

**THE MEDIATION OF PROLONGED DISPLACEMENT in the
IRAQI REFUGEE HOUSEHOLD IN JORDAN**

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Abstract

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This PhD-thesis considers how living in prolonged displacement in the Global South is a mediated experience. I connect literature situated in the fields Forced Migration Studies and Non-media-centric Media Studies to comprehend how forced migrants can be understood as connected migrants. There has been valuable research on the intersections of migration and mediation. Little attention has been given however to situated and mediated experiences of forced migrants, for whom uncertainty is often the norm. I consider how the interaction between mediated and situated practices constitute everyday experiences of living in legal and social uncertainty.

I draw upon ethnographic fieldwork conducted from January to September 2015 on the mediated practices of Iraqi refugees, living in Jordan's capital Amman. Refugee protection in Jordan is formalised as temporary and restricts the rights to work and to integrate further into Jordan's society. Among the Iraqi refugees in Jordan, this reinforces the experience of waiting. Experiences of waiting also relates to limited opportunities for legalised onwards travelling and to ongoing warfare in Iraq.

Forced migrants are digitally connected migrants. In the case of Iraqi refugees in Jordan, perpetual uncertainty about one's legal and social place in the world seems to reinforce the need for connections to places and people elsewhere. Living in uncertainty is a deeply affective terrain that is continuously (re)constituted through situated and mediated interactions and practices. There are major structural barriers that prohibit 'progress' in the lives of Iraqi refugees in Jordan. The use and interplay of media and technologies enables some efforts to overcome these and perform important social and subjective functions for the aspirations, identity-construction and home-making practices of refugees, especially since their place in the world continues to be uncertain.

For my brothers Ibrahim and Taber and their awesome parents

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اعذرنني من التقصير فإنا لست في بيتي

The abovementioned sentence (*A'dourni min al taqsir fa ana lastu fi beiti* which can be translated as: I am sorry for all my mistakes, as I am not in my house) was used by an Iraqi woman who had invited me for a dinner in her home. It struck me as the food and company had been great, and yet she was apologizing. I realized that the woman felt she was making do in Jordan. If I had come to visit her in her home in Iraq the meal would have been even more perfect. This sentence provides me with the opportunity to express my gratitude towards all the Iraqi refugees who were so generous in sharing their stories, their food and their homes with me. I fully realise I am writing about your stories and experiences. I hope you understand that, although in very different circumstances, I was also not in my home and have been writing 'out of place'. I have tried to comprehend your stories and experiences as good as possible and I am deeply sorry if I made any errors or mistakes. Khaled, Yahya, Andra, Marlin, Ahmed, Amina, Leila, Abeed, Arkan, Rawad and everyone I cannot name by name by who made this thesis possible. Your stories resonate in my heart and hopefully are also reflected in this thesis. It is my deepest hope that your future life journeys will be smoother than they have been in the past.

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A note on transliterations

With the transliteration and translation of Arabic names and words I have strived to be as clear and consistent as possible. If words and names are commonly written in English I have held on to that spelling. A special thank you to Hamdan Mansour and Mette Stendevad. I am solely responsible if there have been any errors or mistakes in translation and/or transliteration.

List of Abbreviations

AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority, the US-led transitional government installed after the US-led 2003 invasion.
IBC	Iraqi Body Count
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IDP	Internally Displaced Person / People
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, also known as ISIL or by the Arabic acronym Da'esh).
JOD	Jordanian Dinar
JRTVC	Jordan Radio and Television Corporation
LBC	Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation
MBC	Middle East Broadcasting Centre
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
RSD	Refugee status determination
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US(A)	United States of America
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

Terminology (Arabic)

<i>Aj'nabia (fem s)/ Adjaneeb (pl)</i>	(Western) foreigner
<i>Al-bisbaar</i>	The 1991 – 2003 trade embargo imposed on Iraq by the United Nations Security Council
<i>Iqāmb</i>	Residency card that potentially can legalise one's stay in Jordan. The means to obtain such a card varies from putting 10.000 JOD (approximately £ 11.000) on a Jordanian bank account, through buying a property, by attending a Jordanian university, by starting an import/export business with the help of a Jordanian business partner and/or by marrying (as a non-Jordanian women) a man with Jordanian citizenship as citizenship crosses only over through patrilineal lines (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan E-portal, 2017).
<i>Kafir</i>	The literal translation means 'one who covers the truth'. This term is often translated as and used to mark out an unbeliever, but does not necessarily denote a non-Muslim.
<i>Katjak</i>	Turkish word for smuggling, refers to travelling onwards via irregular means (see <i>tahrib</i>)
<i>Musalsal (s) Musalsalaat (pl)</i>	Dramatic mini-series
<i>Tawtin</i>	By the Iraqi refugees this word is generally used to refer to third country resettlement, but it literally means solution and could therefore also refer to local integration
<i>Tahrib</i>	Travelling onwards via irregular means (see <i>katjak</i>)

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

In this PhD-thesis I address the gap in academic knowledge on the mediation of forced migration by considering what roles digital technologies play in the everyday experience of prolonged displacement. I explore how information and communication technologies (ICTs) have different social and subjective roles in the everyday experiences of prolonged uncertainty about one's place in the world. In order to do so my focus goes out to a particular "prolonged condition of displacement" (Doná, 2015) situated in the Global South: Iraqi nationals who self-identify as refugees in Jordan and who left Iraq as a result of the US-led invasion and its ongoing chaotic aftermath. I explore the roles of different media technologies in their daily lives with uncertainty. Media technologies are actively deployed to make sense of, to negotiate and contest that very uncertainty and as such help the Iraqi refugees in this study to hold on to a dignified, everyday life. Virtual spaces and transnational connections enable attachments and orientations to people, places and ideas beyond one's current situation and as such enable people to make sense of and to negotiate the ongoing uncertainty they find themselves in.

Digital technologies have opened up new ways of staying connected despite geographical distances. This potentially alters the everyday experiences of being a migrant, not least because they enable people to stay actively involved in the lives of people and places they are physically separated from. Existential and social doubts about belonging – often reinforced by exclusionary grand narratives linked to patriarchal, colonial and capitalist entanglements – are common among many migrants and their descendants. Research on media and migration has shown that digital technologies enable diasporic communities to negotiate their identity and their place in the world (Arthur & Gajjala, 2016; Georgiou, 2006; Gillespie, 1995; Hegde, 2016; Karim, 2003; Ponzanesi & Leurs, 2014; Witteborn, 2014, 2015). There is an "intense, cutting-edge creativity born out of existential angst of the migrant who is neither here nor there" (Karim, 2003, p. 5). This might be even more the case for forced migrants as uncertainty has become the norm among many conflict-induced displaced populations (Horst & Grabska, 2015). Yet so far there has been relatively little research done on media use by forced migrants.

In western and non-western settings alike many forced migrants are increasingly living in extended periods of prolonged legal and social insecurity (Doná, 2015). Especially in the Global South, research on media use by forced migrants focuses largely on the practical usage of ICTs and on humanitarian innovation. This thesis points to the importance of digital connectivity beyond its instrumental use. It indicates that digital connections interact with everyday social and subjective experiences of living in prolonged displacement in the Global South. The Global South and the Global North cannot be differentiated into two separate homogeneous spheres and are deeply connected (Chouliaraki, 2013, pp. 2–3), yet I use this distinction to emphasize how global divisions of power and the unequal distribution of resources reproduce inequalities.

To address these issues I build upon ethnographic fieldwork on the mediation of uncertainty among Iraqi refugee households based in Jordan's capital, Amman. The experience of living in forced displacement and, often closely related to this, prolonged uncertainty goes together with situated social, legal and material constraints that influence mediated practices. I draw on yet extend upon Dana Diminescu's epistemological figure of the 'connected migrant' (2008) which suggests that forced migrants should be understood as deeply connected. I do not aim to romanticize resilience or celebrate connectivity. Instead I consider how in the experience of displacement human beings can be simultaneously vulnerable and resourceful. An ethnographic focus on everyday life among refugee households not only enables me to further unpack how experiences of displacement are situated and mediated. It also provides me with the opportunity to consider how their particular experiences extend to broader global political and theoretical developments, and how capitalist and (post/neo)colonial entanglements (Ponzanesi & Leurs, 2014) come into force within refugee households beyond Europe's borders.

