansion of the CfW programmes. It allows to see how rationales of camp spaces such as the differential inclusion of refugees travel beyond the camp and find reflection in the rules governing refugees’ access to the labour market. While I am not analysing the physical and spatial structures of refugee camps in Jordan, I seek to adopt an approach that sees ‘the camp as method’ as a governing tool with logics that extend beyond its fences.

By seeing humanitarian space as arena I use an actor centric approach in order to account for changing roles of organisations as well as the tactics employed by individuals to negotiate these new roles among other actors. I draw on the notion of the broker to flesh out how humanitarian organisations capitalise on their humanitarian identity and access to refugees to position themselves as ‘facilitators’ in a developmental interventionist environment. Using the concept of translation I theorise how individual project managers aim to harmonize the encounter of humanitarian INGOs with the private sector.

Lastly, in order to grasp changing governing practices I make use of governmentality theory and its attention to the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics in order to analyse how humanitarian and development logics interact in the case of CfW programmes. These logics include the time frame of projects, the type of interventions, their ascribed humanitarian or developmental identity as well as their underlying goal. It also includes the way beneficiaries are selected as well as the way projects are evaluated. While actors’ personal perspectives and understandings of reality take center stage in the analysis, a recourse to agnotology theory allows to identify claims of ‘not-knowing’ about refugees’ future residence as productive elements in shaping interventions and justifying their inherent short-term logics.

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8This framing is borrowed from critical border studies where Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) suggest to treat ‘The border as method’, as an epistemic framework that allows to locate governing mechanisms of borders beyond its physical locations.
Figure 2.3: Conceptual Schema

Humanitarian governmentalities

Developmental governmentalities
2.5 Research Questions and Operationalisation

Following the literature review and conceptual framework elaborated above, this study aims to shed light on how humanitarian and developmental governmentalities interact in the case of a developmentalised humanitarian refugee response in Jordan. It seeks to approach this inquiry by taking the JC as a starting point and employs the following set of research questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did the shift from humanitarianism towards development change the governance of Syrian refugees in Jordan?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How did it affect the geographical and operational aspects of humanitarian space in Jordan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do humanitarian actors negotiate their new role and actions in this space?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What logics and rationalities shape emerging humanitarian-development practices and why?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.4: Operationalisation Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transforming Space</td>
<td>Geographic factors</td>
<td>Targeted Geographies</td>
<td>From Camp to ‘host community’</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Rules and structures</td>
<td>‘refugee’ versus ‘resilience’ pillar of JRP</td>
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<td>guiding interventions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Targeted populations</td>
<td>Syrians / Jordanians</td>
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<td>Operational factors</td>
<td>Capacity to deliver</td>
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<td>Donor influence</td>
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<td>Underfunding of humanitarian assistance</td>
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<td>Overfunding of livelihood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transforming</td>
<td>Changing roles</td>
<td>Perceived roles</td>
<td>‘facilitators’</td>
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<td>Actors</td>
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<td>Attributed roles</td>
<td>Responsible for job creation</td>
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<td>Changing strategies</td>
<td>Changes in personnel</td>
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<td>Hiring staff with business</td>
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<td>Brokerage</td>
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<td>Syrian labour</td>
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<td>Translation</td>
<td>“Making the business case”</td>
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<td>to hire Syrians</td>
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<td>Showcasing “added value”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transforming</td>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>Type of intervention</td>
<td>Cash-for-Work</td>
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<td>Practices</td>
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<td>Logics</td>
<td>Goals of interventions</td>
<td>short-term assistance</td>
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<td>long-term benefit for</td>
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<td>Jordanian infrastructure</td>
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<td>Rationales of</td>
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<td>“Not-knowing”</td>
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<td>interventions</td>
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<td>Calculations</td>
<td>Evaluations of</td>
<td>Outreach pressure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>intervention</td>
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<td>Focus on work permits</td>
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Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Unit of Analysis

Changes in the international humanitarian and developmental governance of Syrian
refugees in Jordan after the JC are my unit of analysis. I therefore approached the
inquiry by focussing on four main types of actors involved in its implementation: inter-
national humanitarian and development actors as well as representatives from the GoJ
and the EU as a main donor. In this section I present my methodological approach,
methods of data gathering and analysis as well as ethical reflections and limitations.

3.2 Ontological and Epistemological Approach

The ontological approach of this research is underpinned by a constructivist perspective.
This stance holds that different socially constructed realities exist, that social phenom-
ena are produced by human interaction and socially structured (Bryman 2012). I am
therefore interested in the understandings and representation of social phenomena from
an emic perspective of its participants (Bryman 2012). Governance, agency and power
are understood as relational and emerging through a network of actors, making this re-
search attentive to how these are tied together. The relational concept shifts the unit
of analysis from the singular entity to the networks that support and enable it, however
acknowledging that some actors are more able to meet goals through mobilizing people
and resources than others (Donovan 2014: 885). It sees organisations and individuals
not as taking decisions and actions on their own, but as being subject to specific governing mechanisms that they simultaneously reproduce. This ontological stands suitably captures how humanitarian and development actors do not operate in a void, but are influenced and constrained by rules and interests of donors and the GoJ.

In line with the ontological stance, this research uses an interpretivist epistemology, seeking to understand human behaviour from an emic perspective. This approach considers people to be voluntaristic, actively shaping and interacting with their environment rather than being acted upon (Bryman 2012: 28). Consequently, actors’ perspectives and understandings are the main evidence on which I build my study. As such, the interpretivist epistemology not only considers formal rules and structures such as official mandates but also individual agencies and informal tactics. I do not (only) ask how policies such as the JC impact organisations, but how aid workers make sense of and act on these policies. The interpretivist stance tries to understand human behaviour by an exploration of numerous points of observation, seeing processes as shaped by multiple causes anchored in time and space (Hudson and Ozanne 1988: 509). It is suitable for studying the vast network of actors involved in and the overlapping processes producing refugee governance in Jordan as it allows to not only focus on one specific group of individuals but to use numerous points of observation.

3.3 Research Design

My study set out to better understand how different actors in Jordan engage with an international policy that tries to connect humanitarian and development domains in refugee governance. It therefore employs an exploratory research design and inductive approach (Babbie 2012: 95). This research is focused on a specific phenomenon in a specific time and location – the impact of the JC on the refugee governance in Jordan – making it suitable for a case study design. This is defined as “an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon set within its real-world context – especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident” (Yin 2009: 18). As such, “it tries to illuminate a decision of a set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result” (Yin 2009: 17). I consider the JC as a case of a wider trend in the governance of protracted refugee situations, shifting from humanitarian assistance to development-oriented approaches (Lenner and Turner 2018). In trying to understand how this dynamic changes the governance of refugees
I focus on the actors involved in the implementation of the JC, especially the GoJ, IOs and humanitarian and development INGOs. An important element in the research of a case-study is its context, as cases always operate within unique, historically built environments (Stake 2008: 435). This requires attention to the specific circumstances under which actors work, but also the legal framework and socio-economic dynamics of Jordan that influence the implementation of the JC. Previous policy frameworks such as the JRP proved especially important to understand the effects of the JC.

In line with the stated epistemological and ontological positioning and the case study design, I employed a qualitative methodology and data-collection on the ground (Creswell 2003), using multiple data sources (Farquhar 2012). The epistemological and ontological approach as well as the research design led me to choose semi-structured, in-depth interviews as well as document analysis as my main methods. In-depth interviews were the most appropriate and useful method to understand actor behaviour from an emic perspective. The triangulation with policy document analysis allowed to identify differences in official mandates or policies and how organisations acted on the ground. It also allowed to analyse how this work was presented to the public and to donors. Not surprisingly, I often encountered a much more critical perspective of my interviewees on their own programmes as was presented in their publications.

3.4 Methods

My fieldwork lasted for five months, from September 2018 to the end of January 2019. During this time I conducted 27 interviews, attended three inter-agency meetings and two academic conferences. With the exception of a ten day Christmas break, I was living in Amman. I chose to stay in the capital as all the actors I was aiming to approach were based in this city, even though their operations took place mainly in the north of the country. By staying in Amman I could more easily build up networks, attend meetings and socialise with my research participants. It thus allowed me deeper immersion in the field.

3.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The main source of data I build on is semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a variety of humanitarian, development and governmental actors. This qualitative interview method
is characterized as flexibly “responding to the direction in which interviewees take the interview and perhaps adjusting the emphasis in the research as a result of significant issues that emerge” (Bryman 2012: 470). I conducted 13 interviews with employees of European or North-American humanitarian NGOs, two with employees of the German development agency GIZ, each one with the regional as well as the national office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and one with the ILO. Most of them were livelihood managers, grants managers or policy advisors working on employment programming with Syrian and Jordanian groups. In addition, I conducted one interview with a spokesperson of the JIF, one with two representatives from UNHCR, two with employees of MoPIC and one with a project manager at the development department of the EU Delegation. In order to gain more understanding of context and history I also consulted one academic and one legal consultant working for the national human rights NGO Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD). The majority of my interviews were with one person, in three cases I interviewed co-workers at the same time. My 30 research participants, of which two thirds were female, came from a variety of national backgrounds – half of them were Jordanian and the rest citizens of Western countries.

The interviews took between 25 minutes and two and a half hours with the majority lasting for about one hour. Most of them took place in the offices of my research participants in Amman. Ten interviews took place in coffeeshops in Amman, one at my home and one in my research participant’s home. I always started with explaining my research project and asking for consent in taking part in my research, declared that all names would be anonymised and asked if I may record the interview with my mobile phone – which was approved in all but two cases. My questions varied depending on the type of person I interviewed. They mostly started with the role of the organisation in the ‘refugee response’, the type of aid they were providing and how this was impacted by the JC. It later focused more on individual tactics and perceptions of my participants – allowing me to both grasp institutional as well as individual perspectives. While I had prepared an interview guide before my first interview which I constantly adapted according to insights gained throughout my research, interviews departed from my questions and evolved into conversations where I gave participants a lot of space to direct the course of the dialogue. As suitable to the qualitative and explorative nature of my project, this helped

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1Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Mercy Corps (MC), Acted, Action contre la Faim (Action against Hunger) (ACF), Save the Children (SAVE), Oxfam, World Vision (WV), Collateral Repair Project (CRP)

2Jalal Al Husseini from the Institut Français du Proche Orient (Ifpo)
me identify phenomena seen as important by participants (see Bryman 2012). Towards the end of my research I asked more questions to confirm statements or include themes that previously emerged during the interviews. This allowed me to ensure reliability of my results.

“Talking up”

When approaching research participants, I quickly learned that many of them were suffering from a ‘researcher fatigue’, stating that they stopped counting the number of interview requests they got from researchers interested in the ramifications of the JC, celebrated as the major policy shift in the way humanitarian aid was delivered in Jordan. Together with the realisation that research participants were subject to severe time constraints, this influenced the research process in so far as that I felt pressured to not waste their time asking questions that seemed too trivial.

I also realised that I was mostly perceived as an insider of the ‘development community’. This was due to the way I gained access, resulting from me frequenting the same social circles as participants, or by being referred to them by friends. My German citizenship might have also played into seeing me as part of a community of aid workers mostly coming from Western Europe, and many from Germany. As such, I needed to perform my role as an ‘insider’ of the knowledge community of international aid in order to win the trust and respect of my research participants. Failing to do so, by acting on my outsidersness and asking general or naive questions in order to grasp personal understanding of issues, was sometimes contested. One of my questions about the difference between both pillars of the JRP for instance was prompted brusquely with “you have read the JRP, haven’t you?” and an unwillingness to further elaborate. Even though I tried to ask broad and open questions as I aimed to unravel my interviewees’ understandings and conceptualisations of policies and realities, I noticed that I often opted for asking more specific questions that presented me as being prepared for the interview, having read the relevant policy papers. In reaction, I sometimes tried to stress my outsidersness by presenting myself as an inexperienced student interested to learn about the aid sector. My identity as an interviewer was therefore never fixed (Mullings 1999) but a constantly shifting product of negotiations, dependent on the type of interviewee, the way I gained access, and always situated in the specific time and space of the encounter.

My perceived identity had consequences for the type of data I was able to collect. Being perceived as an insider allowed me to gain what I perceived as honest and personal
accounts on the messiness of development work. In other occasions, interviewees repeated official models and policy jargon – which seemed to me as a clear sign of perceiving me as an outsider that cannot be fully trusted. Of course, also these positions were never fixed and could switch over the course of the interview. Participants often started with narrating official policy models while allowing more personal insights towards the end of the interview.

Still, such observations point to “the limits of analyzing practice through the way practitioners talk about their work” (Pallister-Wilkins 2015: 56), as ‘studying up’ (Nader 1972) means to study those having the “power to exclude themselves from the realm of the discussable” (Cooper and Packard cited in Mosse 2005: 12). As Kuus (2013) noticed when researching foreign policy actors and Pallister-Wilkins (2015) in the case of border police officers in Greece, interviewing elites risks not being able to engage in “open-ended conversations that go beyond the reiteration of rehearsed talkingpoints” (Kuus 2013: 116). While presenting a methodological limitation of my interpretivist epistemology, requiring increased data triangulation with multiple sources, these “rehearsed talkingpoints” have analytical interest by their own (Pallister-Wilkins 2015: 56). They draw our attention to the “‘discursive glue’ holding policy communities together” (Mosse 2005: 12) in the performance of international development. As policy in general, these accounts might not represent reality, but the discourse needed to allow practice (see Mosse 2004).

Talking up to humanitarian worker also entailed the methodological challenge of the sector’s heavy staff turnover. Many of the livelihood positions were newly created and staffed after the JC, meaning that many participants have been in Jordan only for one year or even shorter. This limited their knowledge on the changes that the policy shift brought about. Increased data triangulation helped overcome this limitation to a certain extent. Especially, I found it beneficial to talk more to Jordanian aid workers, even if their position was not exactly in the livelihood domain. Their experience, often having worked since the beginning of the Syrian war in the aid sector, provided rich and detailed knowledge about changes over time.

3.4.2 Observations

Inherent to the workings of international aid is that decisions among donors, government officials and implementing agencies are taken in meetings and communications that may transcend national boundaries, but remain closed to the public.
Agencies operate within a nexus of evaluation and external funding which means that effective mechanisms for filtering and regulating the flow of information and stabilising representations are necessary for survival. Here, information is a private good rather than a public asset. (Mosse 2005: 12)

Thus, my decision to ‘study up’ entailed limited access and opportunities for observing research participants in their daily work and interactions (see Shore et al. 2011). This was due to organisations general unwillingness to welcome research that does not have any practical benefit for their programmatic work – making it “virtually impossible to sustain long-term participant observation” (Mosse 2005: 12). Opportunities to observe such meetings between stakeholders were therefore scarce. An exception were the monthly inter-agency meetings of the Livelihood Working Group (LWG) hosted by UNHCR. After my interview with livelihood managers from UNHCR, they invited me to join the meetings where changes in regulations were discussed, new study results presented and new initiatives announced. I participated in three meetings between November 2018 and January 2019. As all members of my unit of analysis – humanitarian and development actors working on livelihood interventions, as well as representatives from MoPIC and the EU – were present, these meetings provided fruitful, even though limited, insights in the interactions of these actors. The group was open for researchers and I introduced myself at the beginning of each meeting with my name and my role as a Master’s student at the University of Amsterdam. As I was not able to introduce my research and ask for consent of every participant I decided to not directly quote what these attendees said during the meetings and ensure anonymity when referring to the meetings in my findings.

3.4.3 Document Analysis

In addition to my interviews, I collected documents from all of the actors I interviewed. These were policy or position papers, study results or publicly available project descriptions – all of which I retrieved online. I also analysed international media coverage, and organisations’ social media activities on Twitter and Facebook. This helped me to better analyse how actors presented their work to donors and the public. It also allowed me to identify differences between individual accounts and official discourse.
3.4.4 Sampling

I followed a sequential sampling approach, with an initial purposeful sampling where the selection of units – organisations – was in direct reference to my research questions (Bryman 2012: 416), while adding snowball sampling over the course of my research. Relying on academic literature and policy papers, I identified the most relevant organisations involved in the implementation of the JC and then employed a stratified purposive sampling, choosing typical organisations of subgroups of interest. I aimed to interview a diversity of actors while in the case of INGOs I focussed on the bigger and most visible ones due to their greater operational scope and influence. In addition, my research employed a contingent sampling criteria (Bryman 2012: 418), starting off with the criterion of organisations involved in employment schemes for Syrian refugees, but included other actors that were relevant as they provided rich contextual data. Sampling was therefore an ongoing process over the course of my research. I reached out via email to publicly available contacts of actors I identified as important or gained access through personal connections I had established prior to starting fieldwork. After each interview, I asked participants to suggest people they perceived important for me to talk to, a process that often resulted in a smooth connection to additional interviewees. The advantage of this snowball technique was that it was able “simultaneously to capitalize on and to reveal the connectedness of units in networks” (Bryman 2012: 424). Many of my humanitarian participants for instance suggested talking to GIZ as the agency funded many employment schemes of humanitarian agencies. In addition, snowball sampling helped facilitate the study of hard-to-reach populations (Lee 1993) – in this case, authorities who were dealing with severe time constraints.

3.5 Data Analysis

My data analysis started early on in the field and was ongoing. After each interview, I noted reflections, preliminary interpretations and most important insights in my field notes; and promptly transcribed recorded interviews. After transcription, I highlighted important passages of the interviews and added notes and comments. This allowed me quickly to identify changing spaces, actors and practices as main theoretical concepts. I decided to proceed with manual coding instead of feeding my interview material into

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3Mainly during an internship in Lebanon during which I got to know humanitarians who introduced me to colleagues in Jordan.
a coding software. As my aim was not to quantify and categorise perspectives of one specific group but to take into account a wide variety of networked actors I decided that using a coding software risks to take quotes out of their context and away from their specific owner. This would have obscured the big differences in roles, institutions and power of participants and therefore not benefited my analysis.

3.6 Quality Criteria

To ensure credibility of the interview data I mainly used triangulation with other interviews as well as document analysis in order to validate facts. During later interviews, I also mentioned preliminary findings to participants in order to elicit reactions and ensure shared understandings. In addition, I attended two academic conferences on refugee issues that took place at the Columbia University Middle East Research Center in Amman. I engaged in in-depth discussions with befriended researchers working on humanitarianism in Jordan, helping me to compare and thereby check validity of my interpretations (Bryman 2012). Highlighting the explorative nature of my research that does not provide external validity, this study emphasises the importance of the Jordanian context, rooted in specific time and space, and uses thick description (Bryman 2012). To ensure authenticity and reliability I employed purposive sampling, making sure different groups would be heard (Bryman 2012) although I am aware that my sample reflects voices from some groups that were more numerous – such as humanitarian actors – more than those of others. It is therefore important to be transparent and reflexive about the limitations of my research.

3.7 Positionality and Ethical Reflections

Ethical consideration and my positionality have informed this research project from the very beginning. Instead of approaching the topic of refugee governance from the point of view of its target population, I decided that my positionality as an inexperienced, Western, non-Arabic speaking researcher does not allow such kind of work amongst a very vulnerable population. My experience in the field confirmed this conclusion. Through my volunteer work in the communication department of a community based NGO serving refugees in East Amman I developed personal contacts with Iraqi, Sudanese, and, to a lesser extent, Syrian refugees. One refugee from Sudan who became my friend reported
how exhausted he felt from the number of interview request he received, mostly from Western (North-American) researchers. At another social event I met a Syrian woman, who previously worked as an English teacher in Syria. Thanks to her language skills, she regularly acted as gatekeeper and translator for foreign students, without receiving – and not daring to ask for – financial compensation. The great attention towards refugees in Jordan was also a burden for a lot of NGOs, often approached by universities to accommodate research among their beneficiaries. This led a number of NGOs to refuse access to their beneficiaries. In my work for above mentioned NGO I had to declare that I would not use any of my interviews I undertook with beneficiaries as part of my work for my own research project. Although I knew that Jordan was an intensely researched place – partly due to being one of the only safe places to conduct research in the Middle East – I was slightly shocked by the extent of it; and – being a researcher myself – felt uncomfortable. My decision to focus on the institutions serving and governing refugees in the country instead of their heavily researched target population was therefore also a political choice and helped me not only to avoid potentially exploitative research but also to justify my project in front of myself and critical observers.

However, the approach of “studying-up” (Nader 1972) and focussing on (mainly) aid workers brought other ethical challenges. Academics and aid workers are using similar “infrastructures” to navigate their social and professional life in Jordan Pascucci (2017). Shortly after my arrival in Amman, I quickly and very naturally found myself frequenting the same social circles as my research participants. Living in the neighbourhood Al-Webdeh, popular for foreigners and ironically called ‘the expat-bubble’ meant that I passed a lot of my time with INGO staff. While this greatly benefited my access to the field and informal discussions on social events helped me gain deeper insights, I often found myself in the uncomfortable place of feeling like I was spying on my friends, especially when writing up fieldnotes about these encounters. It also added to the feeling of barely being able to switch off from my work, as I always felt pressured to ask further questions when topics that seemed relevant to my research arose during discussions. However, I decided that these challenges were part of being immersed in the field and I allowed myself to let questions go unanswered if it felt inadequate to insist, as a natural part of a research that is never fully complete.

Regarding key ethical paradigms as outlined by Sales and Folkman (2000) of do no harm, avoid deception, ensure informed consent as well as privacy and confidentiality, my most important measure relates to the confidentiality of my interviewees. While not all of them explicitly asked for anonymisation, I followed through with using pseudonyms for
every participant. I do reveal the name of the organisation, as I believe it is important for highlighting the differences among them. When it comes to avoiding deceptions, I encountered challenges in expectation management due to the nature of my research that did not primarily seek to be ‘policy relevant’: One interviewee explicitly asked if I could share some ‘best practices’ of the humanitarian-development nexus put into practice if I came along some during my research. Another participant that I met on a social gathering presented my project to her friend as being “highly relevant” to her work – as she assumed I would evaluate organisations’ efforts to integrate Syrians into the Jordanian economy. These situations left me in an uncomfortable situation, sensing the divide between what practitioners expect from empirical research and what I as an aspiring critical researcher was aiming for. In a context where ‘refugee studies’ is infamously known for its problematic closeness to policy, I wanted to undertaking research that does not try to ‘fix’ policies, but to critique them.

3.8 Limitations

The nature of my research project comes with several methodological limitations. Most importantly, the attempt to study changes in a governance complex made out of a variety and multiplicity of actors necessarily entails the impossibility to include everyone. Out of these practical reasons I chose to exclude national organisations although they form an important part of the humanitarian and development scene in Jordan. This was mainly justified by my interest in changes of international humanitarian and development actors but also by very practical reasons to limit my sample. I also chose to exclude the target group of all interventions, refugees themselves. This decision was, as I elaborated above, not only born out of language and access constraints but mainly an ethical choice. This does however not mean that I perceive refugees are passive objects of governance, but as agents actively shaping and contesting governing practices. I tried to give room to this agency by pointing out their reactions to specific programmes as reported to me by research participants. The variety of actors constituting refugee governance in Jordan also meant that not all could be taken into consideration. Actors whose interrogation would have made my research more complete are Jordanian line Ministries such as the Ministry of Labour (MoL) and Interior. While I interviewed representatives from the MoPIC I learned throughout my research that this Ministry is in itself heavily supported by the UN and acts as a mediator between international agencies and the more powerful

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4this formulation is borrowed from (Turner 2018: 51)
line Ministers who created the policies that regulate refugees’ labour market access.

Another limitation of my research is that most of my data collection was conducted in English which is neither my nor, in many cases, the native language of my research participants. While language was never a barrier during conversations, I realised during the two interviews I conducted in German how more attentive I was to specific choices of words and formulations – nuances that might have slipped my attention during the other interviews.

Lastly, while I am referring to research participants as humanitarian, development or governmental actors I do not negate the great variety that exist between organisations – be it in scale, scope of work, funding characteristics and even humanitarian or development principles. I do not seek to generalise among organisations or claim their conformity but tried to point out shared tendencies in their reaction to Jordan’s developmentalising humanitarian space. As I have emphasised above, my findings are largely shaped by the Jordanian context and might not be applicable to other settings where humanitarian and development agendas merge.
Chapter 4

Developmentalising Humanitarian Space

Shortly after arriving in Amman, the first time I heard people talking about my research topic without me even asking for it was during an evening among the friends of my Jordanian flatmates. I found a place in the neighbourhood Al-Webdeh, an area which had developed into a major expat-hub with lots of international aid workers moving into newly built, expensive apartments, and with fancy coffee shops sprawling around the central “Paris Square”. Like most of Amman’s well-educated youth, almost all of my flatmates’ friends were working for International Organisations, cultivating a love-hate-relationship with these entities. One the one hand, they saw them as imperialist machineries, responsible for the influx of highly paid ‘expats’ driving up rents in the unrestricted neoliberal housing market of Amman. One the other hand, they were attracted by their job opportunities, desperately looked after in a context of skyrocketing youth unemployment in one of the most expensive cities in the Middle East.

Adnan, working for one humanitarian INGO said: “You know, my organisation tries to slowly turn into a development organisation.” This didn’t surprise me – as Syrians were now allowed to work in Jordan I expected humanitarian organisations to engage in long-term developmental type of work. Adnan went on: “You know, the Syrians won’t stay forever, the war is over, so my organisation tries to target more Jordanians now, to become more like a development organisation.” This indeed surprised me, and shifted my attention towards the multifaceted understandings of the developmentalisation of humanitarian aid in the context of forced displacement.
This chapter describes how the JC led to a developmentalisation of Jordan’s humanitarian space, characterised by a change in operational and geographical space, where interventions increasingly take place outside of camp settings. First I discuss changes in operational space, how shifting donor interests pushed humanitarian actors to engage in development – specifically livelihood interventions – and how this changed the relationship between INGOs and the GoJ. I then turn to spatial dimension of this transformation and describe how humanitarian interventions became restricted to camps, while all development projects needed to take place in ‘host communities’ and include at least as many Jordanian as Syrian ‘beneficiaries’.

4.1 Transformation of Operational Space

4.1.1 The Open Door

I mean which country has allowed refugees to work in such a dire economic situation – open the doors to refugees? So there is this recognition that it is ground-breaking. (I16)

Giving refugees access to the formal labour market – “open the doors to refugees” (I16) – was something organisations had been advocating for for a long time, so the JC was welcomed as a positive step forward. As described above, it brought legislative changes allowing Syrian refugees to work in three sectors open to non-nationals and primarily occupied by migrant labour – agriculture, construction and manufacturing (Lenner and Turner 2018). The policy also marked a turning point in the way humanitarian aid was delivered in Jordan. It allowed organisations to engage in “more complex programming, going beyond life saving measures” (I9). The major shift was the possibility to engage in so called ‘livelihood’ programmes, meaning all schemes involving income generating activities for Syrians. These were previously not permitted by the Jordanian government.1 After the JC, the livelihood sector proliferated.

By making development funds available for middle-income countries, the JC also entailed a change in the donor landscape. The EU Commission established the Regional Trust Fund for Syria (Madat fund) which was slowly taking over from the humanitarian donor agency ECHO (I17). Development funds became accessible for refugee assistance and

1They existed before, were however disguised under the label of protection or psycho-social support as they operated in the informal sector (I15)
thereby for humanitarian organisations. Naturally, they welcomed these new funding opportunities and the possibility to engage in longer term programming. “It opened a door for us” was a phrase repeatedly voiced by different participants from INGOs that were established enough and able to receive funding. This was not the case for every humanitarian actor. Indeed, ‘The Shift’ to developmental programming, was not an easy one, and heavily depended on the organisation’s reputation, capacity and crucially, its relationship to donors.