In October 2015, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jordan had registered 50,856 'People of Concern' from Iraq (UNHCR, 2015a). Some of the registered Iraqi nationals had been living in Jordan for years as they sought refuge from the conflict that erupted after the US invasion in 2003. Others came more recently to Jordan as they fled initially to Syria or because they fled from the atrocities of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, also known as ISIL or by the Arabic acronym Da'esh). Jordan also hosts at least 650,000 Syrian displaced 'People of concern' and smaller numbers of displaced persons from countries like Sudan, Somalia and Yemen (UNHCR, 2015b). An

extensive number of Palestinians also find themselves in prolonged legal limbo (Ramahi, 2015). Like many non-western countries, Jordan has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention. Instead, refugee protection in Jordan builds upon a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Jordanian government and UNHCR. This allows the UN refugee agency to legalize the stay of displaced people in Jordan and to safeguard their legal and social protection, but only temporarily (Stevens, 2013). Opportunities to obtain Jordanian citizenship, the right to work and other opportunities to be integrated into Jordan's society continue to be restricted.¹ Legal and social uncertainty about a lack of a future in Jordan and Iraq alter the subjectivities and experiences of Iraqi refugees in Jordan.

The idea for this project originated from what I now consider to be a rather naïve observation made during my first visit to Jordan in 2012 when I first started working with Iraqi refugees. Regardless of their financial circumstances, almost all Iraqi refugees I was then working with owned smartphones. This, I then thought, contrasted starkly with the outdated mobile phone I, a white middle-class person with Dutch citizenship, owned as I confused access to a smartphone as a sign of affluence. This thesis writes itself against this presumption: it shows how technological devices that make transnational as well as local connectivity possible are crucial in the uncertain lives of urban refugees for a wide variety of reasons, whilst also more affordable and available (Madianou & Miller, 2011a, 2011b). It also suggests a caution for simplified and distinction-making processes between 'others' and ourselves. Back in 2012, literature suggested that Iraqi refugees were increasingly 'stuck' in legal limbo in Jordan as none of the three traditional solutions for prolonged displacement – local integration, return or resettlement to a third country – were available. Return to Iraq was not considered a viable option, by the authorities or by the Iraqis themselves. Obtaining Jordanian citizenship, known as local integration, is restricted and the opportunities to travel legally onwards through resettlement slots were drying up (Chatelard & Morris, 2011; Chatty & Mansour, 2011a; Marfleet & Chatty, 2009). I became intrigued by how digital connectivity helps to construct the experience of forced migration and in particular the experience of 'stuckness' (Hage, 2015): how would it *feel* for people to be digitally connected to other parts of the world, while being at the same time restricted from (re)building a life?

¹ Recent changes show that there is some willingness to incorporate (only) Syrian refugees into Jordan's labour market (Betts & Collier, 2015)

Upon the start of this research project in 2013 large numbers of people from Syria were increasingly seeking refuge in neighbouring countries including Jordan. However, because of personal connections I had made in 2012 I was aware that many Iraqi nationals who identified themselves as refugees were still in Jordan. They continued to live in ‘waiting’, and were largely dependent on international support that now was allocated for Syrian refugees. Humanitarian aid relates to the attention span of most news media outlets (Chouliaraki, 2013), and is inherently short-term and temporary (Brun, 2016; Fassin, 2012). Long before the Syrian refugee crisis there were already signs that international support for Iraqi refugees was waning (ICG, 2008). My main academic interest was in what happens when aid dries up but people continue to live in prolonged yet digitally connected conditions of displacement and insecurity. The research questions I aim to answer in this thesis are the following:

- How is the everyday situated experience of living in prolonged displacement among Iraqi refugee households in Jordan mediated?
- How do the socio-historical contextual and localized circumstances of living in prolonged legal and social uncertainty in Jordan feed into the mediated practices and interpretations of media content of Iraqi refugees?
- How do mediated practices interact with and potentially reconfigure situated experiences of living in prolonged displacement among Iraqi refugee households in Jordan? What social and subjective functions do media have in the lives of Iraqi refugee households in Jordan who find themselves in prolonged uncertainty?

In the lives of the people in this study, war and other manifestations of violence and injustice are no longer exceptions but ongoing, recurring events. The particularities around these experiences might be unique to the Iraqi context as I will further unpack in Chapter 2, but the lives of many people worldwide are characterized by the ongoing presence and/or possibility of physical and systemic violence, poverty and conflict (Vigh, 2008). For them, crisis has been the chronic, ever-present and endemic background for years. It is not a turning point or a temporary rupture: it is the context in which many are navigating their lives. Uncertainty and disorder have become the norm and the everyday is negotiated out upon this background of prolonged political, social and economic decay.² Crisis and

² Ghasan Hage (2015) and Lauren Berlant (2011) provide a somewhat similar critique on crisis, although their work is set in late modern societies in the Global North. Hage (2015, p. 3) considers “living the crisis” and

normality can be conveyed through mediated imageries and message and subjectivities of what is normal can change in crisis. Through transnational encounters Iraqi refugee audiences do encounter different worlds and possibilities of being in the world. This can remind them of their own position in the world and what they have lost.

Let me show this by drawing upon an example narrative from the ethnographic data I collected. The middle-aged Iraqi couple I call Abu Adam and Kholoud (#36)³⁴ and their two sons Adam (#34) and Solomon play a central role throughout this thesis. Kholoud and her family initially sought refuge in Syria in 2006, but they came to Jordan in 2011 when the peaceful revolution transformed into a violent conflict. We became friends in 2012 and over the years we stayed in contact over Facebook. After all these years, Kholoud and Abu Adam still describe their situation in Jordan as ‘waiting’ to travel onwards. This segment of my ethnographic field notes takes us back to a hot summer night in 2014 when I was conducting preliminary field work. It takes place in what was then their home: a ground-floor two-bedroom apartment in an area called *Hashmi Schmal*⁵ – one of the lower-class areas located in the east of Amman.

“It is late. We are all watching America’s got talent, the talent show. People act in all sorts of creative ways, and the winner will receive 1 million USD. Four former US soldiers arrive on stage. They have served in Fallujah⁶, and the shows takes a patriotic twist as the audience provides them with a standing

the “situation of a permanent crisis a conservative technique of government”. Berlant (2011, p. 49) states the following: “To be in crisis is not to have the privilege of the taken-for-granted: it is to bear an extended burden of vulnerability for an undetermined duration.” The everyday is an impasse shaped by the crisis ordinary. In these circumstances fantasy can be an escape, an opening and a defence. I will come back to the work of both authors in chapter 3.

³ Throughout this thesis I use pseudonyms to secure anonymity.

⁴ The numbers behind the names of people I interviewed refer to the numbers used in Appendix 1 showing more in-depth information on the people I have interviewed.

⁵ In chapter 6 I give a further description of this area. Everyday experiences of prolonged displacement are obviously situated and relate to experiences in one’s physical location but in the rest of the thesis this plays a less outspoken role, just because much of Iraqi refugee life was confined to the temporary home.

⁶ Fallujah is a city in Iraq. During the 2003 US-led invasion, this city was one of the few places that actively resisted the surge of US force, resulting in heavy combat and the deaths of thousands of Iraqi civilians. US

ovation for the services to 'their country'. To me this contrast feels surreal. Sitting in Amman, in the home of my Iraqi friends who were forced to leave their country and are treated like dirt whereas we are watching how these soldiers who have messed up their country are heralded... I feel furious. They tell me to calm down."

(Field notes, 2014/07/03)

My notes say perhaps more about my own feelings than that it shows what happened in the refugee household that night: I felt arrested by the complex flows were shown through the TV-screen and the calmness of my friends whose lives were so directly affected. A year later, in a recorded interview I asked Kholoud's son Adam (#34) about this episode as I was still intrigued by their calm reaction. Adam answered: "*We take it simple because people out there they never know, they don't know the truth, they don't know what really happened, everything they know is what the media says, so... We take it simple. You can do nothing about it. [...] It is normal.*"⁷ Adam's response can point to interesting issues such as his perception as the American spectators of being ignorant of what had happened in Iraq and his ideas about the role American media has played in this regard. For now, I contend that what I considered as unjust is for them a normality that they are on a daily basis reminded of and have to live with.

This thesis will explore this normality in uncertainty. The process of normalization is a recurring aspect of living in crisis. Over the years I have had recurring in-depth conversations with Iraqi refugees during which personal experiences of violence, the mediatized brutal warfare in Iraq, of ISIS and the rest of the world and the ongoing marginalization in Jordan, were often explained as 'normal'. The normal here implies that disorder as crisis has become part of a one's everyday life, whereas my own normative framework of 'normality' plays an important role in my observations. What is 'normal' in crisis is not how people living in crisis believe things could and perhaps ought to be (Vigh, 2008, p. 11). Normalization should not be confused with indifference.

With the exception of the aforementioned vignette, I draw upon ethnographic fieldwork

forces captured the city in November 2004, but have been accused of war crimes for using white phosphorus as a weapon (Monbiot, 2005)

⁷ The Italic cursive font is used to mark out segments of recorded interviews. I use capitals if people would put emphasis on words or spoke significantly louder.

conducted from January 2015 through September 2015 among Iraqi refugee households in Amman.⁸ I lived with an Iraqi family for three months and largely drew upon personal connections, established since 2012, to meet research participants. The analysis builds upon extensive field notes of participant observations and 42 in-depth semi-structured interviews, which were thematically coded using Qualitative Data Analysis software called NVIVO. All of the Iraqi nationals who took part in this study were registered with the UN refugee agency, but they were often not officially recognised as ‘refugees’ and are in policy documents referred to as ‘People of Concern’. This can be understood in line with the agreement UNHCR made with the Jordanian government, which is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2 but that can be summarized as a system of temporary protection. Throughout this thesis I predominantly use the term (Iraqi) refugee to refer to the Iraqi nationals registered at UNHCR. I use this label since the Iraqi nationals I worked with predominantly self-identified (also) as refugees.

Worldwide, the labels ‘refugee’ and ‘forced migrant’ are both appropriated as governing tools to differentiate ‘undesirable’ irregular, illegalized or economic migrants and ‘desirable’ refugees or forced migrants. Moreover, they are used to institutionalise a ‘state of exception’ while excluding others and misrecognise that reasons behind any kind of migration are often multi-causal and multi-layered (Lindley, 2010). I use the label ‘refugee’ as the Iraqi nationals in this study self-identified as refugee. I do not consider being a refugee as a static identity marker, but I focus on becoming a refugee referred to as ‘refugee-ness’: the process of becoming a refugee is not simply the result of crossing nation-states borders. It is a gradual transformation through which refugees learn from the international community, each other and the host country (Malkki, 1995, p. 114). This continuous dynamic process is deeply mediated and in flux. The appropriation of the refugee label by Iraqi ‘People of concern’ can, for instance, not only be linked to structural uncertainty but also to the hope that this label will provide a safe and legal avenue for onward migration (Chatelard, 2016). All but two Iraqi refugees I worked with described their situation as ‘waiting’ for UNHCR to provide them with the ability to travel onwards.

Early writing on networks, mobility and globalization (Appadurai, 1990, 1996; Castells,

⁸ In July 2014, I conducted three weeks of preliminary fieldwork to further develop my research proposal in order to further assess the feasibility and relevance of this study.

2000; Urry, 2000) painted rosy pictures of how digital technologies could contribute to more egalitarian societies. Arjun Appadurai (1996) presumed that global cultural circulation and digital interconnectedness would result in a world less bounded by borders. The contrary seems to have happened: since the 1990s the securitisation discourse has become a dominant paradigm of Western governments. Securitisation is the practice of power to define something as an existential threat and as such provides the possibility to deploy exceptional measures to curtail that threat. The discourse is used to prioritise closing down geographical borders based upon the presumed threat of terrorism, cultural contamination and financial crisis (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2017; Duffield, 2001; Emmers, 2007). The ‘remote control’ of international borders has further reified the image of Fortress Europe. Open to a global market and technologies, its borders are intentionally but porously closed off for people (Anderson, 2014; Hyndman & Mountz, 2008). Appadurai misrecognised that not everyone has equal opportunities for mobility and/or equal access to capital (Ong, 1999; Sassen, 2000). Transnational and global media productions might circulate particular ideas and images – such as of potential lives elsewhere - but the social and material conditions in which these productions are read differ significantly and do not necessarily bring about social change.

Because of its short-term emergency-driven focus, humanitarian approaches tend to frame conflict-affected migrants as temporary ‘matter out of place’ (Malkki, 1995) and as right-optional subjects (Hyndman & Giles, 2011). As I will further substantiate through empirical findings presented in this thesis, I came to the understanding that such approaches misrecognize that what is supposed to be temporary often becomes prolonged for years. Related to this, I argue against a misplaced crisis-rhetoric that misrecognises the longevity of living in crisis and tend underestimate western involvement in political and social decay in the Global South. Instead, I consider whether and how digital technologies are deployed during prolonged displacement for negotiating and even contesting the extended territorial, temporal and social uncertainty that many forced and other migrants find themselves in. I explore whether digital technologies can somehow help them to make life, while living in these circumstances, bearable and meaningful. In doing so, I insist that beyond the instrumental use of for instance mobile phone-use, digital technologies have important social and subjective functions in the lives of forced migrants living in prolonged displacement. Before I continue however I need to unpack some important concepts and definitions, situated in the field of Non-media-centric Media Studies that play a central role

in my understanding of how digital technologies relate to the social world.

1.1 Defining Mediation, Affordances and Polymedia

Mediation is the dialectical relationship between technological possibilities and the structural social and material possibilities and limitations in place. It refers to the social effects that different media forms can bring but also considers how everyday localized experiences alter practices around media-use (Couldry, 2012; Mazzarella, 2004; Silverstone, 2005). This PhD does not focus on one media form (such as TVs or smartphones) nor does it focus on social media in particular. Instead, I explore the interplay between the multiple characteristics and potentialities different media and digital technologies have, how these interact with each other and are played out within the refugee household. I consider how different mediated images and information – from times and places elsewhere but also from Jordan at the time of fieldwork – together feed into everyday experiences of different members within Iraqi refugee households living in Amman. The satellite TV and the smartphone both played important roles within these households. There was at least one smartphone in every refugee household I visited. In most cases all adults and teenagers had their own smartphones. This widespread availability of smartphones - despite the apparent financial struggles of many families and insecurity about one's financial situation in the future – and the ever-presence of the flickering TV screen, suggest the importance of digital technologies and point to the richness of media consumption in the daily lives of Iraqi refugees.

I explore the different values and utilities different media and digital technologies have, and how they relate to each other and influence the experiences of Iraqi refugees in Jordan. Affordances are the different possibilities for action an object – in this case digital technologies – has. These affordances go beyond the functional as they relate to one's presence in the social and material world (Hutchby, 2001). Different media and digital technologies each have their own characteristics that provide different opportunities as well as limitations. Access to a wider variety of different media forms also widens up the possibility on how and in what ways to communicate, to obtain information and to be entertained. The concept of 'polymedia' by Madianou and Miller (2011a, 2011b) enables me to further understand how different media and platforms are used and appropriated in relation to other available digital technologies. Decisions about media use are largely

shaped by one's social environment and personal preferences, yet it is through the interaction between different, sometimes contesting images and information obtained through different screens and speaker boxes that social relationships and experiences can be sustained and/or reconfigured.

We can question to what extent the mediation of forced displacement is new. Social relations have always been always negotiated and mediated through objects. Earlier experiences of prolonged displacement, have shown that hope and despair have been mediated through particular material objects (Dudley, 2010) and story-telling (Al-Hardan, 2016). Memories of the past in one's former homeland and/or future orientation to better lives (in place or elsewhere) were always part of migrants' subjectivities. What has changed is the immediacy and persistence of information and pictures of people, places and times elsewhere. Digital technologies can be seen as structuring forces that alter everyday life and practices. Networked technologies are continuously restructuring information flows and alter how human beings interact with each other. Their very pervasiveness generates new intensities (boyd, 2010) and alters social relations and experiences.

This does not mean that all forced migrants are equally digitally connected. Like physical mobility, digital connectivity is not evenly distributed. There are differences in degree, initiation and control of movement and communication, which are deeply racialized, classed and gendered (Massey, 1991). Whether a refugee becomes a refugee (as poor people often do not have access to the capital needed to find refuge beyond the borders of their native country (Van Hear, 2004)), is media-savvy and/or has access to digital technologies largely depends on the circumstances in which he or she was living prior to flight. This becomes evident when the mediated experiences of Syrian and Iraqi refugees who often have a relatively affluent middle-class background (Frouws, Phillips, Hassan, & Twigt, 2016; Gillespie et al., 2016) are compared to the experiences of poorer Karenni refugees (Robertson, Wilding, & Gifford, 2016) or Eritrean refugees (Opas & McMurray, 2015).

In the lives of forced migrants, and in regard to this study the legal and social uncertainty related to prolonged displacement, particular affordances might play out differently and can have different or more significant meanings than in the lives of people who have migrated for other reasons or who have stayed put. In protracted conflicts families and

friends tend to become dispersed over different nation-states. The legal and social prolonged uncertainty in neighboring countries reinforces the need for further onward secondary migration and dispersal across the globe (Monsutti, 2008; Van Hear, 2003). The people in this study are continuously reminded of borders and of the effects these have on their everyday lives, but digital technologies also enable them to transgress these same borders. Digital technologies thus have a “paradoxical presence” (Gillespie et al., 2016, p. 2). They might provide forced and other migrants with the possibility to challenge their circumstances, but they also increase the visibility of what is formally framed as illicit behaviour – crossing borders irregularly, working informally - and therefore increase the chance for control and governance. They can therefore be simultaneously a resource, a threat and a range of things in between.