4.1.2 The Difficult Shift

Research participants agreed that organisations needed to engage in development work if they wanted to survive, and that those that “don’t manage to shift”, were forced to close down. As donors’ allocation of funds shifted towards development projects, competition between the organisations increased. Naseer, a Palestinian-Jordanian who had been working in the humanitarian sector since the beginning of ‘the crisis’ in 2011 said:

The problem with organisations is that they can’t do everything […] But everyone will try, because they want to stay and so they apply. If you look at their portfolio they have never done development work, maybe in one country. But they apply as they want to stay, and it’s an organisational culture. So the donors are picky, they look at your portfolio globally and pick the organisations that started the earliest with development.

The competition does not only speak to the humanitarian system being a “marketplace” (Crisp 2009: 76) in which agencies are competing with each other for funds, but also reflects how the type of interventions was mainly decided by donors’ interest. When asked about the difficulties in shifting from humanitarian types of intervention to development, participants often answered that the hardest part was anticipating changing donor interests (I10).

4.1.3 The Closed Door and the Push for Livelihood

While the JC opened the door to unprecedented development programming opportunities, the room for traditional humanitarian assistance such as unconditional cash assistance became increasingly restricted. Kirsten, livelihood manager in one of the bigger INGOs explained that “a huge argument that a lot of people make is that people can
legally work, so they should graduate out of cash assistance” (I15). Hence, the JC was not only a direct response to the dwindling humanitarian funding and refugees’ collective decision to seek opportunities in Europe as discussed in Chapter 2.3. It also helped to increase and justify this cut in humanitarian funding. The new focus on livelihood was born out of agencies’ shrinking capacity to provide cash or in-kind assistance due to this lack (I5).

As humanitarian donors were increasingly retreating, INGOs needed to play after the rules of development donors – unwilling to fund interventions that were seen as ‘emergency measures’ such as direct cash assistance. “Always [it is the] donors who push for livelihood”, said Naseer and stated that call for proposals were now all focussed on long-term interventions (I4). When asked if this shift was a reflection of the assessed needs, Naseer said:

No, no, I mean this is not the good way now, this is how the sector works: One donor starts advocating for something then the other donors start doing the same, then you see donors pushing towards one thing and then you see the organisations running behind the donors. And then we leave a gap somewhere. And then after two years there comes something new – it’s about trends when donors say “do this don’t do that”. Now we have a trend that they want tech, every programming including tech.. tamam, but [...] And then you have to do it. It’s nice, it’s a cool idea, it works for some groups but come on, we have other groups my friend, they don’t have tech, they don’t have food! So what I am saying these are the disadvantages, like there are gaps, like UNHCR is now struggling to find funding to give out cash for refugees needing to buy gas and cloths for winter because everything is focused on long-term planning.

Rather than a pure change in the quantity of funds, the more significant change seemed to have been a qualitative one: donors’ understandings of what type of help seemed appropriate. As a result, among the twelve different sectors for which donor support was pledged under the JRP, money was unevenly distributed. A figure presented by MoPIC during a round table discussion among policy makers in October 2018 shows that the livelihood sector was the only one being ‘overfunded’ by 149%, while social protection, for which much more support was needed, remained underfinanced with only 24% of the requested money received (Hendow 2019: 46). While this represented the GoJ’s estimation of needed support, it shows how donors’ focus on employment related funding did not necessarily reflect the needs as assessed by local actors on the ground.
It did, however, reflect European states’ assumption that jobs would discourage Syrians from onward migration (I17), hence their specific interest in this type of assistance.

The opening of the labour market to Syrian refugees not only led to donors cutting humanitarian assistance. Restrictions to Syrians’ access to public welfare followed as well. At the beginning of the crisis, refugees enjoyed free medical care in Jordanian hospitals, public spending that was later reduced to a subsidy of 80 percent (see Chapter 2.3.3). In January 2018, the GoJ further reduced the subsidy to 20 percent, a decision that was seen as “the single most impactful policy change affecting refugee vulnerability and coping mechanisms since the start of the crisis” (IRC 2018: 8). Thanks to a 22.5 million Dollar trust fund from the United States, Denmark and Canada, aimed at helping the Ministry of Health cover costs (UNHCR 2019b), the decision could be reversed in April 2019. It shows how Jordan used refugee policies as leverage in international negotiations, threatening to retract services in order to receive aid (see Kelberer 2017). It also demonstrates how the JC led to Syrians’ differential inclusion in the Jordanian society – while being allowed partial access to the labour market, refugees became increasingly excluded from the public welfare system.
Another factor that influenced the developmentalisation of humanitarian space was the reopening of the Nasseer-Jaber border crossing with Syria on October 15, 2018. Jordan had closed the crossing, which served as an important commercial link in Jordan’s regional trade, in 2015, after rebel groups had taken control of the area. In summer 2018, the Syrian government regained the area with the help of Russian air strikes. Jordan celebrated the reopening of the border, as cross-border trade represented a source of employment for many drivers and merchants who piled up with cars and trucks in front of the crossing in the days following the opening (Sweis and Hubbard 2018; Ghazal 2018). The event reflected increasing diplomatic relations between Syria and Jordan as well as the gradual instauration of the Syrian regime under Assad in the region.² It also enhanced international expectations about refugees’ return to Syria.

However, in the months following the opening, the return of Syrians remained minimal³, most border crossers were Jordanians shopping for cheap food – as one research participant commented: “It is as if the international sanctions had been applied on Jordan, not on Syria” (I8). Many observers and human rights organisations emphasised that Syria was still not safe, reporting cases of returnees being killed or having disappeared (HRW 2019). A spokesperson of the JIF, through which organisations channelled their advocacy, said:

> What we are trying to fight against is this normalisation that is currently going on, the argument that there is no crisis any more, that the war is over […] There are still a lot of Syrians with humanitarian needs that are not met by anyone! (I16)

While the border opening did not have major impacts on the work of organisations according to all research participants, “it got people talking”, as one of them put it. Everyone wanted to be prepared, wanted to anticipate changing donor interests and programming priorities that were expected to shift towards funding reconstruction inside Syria (I4, I10). One stated: “Once you feel the border is open again, they are not forced migrants any more. That’s why donors will ask you ‘why should I donate you?’ ” (I11). Another added: “There is almost an over-anticipation that refugees will return” (I22).⁴

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² Other examples are discussions about the re-admission of Syria back into the Arab League after it had been ousted in 2011, and the re-openings of several embassies in Damascus (Reuters 2019).

³ Only 15,000 of the more than 600,000 registered with UNHCR were reported to have returned by April 2019 (Spangler 2019).

⁴ During a conference on the topic of refugees and the urban, one United Nations Human Settlements...
The perception that donors wanted to encourage refugees' return to Syria by reducing their funding was widely shared among research participants. Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Mary Kawar reportedly stated in front of the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos Stylianides, that Jordan would not encourage returns to Syria still perceived as unsafe (JordanTimes 2018b). The minister emphasised the international community’s responsibility to uphold their funding, while on other occasions urging them to refocus their funding on the RES pillar of the JRP (JordanTimes 2018a). Noor, who worked on the implementation of the JC for MoPIC however contested this official discourse:

It was expected that with time the humanitarian funding will go down, especially with the stabilisation in Syria, because the problem now is solved. They need no more to provide aid, because it’s no crisis any more. Syrians choose to stay here in Jordan, so with time it is expected it will be decreasing over time more and more. (I25)

This reflects a depoliticisation of refugees in Jordan, reducing their flight to a reaction to fightings inside Syria. It belies the fact that many were political refugees, not having fled from bombs but from persecution or military conscription by the regime that was still in power.

4.2 Increased Government Control over operational space

4.2.1 Getting project approval: JORIS

In order to implement a programme, INGOs needed to submit their project proposals to MoPIC through the online Information System for Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis (JORIS). The proposal needed to include details such as budget, involved stakeholders and number of intended beneficiaries. It first required approval by the lead Ministry responsible for the area of the project (such as education, health or labour). It then went to a bi-monthly meeting between different ministries and finally had to be signed by the Prime Minister (I10). For organisations, this process was the most crucial part of their relationship to the GoJ, unable to operate as long as they did not

Programme (UNHABITAT) employee asked a question related to the agency’s current ‘discussions’ about the future of Zaatari camp, once all Syrians would have left. I remember being struck by that comment that seemed so untimely and non-realistic. (Fieldnotes, 4.11.2018)
receive approval. Since the beginning of the crisis, the procedure has been arduous for organisations, slowing down the pace of interventions meant to be an emergency response. It could take up to over one year until the GoJ approved a project (I23). Donor money was “basically stuck in ministries” (I16) – sometimes due to mistakes NGOs made in their proposal. More often the reason was perceived to be ministers or managers unwillingness to sign because of “very creative reasons” (I16). Sometimes, NGOs were asked to pay ministry staff salaries or equipment. Organisations also saw themselves pushed to fund infrastructural projects, while soft components like trainings were more often rejected. “But basically no NGO has funding to build a school here in Jordan”, described Marie the dilemma (I16).

Participants agreed that throughout 2018, scrutiny from the side of the GoJ over projects had increased. Projects were examined more closely regarding their budget and intended beneficiaries. While some argued that this improved the interventions and reduced redundancy among projects (I15), some saw the goals of the government as running counter humanitarians’ aim of helping Syrians in the best way.

> What the government is doing is they are playing the game by blocking you with your money for six months, for nine months. You will just resist, resist, resist – “no, no, no, no, no, I want 50% Syrians and 50% Jordanians” but after nine months or a year you and your donor will just be sick of it, you will just say “okay whatever the government wants, the government wants 75% Jordanians, 25% Syrians beneficiaries, okay, let’s do it”. (I4)

### 4.2.2 Increased Relationship between INGOs and the State

Going beyond project approval as the only form of interaction, humanitarian organisations started collaborating more closely with the government, for example sign MoUs with specific ministries. How to deal with this increased relationship with the government was contested. Some saw it as part of INGOs mandate to ‘build capacity’. They liked to see people from government or intelligence observing activities as a “kind of engagement, showing that we are not here to destroy your system, we are here to support it” (I14). Others were wary of the presumed loss of independence through an increased cooperation with the state (I14). Interestingly, the necessity to perform according to donors interests and regulations has never been mentioned as a concern for losing independence.\(^5\)

\(^5\)I thank Cybele Atme for pointing this out when reviewing this chapter
Maintaining good government relations became a crucial part of organisations’ work, especially when projects were stuck in the approval process. Their importance went beyond project approval for interventions in Jordan. As many larger INGOs did not only have their national office in Amman, but an additional regional one, maintaining Jordan as their operational space was crucial in a region where international aid actors faced increasing hostility by host governments (I18). While many described their relation to the government as difficult, James from NRC said the GoJ was “probably the easiest I’ve ever worked with” (I18). This good relationship was the result of the organisation’s size and capacity to invest in it:

We have a person within the Ministry of Labour and he is fantastic, he is very supportive, we have invested a lot of time and money in our relationship with the MoPIC and we have very little problems with approving our programmes and moving along and pushing our agenda. (I18)

The crucial government relation was therefore also a question of an organisation’s capacity: INGOs often employed one person solely to go “back and forth the ministries” (I16). While this was manageable for big INGOs like NRC, it posed severe problems for smaller ones without as much resources.

4.3 Transformation of Geography and Target population

4.3.1 From Camp to ‘Host Community’

While the previous section discussed changes to operational spaces of humanitarian actors, I now turn to the spatial repercussions of the shift to development. As Ameera, a Jordanian aid worker whose organisation ended her contract in Azraq camp at the end of 2018 and offered her a lower paid job in Irbid afterwards, described:

There is a trend now to host community. For example Save the Children, they tended to be very big in the camps, now they are very small. And they focus more on host communities, and the fund is very low, also the salaries, there is a huge difference between the past and the present. (I3)

With 85% of the refugee population living outside of camps, there have been ongoing calls for a shift in focus towards an urban refugee assistance strategy (Kelberer 2016). A
critical assessment of the refugee response’s early years found that risk aversion of NGOs led to populations receiving assistance “in large part based on how easy they were to target and reach” (Healy and Tiller 2014: 17). Hence, “needs in Zaatari were over-covered, while urban refugees received considerably less despite their greater vulnerability” (Healy and Tiller 2014: 18). The shift in funding from humanitarian towards development, however, managed to refocus the attention on host communities for livelihood interventions. This was due to the government’s attempt to limit humanitarian interventions to camp settings, requiring all development projects to take place in ‘host communities’. Getting approval for livelihood projects inside of camps became arduous, as security approvals from the GoJ were needed and often declined. “In host communities even with all the regulation at least you can breathe”, said Naseer.“This is why I think organisations are more excited to do programming, livelihood or business programming, outside, not in camps” (I4).

Livelihood projects in host communities were also preferred because they allowed to engage in longer term projects, as development funds had a bigger time span than humanitarian ones. Elisa from ACF talked about the difference in interventions between camps, where all projects were funded by humanitarian donors like United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the developmental programmes in urban areas that were financed by development donors or implementing agencies, such as GIZ.

For us linking the humanitarian and development approach allows us in Irbid to have more long-term projects and more stability as well. ACF has one project in Irbid and in Azraq. In Azraq it is only humanitarian, only short-term contracts, so now all the programmes are finishing at the end of the year, now they are trying to find funds. Because the problem is without funding we have to lay off our staff, and then we have to recruit again[...] So in Irbid it’s more stable, projects of two years, three years, the shortest is one year. So it allows us to build more with the team and do more quality, so it’s good for the organisation, for the staff and for the projects as well. (I10)

As such, engaging in development did not only enhance the duration of programmes, but also the stability of organisations themselves. The same applied to the change in beneficiaries, as organisations started increasingly working with Jordanians.
4.3.2 From Syrians only to ‘the vulnerable’

Most INGOs came to Jordan during the Syrian war in order to assist only Syrian refugees. As part of the shift towards development, all of them started serving Jordanians as well (I11). This was mainly due to the way humanitarian and development type of interventions were divided in the JRP: Humanitarian interventions were assigned to REF and targeted a proportion of 70% Syrians and 30% Jordanians (or more Syrians in camps). Developmental projects – under which all livelihood projects fell – were assigned to RES and had to include 70% Jordanians versus 30% Syrians (I15). This division “has never been written down” but was “kind of an ongoing understanding when applying for projects” (I15). The quotas were also up for negotiation: “Because a lot of people have committed to a higher percentage of Syrians [to their donors], the GoJ is sometimes flexible with a 50/50 quota for a resilience project” (I15). To fulfil this quota, INGOs selected Syrians who scored the most ‘vulnerable’ on the standardised VAF, and Jordanians based on lists taken from the government’s poverty targeting system (Barbelet and Wake 2017). The lists were often outdated, so that organisation needed to embark on “a search for beneficiaries” (I12).

With the growing RES pillar, increasing numbers of Jordanians benefited from interventions. Emphasising the need for more funding of resilience projects, Dina from MoPIC said that the Ministry also wanted humanitarian projects falling under social protection, food security or Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), to include “vulnerable Jordanians” (I20). That increasing Jordanian beneficiaries was an explicit interest of the GoJ went mainly uncontested by humanitarians. Most agreed with the need to equally support poor nationals in order to fight social tensions. Another reason for welcoming this change in beneficiaries seemed to be that working with Jordanians increased organisations’ stability in a volatile geopolitical climate. Many INGOs reported facing difficulties in engaging Syrians in any kind of livelihood programme, due to the rumours of return and the growing insecurity among the population. Others also reported how employment programmes were more difficult to implement for Syrians, as employers seemed reluctant to hire them – assuming they could leave Jordan at any moment (I14). Farah from Ox-fam said that most of her organisation’s programmes were now resilience programmes, meaning that they were engaging with more Jordanians and less Syrians. As such, the organisation faced less difficulties in reaching their ‘targets’ than INGOs that focussed more on Syrians.
The Social Cohesion Narrative

Describing her organisation’s livelihood programmes, Jenan from WV referred to public protests in Amman in June 2018, where citizens demonstrated against a government reform aimed at increasing income taxes. She argued that as Jordanians were seeing their living standards deteriorating due to the presence of Syrians, organisations should step up their livelihood programmes—"because of the competition and the tension in the market, the social cohesion and so on. This is a big problem, we don’t want to increase the tension" (I23). Enhancing ‘social cohesion’ has emerged as one of the rationales, both aim and justification for livelihood programming. Jenan also saw the government’s request for a greater share of Jordanian beneficiaries as a direct answer to increased tensions among the population. Indeed, the social cohesion narrative was also deployed at the highest level: At the yearly donor conference in Brussels in March 2019, Jordan’s foreign minister Ayman Safadi stated that the situation due to the competition over resources and jobs was “alarming”, and hence donor fatigue could not be an option (Wintour 2019). The competition, as argued by many research participants, was due to Syrians’ “willingness” to work – informally – for lower salaries. This judgement however belies the fact that this “willingness” was politically constructed. Monthly minimum wages in Jordan were significantly lower for foreign workers than for Jordanians – 150JDs compared to 220JDs (I22). As such, even if Syrians were hired formally and paid minimum wages, employers would still be incentivised to prefer Syrians.

Arguably, part of developmentalising humanitarian space was the merging of refugee and national population into one category of ‘the vulnerable’ in need of assistance. While the reasons for broadening the scope of beneficiaries might make sense in order to fight jealousy among neighbours, it also obscured the crucial differences in their sources of vulnerability. Specifically, it eliminated Syrians’ lack of fundamental rights and the limitations placed on their engagement in the labour market. As such, it depoliticised refugees’ predicament, and undermined their right to humanitarian assistance based on their refugee status. Discursively creating Jordanians’ unemployment and suffering as a consequence of the crisis belies the fact that it had been a structural issue long before the Syrian war (Luck 2016). Emad, a former employee of MoPIC who witnessed the JC negotiations, argued that the GoJ’s use of a – soon to be reached – “threshold of social cohesion” was “a card, that the government plays”, knowing donors’ high interest in Jordan’s stability. “It is like Turkey’s threat of ‘opening the border’, and Lebanon’s

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6 See Mourad (2016) on the same dynamic in Lebanon
‘sending ships to Greece’”, he argued. He went on:

Although Jordan has been receiving refugees for over 100 years and we never did anything bad to our refugees, so why do you say this? This hurts me as a Jordanian. If you ask for money at least do it with pride, say “this is the situation, we need your support”(I8).

Emad disputed the claim that Syrians were taking away jobs of Jordanians, whose widespread unwillingness to engage in blue-collar work due to a “culture of shame” was seen as a general issue in Jordan’s economy (MoPIC 2015). Supporting this claim, several studies indicate that the influx of Syrians, while crowding out other migrant workers, did not increase unemployment among Jordanians (Stave et al. 2015; Hartnett 2018).

4.4 Conclusion

Humanitarian space is the operational zone created in order to allow survival (Feldman 2018). In its ideal form, it ensures helpers’ access to the population in need and their capacity to deliver life saving services (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010). This chapter has argued that the JC led to a developmentalisation of humanitarian space in Jordan, changing organisations’ operational space, their relationship to the GoJ, the geographic settings in which interventions take place as well as their target populations. The opening of the labour market for Syrian refugees allowed donors to justify an increased cut in humanitarian funding, enhanced by the geopolitical dynamics of decreased fightings inside Syria and the reopening of the border.

With the cut in humanitarian funding, INGOs were presented with the choice of leaving, or downsizing their humanitarian interventions while increasing developmental programming. As scholars of development have argued, “interventions are not driven by official policy, but by the exigencies of organisations and the need to maintain relationships” (Mosse 2005: 103). The need to keep good relationships with donors in order to secure funding led organisations to increasingly engage in livelihood programming as an alternative to cash assistance. This focus primarily originated from a change in donor interests, not necessarily reflecting the assessed needs of the Syrian refugee population. As such, while operational space expanded due to the possibility to engage in different types of programming, the ability for humanitarians to assist especially vulnerable Syrians has been reduced.
The need for good relationships with the GoJ also gained importance, as the shift towards development resulted in increased state control over programmes. This was seen ambivalently, and as a risk to humanitarians’ neutrality and independence which they aimed at maintaining even in the developmental context. The increased government control, exerted through project approval procedures, primarily aimed at limiting humanitarian interventions to camp spaces and enhance development programming in ‘host communities’. Due to the structure of the JRP, more interventions thus took place outside of camps, including a majority of Jordanian beneficiaries. This was justified by the aim to enhance ‘social cohesion’ among the refugee and the local population, thereby condensing both groups into one category of ‘the vulnerable’ in need of assistance.
Chapter 5

Brokering Development

As the previous chapter described, aid organisations increasingly tried to provide Syrian refugees with employment. These efforts became ever more important as the JC’s idea that refugees would integrate ‘naturally’ into the garment industry of the country had been wrong. Indeed, “making refugees work” (Lenner and Turner 2018) turned out to be a difficult task – one that was taken on by international aid organisations. This chapter takes an ‘arena perspective’ (Hilhorst 2018) to humanitarian space, focusing on how different actors developed their own understanding and strategies around integrating Syrians into the economy. These understandings were “as much mediated by the mandates of their organizations, their assessments of needs and their context analysis as by their expectations and motivations or frustrations, and the organizational culture they develop accordingly” (Walkup 1997, cited in (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010: 1122). Hence, I first focus on how humanitarians defined their role in this policy environment shifting increasingly towards development. I analyse how they performed their humanitarian identity strategically to justify initial failures of interventions and how they negotiated access to this developmentalised space by downplaying differences between humanitarianism and development. I then describe how humanitarians situated themselves as brokers between employers and refugee workers, capitalising on their beneficial access to the latter. Parallel to these brokering practices project managers acted as translators between the different “interfaces” (Lewis and Mosse 2006: 10) of the business and humanitarian domain. As such, diverging and contested interpretations of how to cooperate with the private sector emerged.
5.1 Searching for a Place on the Humanitarian-Development Nexus

5.1.1 “We are Facilitators”

Humanitarian organisations struggled to find their role in the humanitarian arena that was more and more shifting towards development agendas. “We are all talking about this at the moment, and I can tell you, we don’t know”, said Marie from the JIF (I19). Hugo from NRC said that organisations were wary of engaging in developmental work, as “the responsibility to development falls on the state, it’s their responsibility, not on humanitarians” (I9). A recurrent theme was the role of the ‘facilitator’ as the favoured position for humanitarians. Bearing resemblance to aid workers’ view of their role in other development schemes (Mosse 2011), being a facilitator should prevent humanitarians’ ‘mission creep’ (Barnett 2011) into the realm of development, seen as the responsibility of the state. Translated to the livelihood domain, humanitarians did not want to be seen as responsible for job creation.

5.1.2 Investors against their will

Maintaining this delicate balance was difficult, if not impossible. Engaging in livelihood programming necessarily meant a change in how humanitarians organisations’ role was perceived. Many livelihood managers reported beneficiaries’ reluctance to engage in yet another vocational training, instead requesting to receive a job instantly. The lengthy training process “can become a big problem because they are in need, they need money, and they need a permanent job, with a good amount of money just to let them feel secure”, said Jenan (I23). Syrians did not see the benefits of a training without guarantee of following employment, and organisations needed to incentivise their participation by transport and food allowances (I23, I14). But not only beneficiaries started seeing INGOs as responsible for providing jobs, government officials did, too. Farah from Oxfam remembered meetings with local governors in several regions: “All agreed to something. That we don’t need INGOs to come and train people” (I14). The governor of Tafila for instance welcomed her plans for interventions, but said “we need you to come and invest in the infrastructure, start a business, start a factory, create jobs. We don’t need more training. Because we’ve been training youth for so long, but this hasn’t been translated into a practice, a job opportunity” that would allow youth to make a living. Farah an-
answered him, saying that “Me as Farah, personally, I believe in all of the things that you say. I don’t have five Million to invest in Karak and start a business here. I think this is the responsibility of the government” (I14).

According to her, the GoJ should know how to respond to local economic needs and go beyond asking for international support. “So far I don’t see that. And I don’t think that the government is willing to support that change”. Instead, “everyone tells us ‘come and invest’”, she said (I14). Farah argued that it was not the responsibility of INGOs and that people “misunderstand our role, misinterpret what kind of interventions we can do”. She also attributed this to the massive presence of INGOs resulting from ‘the crisis’: “People are a bit confused with the work we are doing” (I14). She saw the overestimation of INGOs’ role and influence also reflected in their popularity among Jordanian youth – who now aspired to work in the aid sector, because of its high salaries and benefits.

Some organisations, however, did invest in job creation. Part of MC’s employment programming that I explain more in the following was supporting sharing economy platforms in order to expand and create jobs. However, the limited budget that INGOs had determined the type of sectors they could invest in, and made the sharing economy the only option. Investing in job platforms where employees worked as freelancers and where employers had no responsibility of covering social security meant that job creation was affordable enough for INGOs to implement.

5.1.3 Justifying Failure and Creating a Springboard

As the JC envisioned large scale employment of Syrians in Jordan’s garment industry, many INGOs initially tried to support this plan by providing transportation to the SEZs, or by establishing child care facilities. These technicalities, the lack of public transportation and missing options for child care were thereby constructed as the main reasons for Syrians, especially women, not to work in factories. The bigger political problems – such as poor working conditions and minimal pay – were ‘rendered technical’ (Li 2007), amenable to functional interventions. Explanations of these earlier projects’ failures revealed a similar technical view: Naseer reasoned that the failure to integrate Syrians sustainably into the Jordanian economy was partly due to the inability of humanitarians to engage with ‘the business reality’.

I would say we failed without having the business side and it’s good to say we failed and let’s move on […] I mean we are not business, we are humanitarian,
and not having the business approach it was difficult for us to get it. (I4)

Hugo said that humanitarians and developmentalists were “two different worlds”, the former often social scientists who had “a certain way of thinking” and who were not used to working inside of political structures. Developmentalists, on the other hand, engaged in “a much more politically heavy process” (I9). As such, humanitarian organisations were trying “to fill that gap” of development knowledge by hiring people with a background in economics.

Although acknowledging that the realm of employment belonged to the development ‘interface’, humanitarians still wanted to secure their role in it. Many livelihood manager tried to “tone down the humanitarian-development divide”, as James from NRC put it. According to him it was a “grey area”, and rather than leaving employment programming to development actors, humanitarians should “partner up” with them (I18). They should be the ones who “create that space so that all actors can join in and then development actors can take over”, said James. “But we are creating that space because we have so much access. NRC has been here for the last eight years, we are massive, we are creating at least a springboard for any of the development actors that want to come here” (I18).

As has been observed in other contexts (Sandvik 2016), humanitarians capitalised on their access to Syrians in order to negotiate their engagement in the developmentalised space. The next section shows how they thus went beyond ‘creating a springboard’ for development actors and situated themselves as brokers between employers and a potential Syrian work force. This required translating the project’s goal to employers. Establishing a basis on which this translation could take place presented a first problem.

5.2 “Job Matching”: Brokering Jobs for Syrians

5.2.1 Getting Employers “on Board”

Engaging with the private sector as a new actor in the humanitarian arena was a difficult task. Humanitarian organisations had no established relations with employers, operating for many years without much contact (Zyck and Armstrong 2014). Hence, project managers with a background in development or business were hired in order to achieve this organisational change. James, who was hired to lead NRC’s livelihood programming after the JC, recounted how, after a long process of redesigning their traditional programming,
his team had “developed a model for employment provision which sets away from just providing training like employability, cv writing training [etc.] which is the traditional humanitarian stuff” (I18). As such, they were now “doing higher assessments of labour market needs within the private sector”, thus “forming partnerships” with employers. This was not easy. “The employers, I remember it was so difficult to get the employers on board. They were asking what were the benefits for them?” (I4), remembered Naseer. Participants reported employers being frustrated from the work of INGOs, they are overwhelmed by the different initiatives, different interventions and trainings that they were receiving so far. They believe deep inside that these different interventions, this donor money is not supporting let’s say the actual needs of the private sector. (I14)

James added that among employers “NGOs don’t really have a good reputation, neither does the UN” (I18). According to him, employers saw organisations as being only temporarily in Jordan and as not really interested in a serious and long-lasting partnership with the private sector. Hence, project managers’ main task was convincing employers to engage in their activities, to “read the meaning of a project into the […] institutional languages” of employers, “constantly creating interest and making real” (Mosse 2005: 9). The institutional language – “the actual needs of the private sector” (I14) – was that of profit. As James put it, it is “really about developing more professional relationships with people and showcasing added value, and of course we are a market based program, we want to make business cases” (I18).