As Gillespie et al. (2016, p. 9) have noted the research conducted on media use during forced migration journeys primarily focuses upon the travels of young men, without fully considering gendered and generational differences (see for exceptions Grabska, 2016; Grabska, Del Franco, & De Regt, 2016). Most refugee-oriented literature continues to be positioned as gender-neutral but in its claim to be neutral it tends to prioritize men’s experiences (Indra, 1999). Other research focuses exclusively upon women. Whereas I see the merits of standpoint theory (Harding, 1991), I consider gender as a relational construct played out in the everyday. Gender refers to the power differences that shape socio-cultural positioning and the ways men and women experience and live their lives (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2007, p. 8). Comprehensive research, from Sri Lanka and former Yugoslavia to Canada, has shown that displacement can provide space to address accepted gendered norms, expectations and modes of behaviour (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2007; Al-Ali, 2007; Hyndman & Giles, 2011; Indra, 1999; Kibreab, 2004; Korac, 2004; Matsuoka & Sorenson, 1999; McSpadden, 1999; Rajasignham-Senanayake, 2004). The same can be argued for migration in general and its potentially empowering but also unsettling nature (Benhabib & Resnik, 2009). Gender is played out within the household, and interacts with other identity markers. Interconnecting axes of power related to various identity markers and interconnecting axes – such as gender, race, class, age, sexuality, nationality and legal status interact (Crenshaw, 1991). Throughout this thesis, I draw upon intersectionality as a heuristic device as it enables me to further explore how and why particular differences become meaningful in reference to other differences (Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2013). The research focus is on members of refugee households. In line with Marie Gillespie (1995, p.

52) I consider the different people within the household as “integral parts of and agents in systems and relationships”. Households are not homogeneous. A focus on households enables me to explore how differences are played out in and around ideas of what is home. This PhD therefore explore how the experiences of not being able to go ‘home’, but not being able to move on either, are mediated differently for men and women and children and adults within Iraqi refugee households in Jordan.

1.2 Prolonged Conditions of Displacement.

Like the Iraqi refugees in this study, many conflict-affected migrants find themselves in prolonged condition of restricted legal and social rights and uncertainty about the future. UNHCR defines this prolonged uncertainty as ‘protraction’ but I move away from this policy-driven concept. Instead I find Georgia Doná’s ‘prolonged conditions of displacement’ (2015) more helpful for understanding the everyday experiences of time and place of people living in uncertainty. This people-centred approach enables me to move beyond the limits of labels such as ‘forced migrant’ and ‘refugee’. It is a more inclusive concept that does more justice to the personal experiences of prolonged uncertainty and enables me to consider the Iraqi refugees in this study as future-oriented subjects.

Protraction is a legal definition that connotes a temporal framework. The term, although never formally defined as such (Crisp, 2003), is now commonly used to demarcate the circumstances of individuals who are recognized as refugees and for whom one of the three durable solution – voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country – is not reached within 5 years.⁹ In 2015, UNHCR estimated that 6.7 million refugees were finding themselves in ‘protracted refugee situations’, such as people from Afghanistan living in Pakistan and Iran and people from Somalia living in Kenya (UNHCR, 2015a). In 2011 the average length that people would spend in ‘protracted displacement’ was 20 years (Loescher & Milner, 2011), but over the last years it increased to an average of 26 years (UNHCR, 2015a).

⁹ Early definitions of Protracted Refugee Situations (PRS) used a threshold number of 25,000 refugees in a particular place to identify protraction. Later the argument was made that many smaller ‘residual caseloads’ could also be considered as PRS. The threshold number is not mentioned in 2009 UNHCR Executive Committee conclusion (Loescher & Milner, 2011, p. 15).

However, many conflict-affected migrants are not formally recognized as refugees, suggesting that these people are not considered in the numbers and estimations of UNHCR. This includes internally displaced persons (IDPs) who did not cross the borders of a nation-state to seek refuge, undocumented migrants for whom invisibility might be a strategy, asylum-seekers who are waiting for leave to remain and/or waiting in detention centers, individuals caught in bureaucratic vacuums of unresolved, often exclusionary, residency issues and others who are ‘in transit’ from one place and one state to the other. In the Global North, xenophobic migrant policies are deployed to make sure that asylum seekers are not formally recognized as refugees and are prolonged considered as right-optional human beings (Doná, 2015; Hyndman & Giles, 2011; Hyndman & Mountz, 2008).

The temporal framework of protraction also negates that forced migration often does not follow a linear, straightforward process. Many of the Iraqi refugees in this study were in Jordan less than 5 years, but their lives had been affected by conflict and insecurity long before they left Iraq. Others initially sought refuge in Syria or Iraqi Kurdistan. Moreover, the expectations and hopes of those Iraqi refugees who only recently came to Jordan were informed and mediated through the experience of friends and loved ones who had been in Jordan before them. ‘Prolonged conditions of displacement’ is a more people-centered approach that cuts across different times and geographical locations and enables me to understand how people who are displaced try to make sense of their situation, through their socio-historical context and hopes for the future. For those migrants who are formally recognized and for those who are not, in the Global North as well as in the Global South, the “end of permanency is in sight” (Doná, 2015, p. 70). Contexts that seemingly look very different – in regards to living and legal conditions – have in common that experiences of many migrants worldwide are marked by uncertainty and immobility.

1.3 The normality of crisis

What was framed as Europe’s ‘migration and/or refugee crisis’ was misplaced and misrecognized the above-mentioned temporal conditions. If there is a crisis of Europe it is one of legitimization of its borders (Collyer & Russel, 2016) and/or of cooperation (Gamlen, 2015). Many forced and other migrant populations who might or might not travel in(to)

Europe were and are still living in prolonged uncertainty that started long before 2015. The word ‘crisis’ also seems to imply that an aberrant, short-term period of change and chaos and obscures that many people do not merely move through, but are often caught in prolonged uncertainty.

The stereotypical depiction and associated misconceptions of refugees as either ‘vulnerable victims’ and/or ‘cunning crooks’ (C. Horst, 2003) became again manifest in how the ‘2015 European refugee/migrant crisis’ was framed. The realization that many people travelling in(to) Europe owned smartphones was the source of contention in tabloids as well as on Twitter (Gillespie et al., 2016; Leurs, 2016)). The surprise that refugees are not necessarily poor, the fear that a smartphone could be used as a ‘terrorist essential’ and the hope for techno-fixes to systemic problems regarding geopolitics and borders¹⁰ are all signs of “high-tech orientalism” (Chun, 2008). Having access to technology would be a sign of positive development, but only if the way of using it fits into western political agendas and the people using it remain at distance. During the so-called social media revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa the use of smartphones was widely celebrated, but now that the same people are fleeing for the structural constraints they were protesting against, having access to these devices marks them out as undeserving and/or dangerous (Leurs, 2016). In this thesis, I turn this image around: precisely because of prolonged conditions of displacement and the chronicity of crisis (related to societal violence and decay and legal and social uncertainty) having access to digital technologies is crucial.

In situations of crisis, people move within social environments, but the social environment also moves them. ‘Crisis’ puts a prolonged hold on people and societies. Only sometimes are people able to overcome crisis. But amidst of crisis people hold onto life as meaningful in fragmented, ever volatile worlds and in situations of disorder continue to act. Crisis is a terrain of meaning and action. Crisis then is about finding one’s way despite the structural limitations in and beyond one’s physical place (Vigh, 2008). Digital technologies might play important roles in navigating in crisis. As I will show throughout this thesis this includes providing means to (temporarily) overcome the boredom that is associated with waiting, providing opportunities to maintain intimate contact with loved ones who have either

¹⁰ Gillespie et al (2016) for instance point out that digital applications that were targeted on helping refugees were often not able to keep up with the complex developments such as border closures and that refugees were often not aware of the existence of these top-down designed applications.

moved on or stayed behind, finding relatively safe ways of being employed informally, for making sense of and negotiating one's situation, for contesting exclusionary borders and (mis)representations and to hold on to hopes and aspirations. In this thesis I therefore consider the mediation of prolonged displacement and uncertainty by asking how digital technologies help to navigate and negotiate, to hold onto and to make life meaningful amidst and despite crisis?

1.4 Chapter overview

This thesis shows some of the different roles that digital technologies play in the lives of a particular forced migrant population. **Chapter 2** provides the contextual background of the 'transit' experience of Iraqi refugees in Jordan. It contains three different sections: first, I will explain what political and social developments within Iraq resulted in the outward migration of Iraqi nationals and the pessimistic outlook many Iraqi refugees have on the future of Iraq. I then explain Jordan's refugee protection context and the role UNHCR plays in establishing a protection space that is only temporary. This chapter concludes with a description of the Middle Eastern media landscape more generally and the Iraqi media landscape more specifically, as this is necessary to fully understand how Iraqi refugees deploy digital technologies and interpret particular content.