### 5.2.2 “You have to make the Business Case”

In the early period after the JC, organisations tried to incentivise employers in the factories to hire Syrians by placing them as interns for several months and paying half of their salary. The idea was that after these three to six months “at least [the person] is in the market and has some experience and then you can help connect her more with other employers as well” (I4). This practice was heavily criticised by many research participants working on employment programming, reflecting the contested interpretations of what ‘private sector engagement’ means. “There is no such thing as internships in the Jordanian labour market” (I21), stated one participant. James added that the simplified labour in the factories did not require training, so that people were “put to work the first day” (I18). Paying wage subsidies for several months then led to Syrians being employed for the time
of the internship, and no longer. “So you’re basically paying for the labour, but you’re not actively engaging” (I18). According to James, these practices set precedents in the industrial zones where employers started expecting to being paid by NGOs for employing Syrians. Employers quickly grasped the way programme success was produced, and that organisations had to mainly report back to their donors the numbers of people placed into jobs. As a result, “they were like ‘Ok we’ll take your beneficiaries, and you can tick your boxes to your donor, and we got free labour. But don’t monitor. And this was what a lot of agencies did when they first got here for sure. So again, that’s not private sector engagement, that’s not a market based approach”, argued James. What he instead understood under a good private sector engagement was “a highly selective process of filtering out people” (I18).

5.2.3 "Screening fashion"

In order to reach job placements for Syrians, both employers and workers needed to be “screened” to make sure both parties were really interested. Finding willing employers was particularly difficult, said James. “We’ve interviewed and screened 250 employers and we work with ten, you know. Because that’s what the market is, you have to come to that reality” (I18). Employers were selected according to their capacity and willingness to give work permits to Syrians, businesses also needed to operate in the sectors open to them. When it came to “screening” Syrian workers, INGOs faced difficulties due to the structural lack of hr mechanisms in a country dominated by small and medium enterprises where nepotism decided over hiring processes (Tobin and Alahmed 2019). While it was difficult for organisations to find staff with experience in selecting and hiring workers, employers’ lack of hr expertise was then a gap INGOs could fill. James described the condition for their partnership with employers as “they need to need to hire people. They need to have a gap in their hr system, where they can’t find people, if they can already find people then they don’t need us” (I18). If the former was the case, NRC then selected suitable workers for the company. “We do tons of screening”, said James, as Syrians often showed interest in the beginning but would later not show up for the work, increasing employers’ suspicions of working with INGOs. Hence, the interview process was highly elaborate: “We go out and screen people in three steps. It’s the same thing, we call 1000, 50 will show up, and we filter out two, in three days” (I18). At the end of a selection

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1As Jordan 2025, the national development strategy published by MoPIC in 2015, reads: “Typical labour market mechanisms that exist in healthy and productive economies are largely absent or dysfunctional in Jordan – being replaced instead by non-institutional job hunting methods” (MoPIC 2015)
process of up to six days, James said they eventually found people of whom he knew “the need the job” and would not drop out. The latter was a main issue, said James, “there is very quick matching and incredibly quick drop out” (I18). This problem were attributed to the poor working conditions in the open sectors, all characterised by informality, high working hours and minimal pay (I18, I22).

As the programme’s goal was retention of workers and not sole placement into jobs, James’ team would follow up with workers and employers regularly. “Not leaving the employers behind” (I18) became crucial, as he aimed at changing the perception that INGOs only cared about placing Syrians in order to ‘check boxes’ for their donors. “And that’s a HUGE shift. Even though the placements is still up and down” (I18), establishing good relations with employers was more important. “It makes things easier. And then we can push more for protection, the work rights policy that we want because we are showcasing added value” (I18). As such, decent work conditions were not seen as an inherent right of workers, something employers need to comply with or that should be improved by law. They were seen as a successful outcome of INGOs’ persuasion and employers good will – provided that this outcome performed to neoliberal logics of ‘added value’:

We want to provide a lot of information management services to employers […] because that’s really lacking, employee feedback, drop-out feedback, measuring costs associated with drop outs […] showcasing “this is how much this is costing you, you might wanna consider raising your minimum wage 20 JD. So we’re trying to get more information to use as advocacy, but not towards the government, but towards the employers. (I18)

5.3 Translating Business to Humanitarians

Another act of translation (Lewis and Mosse 2006) was that between humanitarian NGOs and the private sector. Most research participants who were recently hired as livelihood managers or policy advisers mentioned their background in economics, either as part of their education or former work, as important to their ability to reach out to ‘the other world’. Kemal, who was introduced to me by Naseer as the person who

is now leading the whole revolution. I always call it the humanitarian business programming revolution. He is the guy, he is coming from a very strong
business background, he is now trying to give the humanitarian community the taste for the work, more in the business reality. (I4)

When meeting Kemal in MC’s office in Amman’s up-scale neighbourhood Shmeisani, he explained his current project, an “impact lab” aimed at integrating Syrian and Jordanian youth into the sharing economy. MC selected companies that owned online platforms connecting service providers such as plumbers, hair dressers or house maintenance workers with clients. MC would then support them financially to grow and thereby absorb more freelance workers. In response to the question if this programme was targeting Syrians, Kemal said they worked with companies operating in the sectors open for Syrian workers, but would not enforce any regulation on them.

One thing we are trying to be cautious about – when you do an intervention around businesses and the private sector you need to be very careful when you tell companies what to do […] What we are cautious about is telling companies to focus more on Syrians just because we need to do so, not because it fits their business model or business profile. (I13)

According to Kemal, most of the employers wanted Syrians to work for them, trusting their skills and “work ethics”.2 However, they needed to be flexible when it came to their staff:

They need to be fluid enough to move with the flow, always responding on time to what the market requests from them. Having a rigid mentality of where they say we need to be reaching a target of 30%, this works for us as NGOs but that doesn’t work for private sector […] If the best decision at this point is to hire a Jordanian, or an Egyptian or a South-Asian employee, you need to take the decision that fits this position […] But if you decide to hire a Syrian because a NGO that is giving you a grant is asking you to do so, you are ruining your business which should not happen.

While this statement might adequately reflect employers’ preference for more easily exploitable workers (see Lenner and Turner 2018), it belies the fact that the Jordanian

2In their study on exploitation and corruption among Syrian employment in Jordan, Tobin and Alahmed (2019) argue that among Jordanians, there was a “widespread perceptions that Syrians are harder workers than Jordanians, will take lower wages than Egyptians, are ‘naturally’ good at working with their hands, and are better entrepreneurs. These culturally laden perceptions serve to normalise the idea that Syrians can, should be, and will be abused in their employment, and that this is an expected and anticipated occurrence” (Tobin and Alahmed 2019: 35).
economy has traditionally been characterised by quotas and restrictions. High-skilled sectors are closed for non-nationals and Jordanians with Palestinian origin are excluded from public sector jobs. There are gender restrictions in sectors seen as too hazardous for women. Garment and other companies operating inside the SEZs are required to hire a quota of 30% Jordanians (Tobin and Alahmed 2019). In addition, in 2017 MoPIC issued the so called National Empowerment and Employment Programme (NEEP), requesting employers to decrease their foreign work force in order to enhance Jordanian employment in sectors typically occupied by migrant workers. As this gave rise to concern over Syrians losing their job, MoPIC excluded Syrians from the category of foreign workers – however, only for the short-term (Tobin and Alahmed 2019). Thus, rather than describing the realities of the Jordanian labour market, Kemal’s statement reflects the neoliberal assumption of such ‘demand-driven’ approaches to employment, in which all interventions needed to be subordinated to the logics of the free market economy.

This is not surprising, as the need to maintain good relationships with employers became a high priority. It did, however, lead to exploitative working conditions going uncontested. One livelihood manager explained the difficulties of referring Syrians to employers as “it depends on the beneficiaries, if they are capable to take the job. So this is the problems with the private sector. And this is their right, you cannot force them to employ 20 or 30 people and then they don’t have the capability to do the job” (I24). The responsibility for the failure of the job placements, “the problem with the private sector” was shifted on the worker, not being able “to do the job”. It can, however, be equally read as Syrians’ agency and refusal to accept exploitative working conditions and minimum pay. Making employers responsible for the frequent drop-outs by requiring them to lift the quality of jobs was however largely absent from research participants’ discourses.

5.3.1 The forced Marriage

Still, aid workers were not oblivious to the poor working conditions in the sectors open for Syrians. However, they did not perceive them as an area which are amenable to their interventions. Requiring much more effort and political will going beyond humanitarians capacities, improving working conditions was not part of their programming. As refugees were only allowed to work in these sectors, integrating them sustainably into the economy was thus difficult. These difficulties revealed the main contradiction in the idea of sub-

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3 Manufacturing, construction, agriculture, tourism, services (especially gas stations) and services (especially daycares) (Tobin and Alahmed 2019)
stituting humanitarian assistance with jobs: people who are dependent on humanitarian assistance are mostly not able to engage in low-skilled, physically demanding labour. As one research participant concluded:

Donors want organisations to work with Syrians, to work with the most vulnerable, people with disabilities, and at the same with the private sector. And they leave it to the NGOs to come up with a formula. But what does it mean? It means that you come up with the input components and you make them merge together to make it work. But that does not mean that. . . Basically it is a forced marriage in a lot of times and this is why a lot of projects fail. You might get the targets after all, but that doesn’t mean that it’s sustainable.

(126)

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has approached humanitarian space as a socially negotiated arena and explored the ways in which humanitarian actors negotiated their new role in the domain of refugee employment. Instead of essentialising humanitarian versus developmental identities, I drew attention to the way such identities were performed in order to reach specific goals. Actors strategically employed their humanitarian identity in order to negotiate access to the increasingly developmentalised space in which lucrative funding opportunities were available. While the difference between humanitarianism and development was downplayed by some actors in order to justify engagement in development (cf. Sandvik 2016), others referred to their humanitarian identity in order to explain programme ‘failure’. The humanitarian identity thus became a welcomed excuse to justify and evade responsibility over such failures. While organisations strived to position themselves purely as ‘facilitators’, providing trainings and brokering job placements changed their perception by local actors, increasingly seeing them as responsible for job creation.

With private sector actors entering the humanitarian arena, establishing good relationships with employers became brokers’ first priority. The act of translation, of convincing employers to hire Syrians, followed market rationalities. As such, “making the business case” for hiring refugees involved significant support for businesses. Hilhorst and Jansen (2010) argue that “it is partly in the struggle over language (the ‘real’ humanitarian, the proper rights-framework, the suitable narrative of insecurity) that humanitarian arenas are being shaped” (p. 1136). This chapter has shown how the notion of ‘private sector engagement’ was contested among humanitarians – revealing existing competition between
different brokers in governance arenas. Aid workers envisioned to be ‘stepping back and providing space’, acting as facilitator and crucially, not subsidising employers. These cautions were taken to prevent a mission creep into the realm of development that was assumed to be the state’s responsibility. However, while subsidising labour was frowned upon, subsidising private sectors’ hr department was seen unproblematically.

‘Private sector engagement’ also involved a serious process of selection. Scholars have highlighted humanitarians’ discretionary role to ‘select’ those whom they deem worthy of humanitarian aid (Feldman 2018). In the ‘market based approach’ described in this chapter, this led to a paradox: While all programmes were intended to improve the situations of the ‘most vulnerable’, the sectors open to refugee workers required a certain level of physical capability. At the same time, the low quality of jobs and pay discouraged many refugees to actually stay in these jobs.
Chapter 6

Humanitarianising Development Practice

While the previous two chapters addressed the questions of how the shift towards development affected Jordan’s humanitarian spaces and actors, I now turn to the repercussions for developmental organisations and their practices. While humanitarians aimed to strike a delicate balance between wanting to maintain their operations and – at least officially – avoiding a ‘creep’ into development, developmentalists had even stricter directions. Research participants from UNDP and GIZ stated that, due to their mandate, they could never distribute humanitarian assistance like unconditional cash (I7, I27). One employee of UNDP said the agency “solved” this restriction by focussing on ‘host communities’ under the disguise of enhancing ‘social cohesion’ (I7). This allowed development organisations, traditionally only working with Jordanians, to integrate Syrians into their programming. However, refugees were not included in usual development programming. Instead, whole new interventions were designed, combining developmental and humanitarian rationalities. By taking the case of CfW programmes, funded by Germany and implemented by development as well as humanitarian organisations, this chapter analyses the emergence of such humanitarian-development hybrids and its underlying logics. While I previously tried to outline examples of how the work of humanitarian organisations became developmentalised, I show in this chapter how specific humanitarian logics stayed and influenced emerging development programming. Tracing how the CfW programmes, a traditionally humanitarian type of cash-based intervention, has been taken up by development actors, I demonstrate how the latter strived to “become humanitarian”
6.1 How to do Development for Refugees?