Chapter 3 continues with a literature review connecting academic literature situated in media studies, forced migration studies and anthropology. In this chapter I draw upon theoretical as well as empirical studies that can be useful to further explore digital connectivity in experiences of prolonged displacement. I first consider how Non-Media Centric Studies have enabled us to understand the interplay between TV-viewing practices, social relations and domestic spaces. In experiences of migration, experiences of 'home' and identity are less settled, whereas in prolonged conditions of displacement notions of home and where the future will be, is perpetually unsettled. In conditions of prolonged displacement in the Global South, this experience is deeply informed by 'humanitarian reason' (Fassin, 2012) that reinforces an experience of waiting. Waiting is an affective phenomenon (Hage, 2009). The work of two affect scholars, Lauren Berlant (2011) and Sara Ahmed (2006, 2013), further enables me to explore how mediated attachments can enable people to stay optimistic in the present yet hopefully oriented towards particular futures. As these studies are all situated in late modern, western societies I consider

literature on transnational affect and ‘pragmatic of hope’ (Allan, 2014) to further comprehend how these concepts can be applied in a non-western setting.

In **Chapter 4** I discuss ethnography as a methodological approach. I argue that methodological components of ethnography - long-term social immersion, participant observations and the iterative process between empirical research and theory – are important to come to a closer understanding of everyday mediated experiences. I discuss how this approach has been discussed in the fields of Forced Migration Studies and Non-media-centric Media Studies. I also discuss epistemological and ethical discussions related to conducting a media-ethnographic study with forced migrants. This study is inherently partial: the personal everyday experiences of the people in this study are situated within their own socio-historical and current contexts and through my lens as the ethnographer. As a western female researcher conducting research in the Middle East I am – and always will be - the outsider looking in. I draw upon Donna Haraway’s (1988) notion of situated knowledge: to not render the persons we work with as only innocent or vulnerable and to consider power-sensitive solidarities.

In **Chapter 5** I explore the role of information and how communication processes by and with UNHCR further contributes to how the Iraqi refugees in Jordan experience life in ‘waiting’ in Jordan. I consider how communication with UNHR, but also among fellow Iraqi refugees further informs how Iraqi refugees make sense of and try to actively change their situation in Jordan. Waiting is not a passive experience as becomes evident in my exploration of the roles that digital technologies play in making sense of changes in policies, for estimating one’s chance for travelling onwards through third-country resettlement, contesting the regime through protest and travelling through irregular means.

In **Chapter 6** I further explore different mediated experiences that relate to the more situated, localised experience of place: within Jordan and within the home. I first consider two different neighborhoods where many Iraqi refugees are living called *Hashmi Schmali* and *Gardens*. The Iraqi refugees living in these different locations have different experiences of place and therefore their experiences of uncertainty takes shape differently. I show that experience of insecurity is a multi-layered process and that uncertainty has many faces. Different material and affective circumstances make many refugees resort to the safety of their home. I argue that digital technologies enable the Iraqi refugees to establish an ‘absent

presence' in Jordan. The experience of waiting in Jordan is a mediated and gendered experience. The availability of different digital technologies generate different ways of coping and for carving out places for different members in the home and for the structuring of time.

In **Chapter 7** I consider the mediated orientations to places and times elsewhere, beyond Jordan and the present. What I call affective affordances – the potential of mediated technologies to cross-over and circulate particular affects such as hope and nostalgia – enable Iraqi refugees to reorient themselves to particular places and people, despite the experience of being physically and temporarily 'stuck' in Jordan. I first consider one's relationship to the past and to Iraq, and how the experience of loss – of a homeland, stability and security – is deeply mediated. This further feeds into the need to orient one's hope to the future elsewhere. Particular media become the vessels through which people's lives are refracted via the experiences of distant but similar 'others' - friends and family members who have already travelled onwards to western countries - who in their perception are able to rebuild a 'good life' that is free from waiting.

As a main outcome of the findings I suggest to move away from dichotomies such as stuck/mobile, refugee/citizen, vulnerable/empowered and mediated/non-mediated. Instead I argue for both and more at the same time, as I have come to the understanding that experiences of waiting and (im)mobility are multi-layered dynamic processes. Experiences of migration have always been about negotiating and navigating risks and uncertainty (Hegde, 2016, p. 1) and mediated practices have always been part of the migrant experience. The social dynamics and circumstances of an intensified global economy and the availability of digital devices however partly reconstitute the very experience of being displaced and living in uncertainty. The affordances of digital technologies and analogue media are important to negotiate one's place in the world and to hold on to a meaningful life. Different media partly shape these experiences but how particular messages and information are read is deeply situated in Jordan's specific geographical, social and legal context. People are not free-floating individuals. They are deeply affected by ongoing material and social restrictions. It is through a maze of possibilities and control that the Iraqi refugees in this study navigate and find ways to move. This movement can be – but is not necessarily - physically to places elsewhere or socially in Jordan. It is always entwined together with affective, emotional and imaginative

movements through the presence of absent others, the experiences of not being 'at home' in Jordan, in interactions with the humanitarian regime and through one's imaginations to past and future's elsewhere. The mediated environment in which refugees are located therefore plays an important role in how prolonged displacement is experienced.

Chapter 2 – Setting the Scene: The Research Context

In this chapter I provide a comprehensive overview to set the scene of the mediated experience of Iraqi forced displacement in Jordan. This is crucial as mediated practices are situated in the socio-historical and material context people find themselves in. The chapter includes a brief overview of Iraq's more recent history to further comprehend what Iraqi refugees sought refuge for, the different migration regimes that shape experiences in Jordan and an overview of the transnational and Iraqi media-landscape to further understand what media Iraqi refugees in Jordan might use. I sometimes refer to other refugee contexts to consider potential common threads that come back throughout this thesis. I consider some anecdotal accounts provided by Iraqi refugees in Jordan, as the people in this study often made comparisons to the more distant and recent past and to how life used to be mediated, back in Iraq.

The chapter starts by discussing the political and social developments within the geographical territory known as Iraq that have led to outward migration. Like any migration, forced migration from Iraq should be placed within a post-colonial socio-historical context (Chatelard & Morris, 2011). The context in which people seek refuge and the reasons why can potentially alter attachments to their (former) home country and thoughts on where the future is.

I continue with an overview of Jordan's social and legal context. The experience of being a forced migrant is actively shaped by those who are "staying put" (Brah, 1996, p. 181) and by the legal context in place. Jordan's host population is to a large extent composed of descendants of people who at one point in their life were forced to seek refuge (Chatty, 2013). This has shaped the country's policies and has impacted refugee protection in Jordan as only temporary.

Finally, I will set out the media developments in the region and Iraq. Since the early 1990s satellite technology has transformed Arab broadcasting into a transnational field. The increased availability and access to Internet and smartphones have further contributed to connections that can transgress borders. Many Iraqi refugees in Jordan continue to be active audiences of Iraqi media content through satellite connections and Internet. After the US-led invasion, the state-controlled system collapsed into smaller broadcasting outlets

that reflected the fragmentation occurring in the country. This influences what Iraqi refugees watch and how they interpret mediated content.

2.1 Iraqi Forced Displacement: A Historical Overview of Outward Migration

In 2006, three years after the US-led invasion, humanitarian organizations as well as academics started to report on what they framed as “Iraq’s refugee crisis” (ICG, 2008; Amnesty International, 2008; Marfleet & Chatty, 2009; Sassoon, 2010; Weiss Fagen, 2009). Dawn Chatty and Philip Marfleet (Marfleet & Chatty, 2009, p. 1) for instance stated: “The world was caught off-guard as hundreds of thousands of Iraqis fled their homes.” Most of these outputs were emergency-driven and policy-oriented and therefore neglected historical dynamics and continuities. They recognised the role western countries played in the fall of Saddam Hussein and the chaos that erupted after 2003 and rightfully critiqued the lack of responsibility taken by western governments to support Iraqi forced migrants (Chatelard, 2009). However, they neglected earlier western entanglements in Iraq, including the remnants of British colonialism, as well as the fact that outward Iraqi-migration predates 2003.

Since 1948 there have been several episodes of Iraqi outward migration, related to armed conflict, political unrest, violence towards particular ethnic or religious groups and societal failure (Al-Ali, 2007; Al-Ali & Pratt, 2009; Al-Rasheed, 1994; Chatelard, 2002, 2009; Dewachi, 2017; Van Hear, 1995). I focus on Iraq’s more recent past. Under Saddam Hussein’s rule many people including Kurds in the North, Shi’a Muslims in the South and those in the opposition were victims of persecution and state-violence, resulting in flight. Worldwide it was estimated that in 1996 between 4 million Iraqi nationals were living abroad, of whom 600.000 were formally recognized as refugees (USCR, 1996). In the same year, it was suggested that since the Gulf War (1990-1991) up to two million Iraqi nationals had left for Jordan in order to migrate onwards to countries like Canada and Australia (UNHCR, 1996). Between 1990 and 2000 more than 250.000 Iraqis requested asylum in a European country. Many of them reached their destination after transiting through Jordan, Syria and/or Turkey. Prior to the US-led invasion, Iraqis in Jordan were mostly ‘invisible’ migrants regardless of the reason why they had left the country. They were largely neglected by academics and in the grey literature of international organisations. Relief and

opportunities to legalize one's stay were absent. Moreover, the then predominantly Shi'a Muslim Iraqi refugees experienced uncertainty, as Jordan is a predominantly Sunni Muslim country and rather unfamiliar with and even hostile to this denomination of Islam. This resulted in the need for Iraqi migrants to search for futures elsewhere and to move (in often illegalised manners) onwards (Chatelard, 2002). The numbers mentioned above suggest that what was framed as crisis in 2015 might in fact have been a continuation in line with the Middle Eastern's troublesome past. What has changed is Jordan's refugee protection context and the role played by the international community (see section 2 of this chapter) as well as the overall security situation in Iraq, which has altered the characteristics and experiences of Iraqi nationals seeking refuge.