Before the war in Syria, the presence of international development actors in Jordan was minimal (I16, I21). The German development agency GIZ for instance had only a small portfolio consisting of environmental projects. While the agency normally worked with fixed *Strukturprojekten*, “structural projects”, that were developed in bilateral government negotiations and extended to up to 16 years in four year cycles, there were none of those in Jordan prior to the Syrian war. “Jordan was simply not important enough”, said one employee of the agency (I21). As a response to the ‘crisis’, particularly after the large influx of Syrians into Germany in 2015, the government under its development minister Gerd Müller decided to rapidly inflate the agency’s portfolio. Instead of making use of the traditional structural projects, however, a so called *Sonderinitiative Flucht*, “special initiative flight”, was put in place. The German name *Beschäftigungsinitiative* translates into “employment initiative”, while the project goes under “Partnership 4 Prospect” in Jordan – a significant difference, as Andrea, who manages one of these projects, remarked (I27). The different names reveal the ambiguous ‘win-win’ situation that its stakeholders tried to create. For Germany, the focus laid on creating jobs for Syrians, assumingly disincentivising them to seek opportunities in Europe. The English name, while being vague and apolitical, reflects the ambition to also benefit Jordan’s “prospects”. In the brochure of the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Minister Müller is cited:

> We want to give people back their dignity and some scope for them to make their own choices, by enabling them to make a living from their own work again. (BMZ 2018)

Next to photos of smiling Syrian men and women, collecting waste or doing maintenance work, bullet points feature the number of ‘accomplishments’ for the year 2017: a total of 85,000 jobs for refugees was reportedly created for the whole Syrian neighbourhood. In Jordan, waste collection systems presumably resulted in 13 800 jobs, rehabilitation and development of infrastructure in another 1300. That these ‘jobs’ were gigs that ended after 40 days was not mentioned.

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1In Germany, the initiative falls under the larger national agenda of *Fluchtsachenbekämpfung*, “Tackling the root causes of displacement, reintegrating refugees” (giz.de 2017).

As part of its employment promotion initiative, GIZ implemented CfW projects. These interventions, a response to the emergency\(^2\), were quickly designed in 2015, in Germany, and as rapidly rolled-out in early 2016 – not only in Jordan, but also in Lebanon and North Iraq. For Jordan, they became part of national donors’ commitments under the JC to engage in employment creation. They were, as Andrea phrased it, “Germany’s development answer to refugees in the Middle East” (I27). Many CfW programmes were in the waste management sector, where workers were employed to collect and recycle garbage in nine different municipalities in Jordan. The goal was to bring as many people as possible into short-term employment, as a form of transitional aid (Übergangshilfe). The idea was that:

Municipal service jobs in areas such as waste disposal or repair and maintenance of public buildings give beneficiaries an income that is more than simple food aid. Host communities benefit, too: infrastructure projects that employ refugees to improve roads or build sewers translate into lasting improvements for refugees and locals alike. (BMZ 2018)

All CfW programmes in Jordan were funded by the BMZ, GIZ managed five of them and Germany’s development bank Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KFW) another three through UNDP and ILO as implementing partners. Although there were also CfW programmes inside camps, Germany’s focus has been on ‘host communities’ from the beginning (I27). The programmes, having started with two projects in the waste sector, quickly grew. At the time of my research, the CfW sector was much bigger than initially envisioned, and involved also projects improving infrastructure such as dams in areas prone to flooding, or rehabilitations of national parks. The programmes were negotiated between the German and Jordanian government, once or twice a year (I27). Their importance for Jordan was reflected in a special quota that Germany was able to negotiate. While the scheme, livelihood support in host communities, would normally fall under RES in the JRP, requiring a 70% quota of Jordanian beneficiaries, Germany was able to enforce a share of 50/50 (I27). While some of the implementation was done in cooperation with local municipalities, many other programmes were carried out by INGOs. For instance, Oxfam managed a waste collection system in Zaatari Camp, ACF implemented a garbage collection and recycling project in Irbid (I27). As the aim was

\(^2\)To be noted, the emergency of Syrians coming to Germany; not the Syrian refugee situation in Jordan, which was already in its fifth year by then.
to provide work for as many people as possible, workers needed to rotate. They were employed for at least 40 days to up to two to three months, earning a daily wage of twelve to 15 JDs, depending on the job’s skill category (SOP 2019).

Beneficiaries could apply to advertised positions, and were then selected based on their family’s score in the standardised VAF (I10). The agreed upon Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) stated: “Work can be provided for a limited duration (not less than 2 months) and a lottery system can be used to rotate jobs. If necessary participation in the lottery could be limited to priority groups living nearest to the site or most vulnerable” (SOP 2019). This was justified by the shortage of jobs and the over-supply of workers. The inherent tension between targeting the most vulnerable and the need to select capable labourers was acknowledged: “The projects target vulnerable groups, but not the most vulnerable”, said Andrea (I27). As Adams (2007) remarks in her analysis of CfW in another context, the programmes failed to take the needs of ‘labour-poor’ families due to age, disabilities, illnesses and child-care responsibilities into consideration. While these factor reinforce vulnerability, they also significantly lower individual’s capability to engage in physical labour. In a refugee population where a recent study found that “21 per cent of the population report having at least one disability” (UNHCR 2019c: 8), this questions the possibility of substituting humanitarian assistance with low-skill jobs.

Development through humanitarian Modalities

Where CfW could be positioned on the humanitarian-development nexus was contested. “My organisation, and a lot of other organisations do not consider this livelihood. This is an emergency measure, this is not employment” (I12), said Maya who worked for the French organisation Acted, critically viewing CfW as “the German strategy” (I12). CfW’s underlying rationale was humanitarian as the reason for the short-term employment was the assumption that Syrians would soon return to Syria. Eight years into ‘the crisis’ this assumption had long proven wrong. However, openly acknowledging that Syrians might stay for decades to come, similar to other refugee populations like Iraqis and Palestinians, was politically too sensitive. As was repeatedly stated by research participants, talking about “full integration” was “no option” (I6, I15). As such, the shared discourse was that “we don’t know”, thereby justifying CfW’s temporary logic. Linn from UNDP said:

The statistics say that most of refugees stay in their country of first host. But this is also the point, at the moment we don’t know. If for example we would find out that Syrians won’t go back, maybe we would stop doing this
infrastructure rehabilitation kind of work, and engage them more in training, vocational training, for them to be able to stay and work in Jordan. But at this moment we don’t know, so we have to prepare for both. (I7)

As such, CfW’s underlying “idea that they will go back eventually” (I10) persisted, as Elisa who managed a waste collection project in Irbid, stated. “As well rather than offering job opportunities to 100 people and families for six months we prefer to have short-term jobs for more. We prefer to have short-term opportunities but for more people, that’s the logic as well” (I10). This logic had to be defended against local preferences. Andrea said that the cooperation with municipalities was sometimes difficult. “You have to always [...] explain a lot. For the municipality it doesn’t make so much sense to hire people for only three months. It would make more sense to hire people for a longer period” (I27). Andrea would then explain that “this is the project”, that the attempt was to reach as many people as possible, but “explaining this is not easy” (I27). Kirsten from DRC, summed up her understanding of CfW as

I think the CfW programmes ironically have more a developmental objective but the modality is humanitarian. So that’s kind of the first step towards interlinking the two. You use CfW which is considered more of a humanitarian type of intervention in order to achieve more of a developmental goal, which is afforestation or water management control. (I15)

With the 50/50 distribution of beneficiaries, Jordanians were also participating in CfW. As such, this short-term humanitarian emergency measure responded not to emergency needs but to structural development problems – the high level of unemployment in the country.

6.1.2 Graduating Cash Assistance into Development

CfW was not an invention of German development cooperation. It is, as many cash-based interventions, increasingly used in humanitarian contexts (Harvey 2007). Before the JC, CfW had already been deployed in the camps as an alternative to cash assistance. Since the opening of Za’atari in summer 2012, the GoJ, while refusing any labour market access for Syrians, had tolerated CfW schemes in camps, operating “in a legal grey zone” (Turner 2018: 194). As such, these jobs were called ‘incentive-based-volunteering’, because all types of employment that INGOs offered Syrians needed to be disguised as
such, prior to the JC. Refugees were hired by organisations to perform low skilled work such as garbage collection or aid distribution. Refugees were hired for up to 40 days maximum, and remunerated between one and two and a half JDs per hour, depending on the type of labour classified in non-skilled, semi-skilled or skilled. Defined as “a short-term intervention used by humanitarian assistance organizations to provide temporary employment in public projects” (MercyCorps 2007: 2), CfW used to be the only official way through which refugees could earn money in the camp. Based on his research in Zaatari, and citing an unpublished NRC report, Dalal (2015) argues that “the purpose of these programmes, however, is not to increase the income of refugees or promote self-reliance, rather they are ‘jobs required by the organizations to fulfil their role in the camp’” (p. 270).

The expansion of the scheme from camps to ‘host communities’ reflects the notion of the former as “laboratories of social transformation” (Fresia and von Kanel 2016: 251, cited in Oesch 2017: 112) where new humanitarian blueprints are tested before being rolled-out on a national scale. It was also an example of how employment programming that operated in the informal sphere was graduated into the formal economy under the JC. Witnessing the slow uptake of work permits in the months following the formalisation of Syrian labour, the GoJ decided in 2018 to issue short-term work permits in order “to allow them to work formally” in CfW projects, as UNHCR put it (I5). As such, these jobs were contributing to the JC’s target of distributing 200,000 work permits to Syrians. After this decision, CfW needed to be aligned with the national Labour Law and global decent work practice (SOP 2019). The SOPs, developed in early 2019, stated that their application “will aid the ongoing shift from emergency cash-based activities towards more employment-based (EB) approaches” (SOP 2019: 5). It furthermore reads:

In Jordan the term cash-for-work has been widely applied by donors and agencies in the livelihood response to the Syrian refugee crisis. However, if the main principles agreed during the SOP preparatory period are applied or are already being applied, then it is evident that CFW activities are already evolving into a longer term EB approach and the difference between the two approaches (in Jordan) is mainly one of terminology. (SOP 2019: 5)

3While it changed for CfW, this practice was still common when NGOs hired Syrians as their staff, since the aid sector remained closed for refugees (I4). Ameera reported that due to the cut in humanitarian funding throughout 2018, organisations increasingly substituted Jordanian aid workers in the camps by much cheaper Syrian ‘volunteers’ (I3)

4Organisations working on the guidelines were ILO, GIZ, WFP, ACTED, DRC, CARITAS, UN WOMEN and UNHCR (SOP 2019: 5).
This reflects the attempt to showcase a type of humanitarian assistance as a development intervention, comparable to employment intensive infrastructure projects used to increase employment in settings of structural unemployment. As such, it did not go uncontested by everyone.

6.1.3 Being stuck

As Farah from Oxfam, who strongly performed her expertise in development cooperation and took issue with the “mind-set” of many humanitarian co-workers in her organisation, stated:

We don’t do CfW outside the camps. For me as Farah, I believe that CfW as job opportunities is a transitional period. You cannot continue working in this approach. For me the CfW approach destroys and distorts the labour market here in Jordan and expanded the level of informality within existing labour market, and it’s an issue actually. (I14)

According to her, most organisations had thought that CfW would only be needed for a short period. “When you start a cycle of support for a population affected by crisis”, she said while drawing a circle on the table,

you start with what, humanitarian assistance, right? And then you shift to CfW opportunities as a transition, you train, you build their capacities, and then you secure job opportunities, long-term. So it’s part of a cycle. But the cycle stopped at the CfW opportunities, it didn’t extend in a way that reflected the needs of the labour market. (I14)

Due to a failure to engage with the private sector ahead of time, refugees were not trained in the skills that the labour market demanded, said Farah. In addition, refugees largely did not accept the low-skill jobs in garment production that were the only ones available for them.

And this is why the government actually started issuing short-term work permits to cover this CfW opportunities. Okay, we have more numbers, and you can say if you witness the number of work permits between 2016 and 2018 you see some increase. And this is not because they are creating jobs but they are documenting opportunities that already exist – the CfW opportunities to a certain extent. (I14)
As a response to ‘being stuck’, “there is this whole debate on how to make CfW sustainable” (I21), said Nadine. So called “CfW Plus” was invented, including post-employment services that should link participants to permanent jobs (I21). However, this transitioning was not necessarily preferred by workers. As CfW paid hourly wages which were higher than elsewhere and had, according to MoPIC, “very good work conditions because it’s managed through the international donor community” (I24), there was a sense that Syrians actually preferred CfW over factory work. Still, actors held on to the idea that it should lead to full-time employment. During one Livelihood Working Group Meeting (LWGM), one aid worker remarked that if Syrians could not change from a one-year work permit towards a short-term CfW permit, they would be discouraged from actually engaging in longer term employment. This comment was prompted by some irritation, with MoPIC saying that INGOs should not give refugees the feeling that they could rely on CfW, as it was never intended to be a ‘normal job opportunity’. Hence, beneficiaries were recorded in GIZ’s workers database to ensure that people would not take part in several CfW ‘gigs’. As Noor from MoPIC said: “In a way they will push them towards a graduation of such programme and get engaged in a permanent job” (I24).

This reflects not only the assumption that there were jobs that Syrians could and want to work in, but also the inherent tension between care and control that form part of humanitarian services (Malkki 1992: 34): While the possibilities to engage in several different jobs was seen as preferred by refugees and encouraged by governing actors through introducing flexible and short-term work permits, taking part in several CfW ‘gigs’ was not perceived as one of humanitarians’ “approved forms of adaptive self-reliance” (Duffield 2010: 68).

### 6.2 Measurements and targets

Once I accompanied a befriended aid worker to her organisation in order to conduct an interview with one of her colleagues. After the interview, I returned to her office to say good bye. If I got the information I needed, asked my friend. I confirmed. “How many beneficiaries did you reach? How many women?” prompted her colleague jokingly, as a way to inquire about the success of my interview. We laughed, awkwardly knowing about the main benchmarks on which a programme’s success is evaluated. (Fieldnotes, 19.12.2018)
Scholars have argued that in contemporary humanitarianism, due to the upward accountability towards donors, “a heightened emphasis on efficiency and the search for objective indicators of success might lead to the displacement of goals that are not easily quantified, such as the desire to restore dignity to victimized populations” (Barnett and Weiss 2008: 5). The focus on work permits was a case in point. It was widely acknowledged that the permit figures were substantially inflated, as permit renewals were not withdrawn from the overall number counted by the MoL. The same went for workers switching sectors, as permits were tied to a specific sector and Syrians needed a new one if they changed. In addition, permits did not reflect employment as many permit holders did not actually work. During one LWGM, one participant shared study results according to which only ten percent of refugees owning a work permit were actually employed (Fieldnotes LWGM 15.11.2018). Still, the sector held on to issued permits as the main target that was agreed upon in the JC. Like a ritual, every LWGM started by an update on the work permit figures, as if to remind everyone of their overall goal. During the same meeting, another participant therefore spoke up saying that “I think as humanitarians, we are focussing too much on the number of work permits issued, and not on the actual working conditions of refugees” (Fieldnotes LWGM 15.11.2018).