In order to further understand the subjectivities and experiences of those Iraqi migrants who sought refuge as a result of the chaos that emerged after 2003, we also need to go back into the more distant past. The US-led Gulf war in 1990-1991 (also referred to as Operation Desert Storm) and the UN-imposed economic sanctions (1990 – 2003) have effectively created the extremely precarious environment in post-2003 Iraq (Al-Mohammad, 2012). In 2012, when I first started conducting research on Iraqi forced displacement, I was assisted by Mohammed. Born in the 1980s, he had never known a country that was in peace. Since 1980, Iraq has been in conflict. The brutal Iran-Iraq war (1980 -1988) and the frequent escalation and violence inflicted upon Kurdish Iraqi citizens were followed by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. US-led air bombardments liberated Kuwait, but destroyed much of Iraq's infrastructure including many civilian facilities. Warfare against the Iraqi regime continued through the 1991 – 2003 embargo, by Iraqis referred to as *Al-bishaar*. The ban on exports and imports was officially intended to curtail the power of Saddam Hussein and his Ba'athist party, but *Al-bishaar* effectively strengthened the position of the repressive regime. The elaborate governmental bureaucracy was backed by a 'shadow state' that consisted of patronage networks that were lenient to Saddam Hussein and enabled the ruthless regime to tighten its grip (Tripp, 2010, pp. 259–267). The embargo however had detrimental consequences for the everyday lives of people living in Iraq as it crippled the country's economy and the infrastructure, further derailing Iraq (Dewachi, 2017). Malnutrition, poverty and unemployment became widespread. It had become increasingly difficult to find adequate medicine within the country (p 8). The awareness that the country's infrastructure was failing provided highly educated professionals a further incentive to look for futures elsewhere. Medical

professionals oriented their hopes for the future towards the UK, as their education as well as the Iraqi medical system was deeply rooted in British imperial past (pp. 25-26). Social support systems – like nurseries and free transport – collapsed, pushing professional women back into their homes (Al-Ali, 2007, p. 186).

Despite everyday experiences of poverty, violence and state repression many of the Iraqi people I have spoken to over the years have rather fond memories of the embargo-period as this was contrasted with most recent developments. Nadjie Al-Ali (2007, p. 261) comes to similar conclusions: “Any positive nostalgia for the period before the invasion is largely a measure of the extent to which living conditions have deteriorated since 2003.” It seems that for many of the people who left Iraq after 2003, prior to the invasion there was a general awareness of what formal and informal rules (not) to transgress that made it possible for many Iraqi nationals to live relatively stable lives as long as they would walk the line. Among those Iraqi refugees who had fled Saddam Hussein’s Ba’athist regime there was the hope that the country’s situation would improve after the regime would be overthrown. Madawi Al-Rahseed (1994) shows that in the early 1990s Iraqi refugees who were living in the UK and who identified as Arab (Sunni and Shi’a Muslims) were hoping to return to a post-Ba’athist Iraq. This further explains the political involvement as well as the (mis)use of the Iraqi (Arab) diaspora in supporting the ousting of Saddam Hussein (See Al-Ali & Pratt, 2009).

In March 2003, a US-led coalition - supported by countries like the UK and Australia - invaded Iraq under what turned out to be false pretences that the country had Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). An additional reason provided by the US Government to justify what they framed as Operation Iraqi Freedom was to free the Iraqi people from the oppressive reign of Saddam Hussein and his Ba’athist regime. Initially there was little popular and organised resistance and after three weeks the allied forces found themselves occupying Iraq (Tripp, 2010, pp. 278–282). There were however few plans for reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq (Barakat, 2005). The first two acts of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the US-led transitional government were a recipe for disaster. The dissolution of the Ba’ath party and the ban of all members of the Ba’ath party from public positions as well as the abolishment of the entire Iraqi army and security apparatus meant that at the stroke of a pen, 300.000 young armed men were out of work and on the street (Tripp, 2010, pp. 282–285). Moreover, during the sanction years Saddam Hussein

armed powerful gangs to help him smuggle goods into the country and just before the invasion he freed all prisoners further derailing the country (Fontan, 2009, p. 113 cited in Al-Mohammad, 2012, p. 599). Widespread looting occurred across Iraq (Barakat, 2005) and gender-based violence increased dramatically (Lee-Koo, 2011).

Sovereignty was handed over to the Iraqi Interim Government in June 2004, yet Lewis Paul Bremer, the American leader of the transitional government, appointed its members. Bremer's team was pushing for a representational democracy that would mirror popular distribution of Iraq's communally divided society, but through their policies they were further essentialising sectarian and national differences (Sky, 2015; Tripp, 2010, pp. 277–316). Although there certainly were animosities regarding the violence inflicted upon the Kurds in the North and the Shi'a people in the South and a need for reconciliation, US and UK policies ignored that the country had a long history of secular politics and that in the everyday pragmatics, differences between Shi'a and Sunni people was not clear-cut. Classifying people based upon religion is a recent phenomenon. Before, differences were largely based upon social class, place of residence, profession and education, urban or rural background, political orientation and generation (Al-Ali, 2007, p. 2). For example, in the second half of the 20th century there were many Sunni / Shi'a marriages, but the constitution that became law in 2005 made mixed marriages extremely difficult (Al-Ali, 2007, p. 46).

It was only in 2005 that the security situation further deteriorated. Most of the Iraqi people I worked with would describe the 2003 – 2005-period as a hopeful time during which they were looking forward to how the future in their country would further evolve. Instead, living conditions worsened, there was a sharp increase in criminality and general lawlessness became part of everyday life (Al-Ali, 2007; Al-Mohammad, 2012; Marfleet, 2010; Tripp, 2010, pp. 277–316). The police and army continued to be in disarray at least until 2008 and in the absence of a central state there was an incentive to pledge allegiance to tribes and sectarian communities in order to find additional means to secure one's safety now the state had fallen apart (Al-Mohammad, 2012; Boyle, 2009). Bombs in Shi'ite areas triggered reprisals in Sunni neighbourhoods and vice versa creating a vicious circle of violence and revenge. Militias linked to political parties and terrorist groups like the militant Sunni network Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and Shi'a militias like the Mahdi Army sought to establish sectarian boundaries across what had previously been mixed

neighbourhoods. Many civilians became targets for bombings and/or lost their lives because of the violence. Iraqi Body Count (IBC), an ongoing web-based civilian-led initiative dedicated to record civilian deaths since 2003, estimates that by the time of writing (2d of August, 2017) between 178,234 and 199,591 civilians in Iraq have lost their lives (See also Boyle, 2009 on this data-set). Kidnapping also became a major industry. While often motivated by revenge as well as often exclusionary political and religious ideas these messages were further appropriated to obtain the attention of the internationally oriented media as this would enable them to obtain higher ransom (Al-Mohammad, 2012).¹¹

Life in post-invasion Iraq continued to be marked by the continual struggle to live through dangers, threats and uncertainty. Due to the pervasive violence and a rapid regression of social and human security, many Iraqi civilians decided to flee to Iraq's neighbouring countries: Syria, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. In 2011, the US withdrew its troops from Iraq, but the violent insurgency and political instability continued. A common critique towards the Shi'a dominated government was that they would sideline Iraq's Sunni minority and that they were effectively governed by Iran. Meanwhile, its then leader Nouri Al-Maliki who was pushed forward by the US government (Filkins, 2014; Sky, 2015, pp. 336–338) was becoming an authoritarian leader (Dodge, 2013). In 2014, Sunni insurgents belonging to ISIS confiscated large segments of Syria and North Iraq including cities like Mosul, Tikrit and Fallujah. This again resulted in large numbers of forced internally and internationally displaced people (Higel, 2016; UNHCR, 2016).

At the time of writing it is uncertain how Iraq's future will further develop. It seems that ISIS is losing ground to Iraqi military forces that are supported by airstrikes of multiple foreign players with competing political agendas. Meanwhile the Baghdad-led Iraqi government – operating from the highly securitised Green Zone - continues to be largely dysfunctional, torn by corruption, ethno-sectarian repression and the violence of militias consisting of religious fundamentalists. Regardless of whether some sort of peace will be restored, all but two of the people I worked with were very pessimistic about the future of Iraq and did not envision the possibility of return. Mohammad Al-Haydar (2012, p. 604) conducted ethnographic fieldwork in 2006-2007 and in 2009 states he “never met a person

¹¹ See Chapter 7 on how the Iraqi refugees in Jordan consider the role of in particular Al-Jazeera in regard to the unraveling of Iraqi society.

in Basra or Baghdad who had not experienced at least the kidnapping of a close family member, a friend or neighbour”. He shows through the account of his friend’s kidnapping how a combination of different uncertainties have come to play out in everyday life in Iraq: the worrying for the one’s personal safety and the safety of loved ones, the waiting for someone during the kidnapping, the need to find money to cover the ransom and finally the financial debt after having paid the ransom. These experiences have further unraveled communities and destroyed many people’s lives and subjectivities. It not only broke down many relationships that extend beyond the family and close, previously established, friendships, but also the trust in a wider Iraqi community and in Iraq as a nation. I encountered this dissolution frequently throughout my fieldwork, and I will reflect upon this throughout this thesis.

In this section I have shown that what was framed, as the ‘Iraqi refugee crisis’ was a continuation of Iraq’s troublesome past. This past partly contributed to the chaos that evolved in post-2003 Iraq and stretches out to the future, as the further unravelling of Iraqi society has left a deep distrust in Iraq’s future among those seeking refuge in Jordan. The earlier mentioned study by Madawi Al-Rasheed (1994) showed that Iraqi Arab refugees in the UK held firmly on to their hope for return and their dream to establish a democracy in Iraq. This dream has failed to materialise. In fact, as I will further show in Chapter 7, seeing and hearing about the ongoing violence in Iraq reinforces the lack of trust in and for a future of Iraq and the need, of most Iraqi refugees in Jordan, to imagine futures elsewhere beyond Iraq. In the next section I will further consider how this desire is related to Jordan’s legal protection context. An important disclaimer is that much of Iraq’s displacement is internal (Chatelard & Morris, 2011; see for most recent numbers Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2017). Crossing the borders of nation-states requires access to financial means and legal documentation (Van Hear, 2004). My study focuses on those Iraqi refugees who had the financial means to leave their country.

2.2 Iraqi displacement in Jordan: temporary protection and the experience of transit

Establishing Jordan’s Urban Protection Space

Jordan is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its related 1967 protocol, the two key documents that were developed to ascertain the legal and social rights of people

seeking refuge beyond the borders of nation-states, suggesting that Jordan does not have a refugee regime as such (Chatelard & Morris, 2011, p. 6). Jordan's constitution however bars extradition of political refugees. Its Law No 24 of 1973 on Residence and Foreigners' Affairs basically governs all movement into the country. It makes reference to 'refugees' as it states that those seeking asylum need to report themselves with the authorities within 48 hours. There is no specification on what the consequences are of that reporting (Stevens, 2013, p 7).

The reluctance of Jordan and other Middle Eastern states to establish a refugee rights framework is often explained through the prolonged presence of displaced Palestinians and the caution that UNHCR would promote local integration or third country resettlement instead of the Palestinians' right of return (Hanafi, 2014, p. 587). In contrast to Syria and Lebanon, the Jordanian government has provided citizenship to many Palestinians residing in Jordan. According to Oroub El-Abed (2014, p. 98) Jordan's official figure for Palestinians living in Jordan would be 43 *per cent*. This breakdown is contested because of the sensitivity this might cause as it might then be deemed the truer home of Palestinians. The 2015 census does not provide a breakdown between Jordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians (Ghazal, 2016). Jordan also hosts an extensive number of Palestinians who find themselves in legal limbo as stateless refugees such as ex-residents of Gaza (El-Abed, 2006) and Palestinian Syrians who sought refuge in Jordan as a result of the current-day conflict in Syria (Morrison, 2014).

In 1998 the Jordanian government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNHCR that enabled the establishment of a 'protection space' to ensure the rights of refugees registering with the UN refugee agency (Evans-Barns, 2009). This MoU came into existence next to Jordan's Law No. 24 of 1973 on Residency and Foreigners Affairs (Stevens, 2013). The MoU ensured that people could register with UNHCR in order to seek asylum beyond their country of origin. This would legalize their stay in Jordan and protect them from being forcefully returned (except for Palestinians who are governed by the UNRWA-agency and one can "only enjoy services from one UN agency at the time"). Generally referred to as non-refoulement, this principle is considered as "the essential foundation of international refugee law" (Goodwin-Gill, 2014, p. 40).¹² The MoU not only

¹² see also Chapter 5 on how this principle has been violated in regard to refugees from Sudan.

resulted in a drop of deportations, but also established an operative framework for UNHCR to safeguard protection (Chatelard, 2002, p. 9).

The UN refugee agency started to perform as a surrogate state (Kagan, 2011): it took on a number of functions that are generally performed by a state if the 1951 convention is signed. Beyond registration and refugee status determination, this includes also access to health care and education services for the registered refugees (Evans-Barns, 2009). In the absence of a legal framework as well in reaction to the role UNHCR took on, the displaced Iraqis increasingly put their trust in the agency and expected little from their host government (p. 1). UNHCR does not have the capacity to bypass its host, and requires the goodwill of the Jordanian government as well as financial donations of other countries. The environment to safeguard protection is therefore fluid, and can be expanded as well as retracted by the host state (p. 12). This became evident in 2006 when the Jordanian government suspended UNHCR for two weeks upon suggesting 'local integration' as a durable solution for the refugees the country was hosting. Talking about this option was 'off the table' (Ward, 2014, p. 11).

The high political profile and the notion that the Iraqi refugee crisis was the largest urban refugee crisis UNHCR had ever addressed resulted in significantly greater donations provided by other countries than for any other urban refugee situations so far (Chatelard & Morris, 2011, p. 5). Providing financial assistance to countries affected by a refugee influx is considered as one of the - be it the easiest and rather perennial - acts of burden sharing (Suhrke, 1998). 'Burden sharing' can also take the form of state-controlled resettlement to a third country, by relaxing particular migration-policies. In 2007, as a result of international pressure, schools and public health systems became freely accessible to Iraqi migrants who were registered with UNHCR (Sassoon, 2010, p. 41). Due to donor fatigue and a shifting focus to other 'crises' such as the arrival of large numbers of Syrian refugees, for Iraqi refugees this is no longer the case.

The number of Iraqi refugees Jordan is hosting has been and continues to be vigorously debated. The Norwegian Research Institute Fafo (2007) conducted a survey in 2007 and initially drew the conclusion that there were 161.000 Iraqi migrants in Jordan. The Jordanian government as well as many aid workers and academics contested these numbers as far too low. Iraqi migrants would be reluctant to reveal themselves to Jordanian authorities. The Jordanian government argued that the total of phone numbers ascribed to

Iraqi nationals was 481.000, as Jordanian phone companies register the nationality of their subscribers. Fafo eventually reconciled the various estimates and argued that the number of Iraqis hosted in Jordan in 2007 was in between 450.000 and 500.000. At the time of fieldwork, the Jordanian government maintained the accuracy of these numbers, but the UN refugee agency solely relied on the number of Iraqi people registered.¹³ Over the years, the international community established outreach programs to locate the ‘invisible’ refugees for registration. The concerned agencies eventually admitted that over 90 percent of the Iraqis in need of protection had already been registered (Chatelard & Morris, 2011). This does not suggest that every Iraqi migrant has registered with UNHCR. Not everyone benefits from registration: the goals of a legal framework might not align with the realities experienced and desires by refugees. It might for instance be used to further discriminate or even lead to deportations as also became evident in the experiences of Mozambican refugees in South Africa (Polzer, 2007).

It is important to recognize that in the Global North as well as in the Global South there is always politics behind statistics published on (forced) migration populations (Crisp, 1999; Fargues, 2014). Jeff Crisp (1999) points us to several obstacles to “counting refugees”. This includes issues such around labelling (who counts as a refugee?), operational issues (do the refugees know how to find protection and/or wish to be found?) and the political reasons a particular state has for inflating (for instance to receive more international aid) or deflating the numbers (for instance for election purposes). Philippe Fargues (2014) equally shows how definitions of what counts as emigration and immigration plugs into highly sensitive issues of national identity and nationhood. This makes the collection of statistics a difficult matter that can result in contrasting, but not necessarily contradictory, estimates.

There is a wide variance on why and how Iraqi nationals sought refuge in Jordan: those who did not flee reactively had time to make preparations to leave such as selling their property. Others came to Jordan after an initial episode of internal displacement, or left Iraq after facing one difficulty after the other. Already in 2003, people associated to Saddam Hussein’s regime had left. Framed as ‘Mercedes refugees’ (Margesson, Bruno, & Sharp, 2009), their assets and ties enabled these Iraqi nationals to find a relatively stable status, in Syria, Yemen and Jordan. A purge against intellectuals and professionals

¹³ See Stevens (2013, pp. 4-6) and Chatelard and Morris (2011) for a more extensive analysis of counting Iraqi refugees in Jordan

including medical doctors (Marfleet, 2010) further pushed many middle-class Iraqis to seek security abroad. Since the sectarian killings in 2006 – 2008 there was more variety in the geographical and socio-economic backgrounds of people seeking refuge (Sassoon, 2010).