Research participants repeated that donors focussed mainly on outreach numbers, “they prefer to have a bigger number [more] than anything else” (I23). This put stress on organisations, as these ‘targets’ were not always easy to reach, especially since programmes needed to perform to the set quotas of Jordanian and Syrian beneficiaries. The focus on outreach was seen as a humanitarian logic that still reverberated. One participant working for ACF said that along with the shift towards development, his organisation was “looking for more impact based projects” (I11). He explained:

> So usually in emergency projects we looked at the direct objectives of the project which is like for example if we do water projects we look to the number of people who got water. But when we do development we look maybe at the level of water prone diseases if it’s decreased or not. Because we would work more on behavioural things, more than services. (I11)

This change in evaluation had not been translated into the livelihood domain. Instead of measuring increase of income or decrease in vulnerability among refugees, numerical job placements were the main indicators, sometimes expanded by a focus on job retention over time. This might be explained as “cognitive dissonances between new ideas of humanitarians and old habits that may not disappear” (Hilhorst 2018: 10). Using
this evaluation method also promised an easier “creation of success” (cf. Mosse 2005; Sözer 2019): While assessments of Syrians’ vulnerability were reflecting their worsening situation\(^5\), growing numbers of work permits seemingly indicated a general improvement.

### 6.2.1 The Work Permit Headache

Like other foreign workers in Jordan, Syrians needed work permits in order to formalise their work. Normally, work permit were handled through the so called Kafala system, where employer were responsible for issuing permits and paying their fees (Tobin and Alahmed 2019). As this had discouraged many employers from doing so, the MoL issued a number of regulatory changes in order to ease Syrians’ access to the labour market. Permit fees that could cost up to several hundred JDs were waived for several months and this ‘grace period’ had been successively extended. It was made possible that the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions acted as employer in order to issue permits for the construction sector, the same went for agricultural cooperatives in agriculture. As work permits were tied to a specific job, it was hard for Syrians to switch sectors. This was subsequently made easier by allowing refugees with an agriculture permit to also work in construction, and it was hoped that the Prime Minister would soon allow the other way around, too. After explaining these changes in her presentation during a LWGM, Noor from MoPIC thus said, “hopefully we will get rid of this work permit headache” (LWGM 15.11.2018).

The introduction of short-term permits furthermore allowed to formalise CfW jobs. However, this “innovative solution”, as it was heralded by MoPIC (I24), complicated the headache even more. Inconsistencies between the regulations of the MoL and practices of labour directorates in the different governorates, who still issued year-long permits for CfW jobs, were frequent complaints (I27, I22). While the relaxations of some restrictions was welcomed by organisations, Charlotte pointed out that “at the same time, what has been set up for Syrians is an entirely different work permit regime” (I22). Her work at the ILO, an organisation mandated to promote ‘decent work’, “in the last two years has focussed unfortunately on the work permit regime” (I22) in order to allow formalisation. Frustratingly for her, this left no time and resources to focus on improving working conditions inside the sectors open to Syrians.

\(^5\)A recent vulnerability assessment by UNHCR (2019c) found that “an increase of three per cent of the population were recorded as being highly or severely vulnerable, from 73 per cent in 2017 to 76 per cent in 2018. Within those found to be vulnerable, a higher proportion were identified more severely vulnerable than in 2017” (p.7).
6.2.2 “It is only about numbers!”

"Failure is not a failure to implement the plan, but a failure of interpretation"
(Mosse 2005: 18)

The challenge of bringing the work permit numbers up to the target of 200,000 – a dawning failure of the JC – gave rise to novel interpretations of this target. Acknowledging that accumulated permit numbers were not a suitable indicator for employment, donors and the GoJ agreed on the new proxy of having 60,000 ‘active’ work permits. As Noor from MoPIC said: “The World Bank is currently moving away from the proxy of work permits as facilitating work opportunities for Syrians. Because that doesn’t represent the reality” (I24). She suggested that permits might not be necessary at all in order to measure employment: “If the JC had the objective of 200,000 work opportunities for Syrians, that means whatever job there is they are working in, whether it’s formal or informal, they had that opportunity” (I24). As such, not only formal jobs but informal employment should be counted as well.

Because this is what’s going on, this is what’s happening in the field. But this is still under discussion. We are trying to find a way how the ministry can still have enough information about the labour market but without the need to issue a work permit for each and every single working person out there. (I24)

Farah, referring to a recent meeting with the MoL, pointed towards the dangers of such an approach. “There was the idea that you’re replacing the work permits with the Ministry of Interior Cards in order to calculate the number of people working in this country” (I14). Anyone owning an identity card would thereby be considered a worker – and, if not found in the database of permit holders – categorised as working in the informal economy. Only men would be calculated, as women were assumed to have children and engage in unpaid domestic work. “Imagine!”, exclaimed Farah, stating that this measurement would be severely flawed due to the big number of disabled and ill people who were not working at all. “But they want numbers, the government wants numbers. The only option is to calculate in any way possible” (I14). Summing up her frustration of the whole sector being fixated on measurements, she said:

In the end it’s only about numbers. We are not working on decent working conditions, we are not even saying anything about sexual exploitation, harassment, which is happening in the informal and in the formal economy. (I14)
6.3 Conclusion

Taking the case of GIZ, this chapter traced how development actors responded to the JC by integrating refugees into their programming. Instead of including them into their existing employment schemes, GIZ created a new form of humanitarian-development hybrid. This is visible in the ad-hoc way of how the Sonderinitiative was designed and rolled out, reflecting the humanitarian priority of short-term relief over development’s aim of long-term socio-political change (Scott-Smith 2018: 5). These logics were also reflected in the CfW projects that favoured an outreach to many people over sustainable employment. Attention to the discourses of aid workers revealed that ‘the link to development’ which the programme presumably represented, was not framed as the aim to develop refugees’ skills and livelihoods. The ‘development’ part of the programme was instead intended to benefit Jordan’s infrastructural development. Refugees, while being able to engage in paid labour, were still caught in precariously short-term type of assistance. This was due to an increased governance by numbers (Shore and Wright 2015), where the goal to enhance work permits took precedence over improving working conditions.

While such programmes emerged inside the camp, they were, reinforced by the JC, transferred to ‘host communities’, reflecting camp spaces as “laboratories of social transformation” (Fresia and von Kanel 2016: 251, cited in Oesch 2017: 112). While the scheme travelled beyond camp spaces and was now applied on a national level, it still bore with it governance logics of refugee camps’, aiming at short-term assistance. The described attempt to formalise refugees’ informal work in agriculture and construction by distributing work permits reflects characteristics of “resilience humanitarianism [that] tends to build on the survival economy and people’s resilience, but may be blind to the economic logics” (Hilhorst 2018: 8) of such economies: Syrians’ main engagement in agriculture and construction resulted in these sectors being widely understood by many research participants as their ‘preferred sectors’. This belies the fact that after five years of criminalising their work, refugees had no other option but engaging in the two sectors where informal labour was most accessible. By uplifting the precarious CfW as well as these informal types of employment into the formal economy through the ‘innovation’ of flexible work permits, humanitarian and development actors legitimised the piece-meal, precarious jobs through which the poor struggled to survive.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

Crises are never self-evident, but are constructed to delimit certain phenomena in time and space (Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins 2016). As such, “there are always multiple ways in which crises can be understood and acted upon” (Hilhorst 2018: 2), they acquire meaning by the negotiations of different actors’ discourses and practices. This thesis tried to demonstrate how the JC has significantly altered the way the ‘Syrian Refugee Crisis’ has been understood and acted upon in Jordan, and how that fundamentally affected the governance of refugees. Barnett and Finnemore (2004) argue that the study of humanitarianism “offers a window into the changing politics of international communities, their evolution, and their articulation, rearticulation, and possible disarticulation” (p. 236). By studying humanitarianism in Jordan after the JC, I tried to offer a glimpse into a changing international and geopolitical refugee regime – shifting from seeing refugees as victims of emergencies who are entitled to humanitarian care to perceiving them as an economic burden to be solved by development interventions (Ramsay 2019). This shift, I argue, had the following effects on refugees’ governance in Jordan.

7.1 The Anti-Politics Nexus

7.1.1 Depoliticising Flight

As described in Chapter 4, the JC contributed to a developmentalisation of humanitarian space, in which the opening of the labour market to Syrians allowed donors to downplay the need for humanitarian assistance. Due to the way humanitarian and development
interventions were separated according to geography and target population in the JRP, the resulting push for developmental interventions increasingly benefited Jordanians as well as the country’s infrastructure development. Jordan’s structural unemployment after decades of neoliberal reform (Lenner and Turner 2018) was thereby constructed as a direct consequence of the influx of Syrian refugees, and citizens’ protest over deteriorating living conditions framed as a response to competition with them in the market. These concerns were then used to justify humanitarians’ need to step up their support for the local population. That this went uncontested by organisations can be explained by 1) the need to maintain good relationships with the GoJ (Mosse 2005: 103) and 2) by the increased stability that working with Jordanians brought. While a volatile policy environment in which decisions concerning Syrians’ access to different forms of employment could change any time, and an unstable geopolitical climate sabotaged organisations’ efforts to establish long-term programming for Syrians, working with Jordanians was devoid of these difficulties. As such, the need for programmes targeting both Syrians and Jordanians in order to enhance ‘social cohesion’ presented the ‘discursive glue’ holding the aid community together. It did not necessarily represent reality, but allowed to “sustain policy models offering a significant interpretation of events” (Mosse 2004: 17).

Through this change, the sources of both Syrians’ and Jordanians’ economic plights were condensed into the problem of lacking job opportunities. As such, the needs of both groups were recast as identical, justifying the call for the same type of support. This depoliticised the status of refugees, as it obscured the very limited possibilities Syrians actually had to make a living; as well as their restricted access to public welfare services compared to Jordanians. The depoliticisation of refugees was moreover reflected in the way the re-opening of the border and the stabilisation of the regime inside Syria was used to justify 1) a further cut in humanitarian assistance and 2) the expectation of refugees’ large scale return. As such, the “development discourse on refugees” (Malkki 1995: 507) shifted away the focus from their rights and the political and historical processes that lead to mass displacement (Malkki 1995). As Hyndman and Giles (2011) have argued, in contrast to refugees moving to the Global North who are seen as threatening the security and welfare systems of Western states, refugees in the Global South are routinely depoliticised due to their lack of status and dependence on humanitarian aid. They are seen as “vulnerable ‘womenandchildren’ ” (Hyndman and Giles 2011: 367), leaving no room to consider the political nature of many, mostly male refugees, who did not flee from fightings but from persecution and military conscription by a regime still in power. Hence, developmentalising humanitarianism entailed undermining refugees’ political status and
reflects the anti-political mechanisms of humanitarian governance in other contexts.¹

7.1.2 Depoliticising Unemployment

The change in beneficiaries had, however, also depoliticising effects on the Jordanian population. Enhanced government scrutiny of and sovereignty over aid projects has been seen as a form of decolonisation and positive increase in state capacity (Drążkiewicz 2017). Yet, I want to suggest that the GoJ’s increased control over interventions, aimed at enhancing Jordanian employment through aid programmes, had opposite effects. While the GoJ was increasingly cutting public sector jobs², it was shifting the responsibility for employment creation to the international community, thereby increasing its dependence on international aid. This obscures the reasons for Jordanians’ unemployment, specifically the failure of neoliberal reform programmes to substitute public sector jobs with decent work in the private sector (Harrigan et al. 2006; Baylouny 2008; Lenner and Turner 2018). One could argue that as Western states have transferred the responsibility for hosting Syria’s refugee population to Jordan by reducing their willingness to resettle, Jordan has shifted responsibility for solving its unemployment problem to international donors. As such, both Western states and the GoJ had an interest in downplaying refugees’ humanitarian situation and their entitlement to assistance, asylum and rights. Instead of responding to these entitlements, humanitarian actors started serving the country’s poor, into which Syrians as well as Jordanians have been condensed as ‘the vulnerable’ whose ‘resilience’ needs to be enhanced.³ As such, humanitarians were no longer seen as responsible for supporting crisis affected Syrians, but also for solving structural problems of the Jordanian economy. This humanitarian-development nexus thereby reflects development’s anti-political effects (Ferguson 1990) where 1) structural reasons for unemployment were neglected, substituted by the ‘refugee crisis’ as the sole source of problems; and 2) social protests over tax reform targeting the middle class but not the political elite were recast as citizens’ fury over job competition with refugees.

However, the case of Jordan also shows that this development discourse was not, as argued

¹Analysing changes in the French asylum system for instance, Ticktin (2011) showed how asylum claims based on political persecution increasingly lost legitimacy compared to claims based on physical suffering.
²However, these cuts in public expenditure have been equally influenced – if not imposed – by international actors, especially by the structural adjustment reforms under the IMF (Baylouny 2008)
³In January 2019, UNICEF Jordan Representative Robert Jenkins announced the organisation’s shift in focus in the coming years, away from a status based assistance programme for Syrians towards a pure vulnerability approach – “encouraged by the government’s priorities, which are very much aligned with our focus” (Ghazal 2019).
by Ferguson, only generated by development institutions and international donors (see Lewis and Mosse 2006), but co-created by Jordan’s political elite. In the context of the Middle East, where protest over economic injustices have presented one of the major threats to regime stability in recent years, governments have an interest in showcasing unemployment as a direct consequence of a refugee situation which should be solved by international efforts. The GoJ thus strategically used this development discourse as a solution to refugee needs in order to harness international support for their own gains.

### 7.1.3 Commercialising Humanitarianism

With the cut in humanitarian funding, humanitarians had the choice between stopping or significantly downsizing their operations; or engaging in development programming – tasks that most organisations were not familiar with. That all of the organisations I studied chose the latter speaks to humanitarians’ tendency “to insist that the break between humanitarian action and development is both artificial and detrimental to the long-term effectiveness of the humanitarian response” (Sandvik 2016: 5). However, humanitarians’ inexperience in the development domain put their place in the “humanitarian marketplace” (Crisp 2009: 76), in which agencies have to build a reputation and prove their capacity in order to qualify for donors’ competitive grants, at risk and required them to redefine their role. As I described in Chapter 5, they thus used their humanitarian identity and access to refugees strategically to position themselves as brokers between Syrian workers and employers. As such, they envisioned themselves as ‘facilitators’, engaging in development, but not wanting to be seen as responsible for it. This is reflected in the way they took recourse to their humanitarian identity in order to justify project failure.

However, by brokering job placements as described in Chapter 5, or becoming employers themselves in CfW programmes as described in Chapter 6, INGOs were increasingly seen by beneficiaries as well as local government actors as responsible for the creation of jobs – expectations, that in their capacity as NGOs, they could not fulfil. This contradiction demonstrates the “tension between flagging the untouchability of the humanitarian space and the sentiment that it is the obligation of the humanitarian enterprise to expand the type and timespan of its activities into the domain of development” (Sandvik 2016: 5). It mirrors the analysis of Drążkiewicz (2017), who describes how humanitarians in protracted crises desired to engage in developmental work but refused to cooperate

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4This list could be expanded by other livelihood interventions such as entrepreneurship training, the distribution of grants for home based businesses, or the manufacturing of goods by refugees that were then sold to mostly international aid workers during bazars.
with the government’s priorities on the basis of their assumed ‘neutrality’.

7.1.4 Depoliticising Exploitation

As described in Chapter 5, in order to satisfy the JC stakeholders’ needs to see Syrians formally employed, project managers with a background in development were hired to help Syrians into factory jobs. They became translators between 1) employers with whom they shared a specific understanding of ‘the market’ and 2) the Syrian refugee community among whom they claimed to have favourable access and trust through their longstanding experience of providing assistance. In an elaborate selection process requiring a lot of resources from organisations, employers and potential workers were ‘screened’ according to their willingness to engage in what must be described as exploitative work. The political issue of bad working conditions in the factories was ‘rendered technical’ (Li 2007), amenable to solution by a technical selection process. It was also individualised by making poor salaries – intended to substitute humanitarian assistance – dependent on refugees’ willingness to accept these working conditions. While humanitarians were not necessarily oblivious to those, in their desire to stay a-political, decrying bad working conditions as the reason for Syrians’ low economic activity was not the chosen option.

Much theoretical discussions on brokers has focused on categorising them according to their belonging to the groups they are mediating between Gould and Fernandez (1989); Stovel et al. (2011). My findings suggest that a more relational approach to brokerage can help a better understanding of how power is distributed among the governance network (see also Koster and van Leynseele 2018). Going beyond the structuralist argument that brokers are restricted by systemic constraints, this demanded attention to their own conceptualisations of these constraints: brokers’ attitudes towards and understandings of the groups they are connecting – and their differential (perceived) power to alternate conflicting standpoints. As became clear, employers’ needs and offered working conditions were taken as given, as performing to fixed and unquestionable laws of the free market, at best amenable to persuasion if ‘added value’ could be proved. In contrast, workers’ lacking ability and willingness to conform to these characteristics was problematised. It was easier to ‘render technical’ (Li 2007) and to manipulate through technical interventions such as training programmes and selection processes. This challenges the distinction made between brokerage practices in the Global North and the Global South, which posits that only the former are subject to neoliberal conditions (Koster and van Leynseele 2018: 6). Similar to many governing discourses on refugees, “the problem” of
their unemployment was located not on the political and economic processes leading to it, but “within the bodies and minds (and even souls) of people categorized as refugees” (Malkki 1992: 33).

As Barnett and Duvall (2005) argue, “humanitarianism is now precariously situated between the politics of solidarity and the politics of governance” (p. 724). While humanitarians used to stay in apolitical solidarity with victims, defying the powerful, my findings provide a case on how humanitarians became increasingly implicated in governance structures (ibid.) – in this case, the governance of labour. As such, humanitarian job brokers, with their aim of staying outside of politics, were actively maintaining the power difference between employers and workers in which the former could dictate the conditions to which the latter had to perform.

‘Added Value’ – for whom?

Translating does not only involve brokers’ transmission of resources between connected groups – the act of translation produces realities on its own (Hönke and Müller 2018: 6). In order to successfully translate their endeavour to employers, humanitarians did not only have to ‘make the business case’ for hiring refugees, but also for collaborating with INGOs not enjoying a favourable standing amongst the private sector. Both engagements had to perform to market logics. As such, organisations needed not only to provide access to a potential Syrian work force, they needed to prove “added value” (I18). This was identified in the lack of formal hr systems in the Jordanian labour market – a lack which had historically allowed the emergence of different types of job brokers, not only in Jordan but also in Syria and other parts of the region. Tobin and Alahmed (2019) state that “for Syrians specifically, the creation of official and legal work permit ‘gobetweens’ […] have engendered a culture of reliance on brokers […] who may exploit the system and divert benefits for private gain in corrupt practices” (p.4). The dubious role of these brokers in the distribution of work permits to Syrian refugees was a recurrent concern during the LWGMs I attended. One could argue that humanitarian actors presented more favourable brokering institutions, less prone to seek personal profit. However, their translating practices entailed a substantial subsidy of private businesses. While humanitarian actors are known to substitute the public sector through aid provision in crises (Slaughter and Crisp 2009; Werker 2007), this thesis illustrated how ‘partnerships’ with the private sector resulted in humanitarians subsidising private employers by taking care of their employee selection. As such, far from ‘taking a step back’ and solely acting as
‘facilitators’, humanitarian organisations became crucial actors in Jordan’s labour market system. With their aim to form ‘professional relationships’ with employers, they are actively fighting against the perception that INGOs’ stay in Jordan was only temporal.

7.2 The Nexus as a separated Connection

The JC was intended as a key tool in forming the humanitarian-development nexus, in connecting short-term humanitarian assistance with sustainable solutions for refugees. As this thesis tried to demonstrate, this assumed connection was however separated from the start. As shown in Chapter 4, what was considered a humanitarian versus a development intervention became spatially separated. The GoJ strategically assigned the domain of development interventions to the spaces of ‘host communities’. This led to a decrease in projects inside the camps and an increase of them in urban areas. As such, developmental programming increasingly benefited Jordanians. Paying attention to the discourses, logics and rationalities of governance revealed that refugees were not the intended object of longer term development solutions. Linking both domains was interpreted as supplementing the temporary assistance for refugees with long-term benefits for Jordan, exemplified in the CfW programmes. One could argue that this reflected humanitarians’ “cognitive dissonances” (Hilhorst 2018: 10) in the developmentalised space: the urge to reach as many people as possible prevailed over the need to provide sustainable solutions. This rationality was further reinforced by the emergence of a “governance by numbers” (Shore and Wright 2015) in which programmes were evaluated by quantifiable indicators such as work permits or people placed in jobs.

However, the persistence of short-termism is more than a prevailing ‘cognitive dissonance’. Maintaining a refugee governance characterised by temporality and precarity was a political goal. Trying to avoid a full integration of Syrians into the Jordanian society, Syrians’ integration into the Jordanian labour market needed to be created as temporary. This was achieved by establishing a completely different work permit regime, specifically for Syrian refugees. This regime, based on quickly changing policies, was precarious: The grace period for waived work permit fees needed to be extended every six months, sectors were regularly opened and closed, creating confusion and insecurity among aid organisations, and putting their programming at risk. Far from signifying an increasing integration of Syrians into the Jordanian social fabric, their economic integration was governed by a regime of temporariness. Therefore, the partial inclusion
into the labour market and simultaneous exclusion from public welfare systems reflects
Syrians’ “differential inclusion” (Baban et al. 2017) into ‘host countries’. As analysed in
relation to Syrians in Turkey by Baban et al. (2017), and Palestinian refugees in Jordan
by Oesch (2017), this “indistinction between exclusion and inclusion is a deliberate way
of governing” (p. 113) refugees in protracted crises.

This differential inclusion is also mirrored by the integration of the Syrian refugee pop-
ulation in development actors’ programming: Rather than including them into their
long-standing portfolios, entire new programmes were designed, more shaped by a long-
term humanitarian “care and maintenance” (Cohen 2011) approach than by enhancing
human development and integration. Entrepreneurship training and CfW projects in the
construction sector were also justified by the possibility to ‘transport’ these skills back to
Syria. Employment programmes often did not aim at integrating Syrians into Jordan’s
labour market, but equip them for a future return and their ‘homeland’s’ reconstruction.
As such, attention to programmes’ rationalities revealed the politics of “not-knowing”
(Stel 2016; Nassar and Stel 2019): Not-knowing if Syrians would return to Syria in the
future was one of the main “talkingpoints” that were reiterated by research participants.
Not comparable to types of strategic ignorance or conspirational refusal to acknowledge
a truth, as not-knowing has been theorised in other contexts (see Aradau 2017), this dis-
cursive talkingpoint was obviously not wrong. How could one possibly claim knowledge
about the future?5 However, this claim of not-knowing had productive political effects,
as it justified the prevailing logics of temporariness and exceptionality that characterised
the governance of Syrians in Jordan. While presumably highlighting refugees’ freedom of
choice, the claim to not know obscured actors’ involvement in shaping the conditions that
allow, or forbid, such a freedom of choice. By reducing humanitarian funding, restricting
access to jobs and limiting public welfare services, international donors as well as the
GoJ became complicit in putting the principle of ‘voluntary return’ at risk. As Naseer
put it, referring to the growing impoverishment of the refugee population: “I am scared
that this will be an option for Syrians to return when they don’t want to return. Even
if you want to call it ‘voluntary return’, I don’t believe [it], it’s not voluntary” (I4).

5 Apart from considering numerous surveys where a large majority of Syrians reports not wanting to
return to Syria in the years to come (e.g. syrianobserver.com 2019)
7.3 Settling Refugees, or Settling Ourselves?

In her article “Building the Other, Constructing Ourselves” Smirl (2008) draws attention to the unintended spatial repercussions of international humanitarian interventions, and the way the physical arrival of aid organisations affects emergency sites. While the spatial dimensions of the international presence in Jordan, particularly in Amman, would be an interesting research topic on its own, I want to draw attention to some of the ‘building’ effects that the development agenda has brought to Jordan. Reflecting a common criticism, one research participant described the JC as a European refugee “settlement strategy” (I8), aimed at preventing their onward migration to Europe. As I tried to show in this thesis, the political impossibility that Syrians’ stay in Jordan could be more than temporary however undermined any possibility of a real connection of humanitarian and development aid for refugees. The case of Jordan thereby questions the possibility of economically including a population, while simultaneously denying any political integration. As such, my findings reflect similar and much older dynamics in contexts where the ‘development agenda for refugees’ had been ‘tested’ (see Crisp 2001). This gives rise to the question of who or what the humanitarian-development nexus, currently occupying the minds and resources of numerous policy makers, aid institutions and researchers, is really for.

Interestingly, I have found discussions about the humanitarian-development nexus often framed in reference to the work of humanitarian organisations themselves. In these instances, future developmental work was described not as replacing only humanitarian assistance for Syrian refugees (with longer term development assistance), but as replacing working for them altogether. As one participant, working for a humanitarian organisation that came to Jordan in order to assist Syrians, put it:

They [the organisation] are not only focussing on Syrian refugees and our area of interest is really important for Jordan, even before the crisis and after the crisis, which is water, and this is totally different, this is totally out of the refugee crisis. The water sector is really needed in the country. I believe [the organisation] will manage to have more projects and will be able with this strategy [to stay]. (I11)

In contrast to other contexts where humanitarian actors decided to leave an increasingly developmentalised field (e.g. in Uganda, see Lie 2017), all of the organisations I studied adapted to this new agenda, and many participants envisioned their future working in
Jordan as a development organisation. This seems to reflect that “the work of organisations is more immediately shaped by their own ‘system goals’ – those of organisational maintenance and survival – than by the formal policy goals” (Mintzberg 1979, cited in Mosse 2005: 103). Naturally, humanitarian organisations are driven by their goal of maintaining operations. “This is a legitimate desire”, as Hilhorst (2018) argues, “it would be extremely complicated and unethical for organizations to hire and fire staff according to whichever crisis comes by. It only becomes problematic when the desire to maintain operations overrides the desire to save lives and restore dignity” (p. 3). My findings support such concern, and suggest that the turn towards development increasingly abandoned refugees as objects of humanitarian care (Hilhorst 2018), challenging one of humanitarianism’s core functions – the act of giving (Sandvik 2016).

While the humanitarian-development nexus in its current form in Jordan did not offer durable solutions for Syrian refugees, it did, however, allow longer term opportunities for humanitarian organisations, increasingly eligible for long-lasting development funding. Future research needs to show how organisations adapt to a continuing developmentali-sation of humanitarian space, and address the question if the assumed ‘nexus’ ultimately leads to humanitarians’ abandonment of refugees altogether.
## Appendix A

### List of Interviews and Organisations

Table A.1: List of Interviews

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Table A.2: INGOs, members of JIF as of April 2019

1Source: https://jordaningoforum.org/our-members/
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Table A.3: UN Organisations present in Jordan

2 Source: http://jo.one.un.org/en/who-we-are/
Bibliography

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De Bel-Air, F.
DeutscheWelle

Donovan, K. P.

Drażkiewicz, E.

Duffield, M.

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Dunn, E. C.

EU-Commission

FAFO

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Field, J., D. T. Anubhav, and Y. Mookherjee

Fisher, J. and D. M. Anderson

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Gabiam, N.

Ghazal, M.


Hilhorst, D.

Hilhorst, D. and B. J. Jansen

Hoffmann, S.

Hönke, J. and M.-M. Müller

HRW

HRW

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IRC

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JordanTimes

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JRP

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