Given that the MoU came into existence next to and not instead of the 1973 law on residence and foreigners' affairs this provides also other avenues for legalizing one's stay through what is called *iqāmb*, a residency permit. At the time of writing there were a variety of ways to obtain *iqāmb*, including putting 10.000 JOD (approximately £ 11.000) on a Jordanian bank account, through buying a property, by attending a Jordanian university, by starting an import/export business with the help of a Jordanian business partner and/or by marrying (as a non-Jordanian women) a man with Jordanian citizenship as citizenship crosses only over through patrilineal lines (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan E-portal, 2017). The first few options mentioned are unavailable to people without resources. The latter potentially complicates the position of divorced non-Jordanian woman in Jordan¹⁴ as well as the legal position of children born within a marriage between Iraqi men and Jordanian women.

The additional opportunities *iqāmb* provides over an UNHCR-registration document seem to be limited. Access to work is governed by labour laws that apply to all foreigners, regardless of owning *iqāmb*. I met people who had both registered at UNHCR and owned *iqāmb*. I was told that the latter exempted them from the exit fees they thought they would have to pay upon leaving Jordan, enabled their children to attend particular private schools, and/or they received an *iqāmb* because they were home-owners in Jordan. Chatelard (2016) notes that between 30 and 40 *per cent* of UNHCR-registered Iraqis also had residence permits. Access to work is governed by labour laws that apply to all foreigners, regardless of owning *iqāmb*. Work permits are difficult to acquire, except for professionals with skills that are in high demand in Jordan's labour market (Chatelard & Morris, 2011, p. 6). Recent changes show that there is some willingness to incorporate Syrian refugees into Jordan's labour market (Betts & Collier, 2015). However, this is only the case for low skilled professions.

The economic impact of refugees is a recurring theme in the Jordanian media and political

¹⁴ See MacDougall (2011) on the difficulties of Iraqi divorced women whose children are Jordanian nationals.

discourse. The different larger refugee influxes to Jordan – the Palestinians, Iraqis and the Syrians – have all resulted in concerns of politicians and in media reporting about the potential burden these forced migrants would put on the Jordanian economy (Chatty, 2015, pp. 3–4; El-Abed, 2014). The one million Palestinians, who needed to involuntarily return from Kuwait and the Gulf in the 1990s, brought with them capital and skills that stimulated Jordan’s economy (Van Hear, 1995). It is important to recognise the difficulties of people living in Jordan and that Jordan is a country that has limited natural resources and that struggles with drought (Al-Qinna, Hammouri, Obeidat, & Ahmad, 2011; Hadadin, Qaqish, Akawwi, & Bdour, 2010; Hammouri & El-Naqa, 2007; United Nations, 2011). A study on the economic impact of Iraqi refugees after 2003 shows however that post-2003 inflation is due to other factors including the much larger investments of non-Jordanian Arab nationals, but also the increase in fuel costs as prior to the invasion Jordan imported subsidized oil from Iraq (Saif & DeBartolo, 2007; Sassoon, 2010, pp. 49–51).

The Jordanian government considers the presence of (forced) migrants in regards to its own geopolitical and domestic agenda, suggesting that Iraqis and other forced migrants are fitted within multiple, sometimes competing, human mobility and non-mobility regimes. The plurality of mobility and non-mobility regimes can be further understood through what Alexander Betts (2010) describes the Refugee Regime Complex and enables the nation-state to strategically choose between multiple, often competing regimes. It also seems to create further stratification between forced migrants, based upon one’s financial circumstances but also upon nationality.

Another way of understanding the practices of the Jordanian Government is by considering how the country’s security and development discourse intersect with what Oroub El-Abed calls the “guest discourse”, an ethical hospitality (2014, p. 82 citing Brun 2010) that refers to the country’s Bedouin, Islamic and Arab cultural traditions. A welcoming policy goes together with the determination not to establish any arrangement that can result in permanence (Weiss Fagen, 2009, p. 5). Hospitality can become conditional and threatened if the host society feels intimidated by the potential power the guest might have, either financially, socially or political. In 2005, bombings in three Amman-based hotels – claimed by AQI¹⁵ - resulted in increased security measures. Young

¹⁵ Ten years later, in February 2015 two Iraqi perpetrators were executed, in what seemed to be in retaliation of the brutal killing of Mu’ath al Kasasbeh by ISIS even though Al Qaeda has distanced itself from the

single men were barred from entering, and the Jordanian authorities would only let Iraqis enter who owned newly issued passports that were less prone to forgery. In 2007, Jordan began demanding entry visas, which became more difficult to obtain (Sassoon, 2010, pp. 53–55). Joseph Sassoon (2010, p. 54) cites various politicians in various newspaper articles, including Jordan’s English newspaper *The Jordan Times*, and televised media sources, including *Al Jazeera* in which at that time Iraqis were increasingly framed as a potential security threat. Especially Shi’a Iraqi men would not be let into the country. Those in Jordan were targeted for deportation to Iraq.

Iraqi Urban Refugees in Jordan

In Jordan, most Iraqi refugees as well as most Syrian and other refugee populations are living in urban settings. Many forced migrants tend to prefer living in urban settings over living in camp or rural settings (Fabos & Kibreab, 2007).¹⁶ Cities would provide better self-sufficiency and social opportunities. It is also important to recognize the importance of access to facilities such as Internet and electricity as these provide access to transnational spaces many refugees rely on, financially as well as socially and access to regular and irregular jobs. In the case of Jordan there was also no attempt made to contain the majority of Iraqi refugees. Urban displacement however causes different challenges for humanitarian interventions, including the provision of adequate protection. Often, refugees are residing in impoverished neighbourhoods where local and national governments are already struggling to provide their own citizens with adequate basic services. This makes it more difficult to distinguish UNHCR’s target population and to provide protection and assistance without disgruntling the host population who might feel equally disenfranchised (Jacobsen & Furst Nichols, 2012). Urban refugees would be more prone to face arbitrary state actions and are demonized as they are considered as a burden for national resources or a national threat, further creating an environment perceived as hostile and insecure. Invisibility can be an important strategy for feeling safe, also in regard to finding informal employment, but at the same time can threaten one’s access to legal protection and other necessary services and make it more difficult to produce accurate number of the target population (Fabos & Kibreab, 2007; Jacobsen & Furst Nichols, 2012).

actions of Da’esh in 2013.

¹⁶ Cities are often also build around camps such as Jordanian city Irbid.

Iraqis are scattered across Amman. The more affluent Iraqis are residing in residential neighbourhoods in West Amman, whereas many less well-off Iraqis live among poorer Jordanian, Palestinian and other migrants in the eastern part of Amman where they live in often badly maintained apartments (see Chapter 6). The Fafo data in combination with data from UNHCR provide viable background information on the individual and household characteristics of the Iraqi population in Jordan. The gender distribution was relatively even. Approximately 35 *per cent* are children, 56 *per cent* are in the age range of 18-59 years old and 9.4 *per cent* are sixty year or older (UNHCR, 2015a, 2015b) According to Fafo (2007), approximately 87 *per cent* identified as Muslim Arabs, of whom 80 *per cent* identified as Sunni Muslim and 20 *per cent* belonged to the Shi'a tradition of Islam. Three *per cent* considered themselves as Kurds, and the remaining 10 *per cent* belonged to non-Muslim minorities. In Figure 4.1. of Chapter 4 I provide a breakdown of the people I have spoken to for this research project. Even though it is not possible to make generalisations based upon the small scale and ethnographic approach, 17 out of 42 people in my study belonged to Iraq's non-Muslim minorities (Assyrian Christians and Sabeian-Mandean) suggesting that the space for religious minorities in Iraq has been further confined.

The majority of Iraqi refugees registered at UNHCR come from Baghdad and formerly belonged to the middle class (Fafo, 2007; Pascucci, 2011). Education levels were remarkably high, as 50 *per cent* have a university education (Chatelard, 2016). This makes the situation of the displaced Iraqi population unusual in comparison to many other refugee populations, as it resulted in different needs and expectations. Harriet Dodd (2010, p. 4) for instance argues in regard to Iraqi refugees in Jordan that it "is a refugee influx of a population with first-world aspirations rather than a third-world tolerance of vulnerability". The narratives of Iraqi refugees in Egypt would concern what Elisa Pascucci (2011, p. 50) calls 'middle-class anxieties' like concerns for the quality of education. Regardless of the position they were in prior to displacement, all of the Iraqi refugees in Jordan are affected by experiences of violence, loss, feelings of powerlessness. There is uncertainty about the future as there is no guarantee that their host state will not shift its policy and will send them back to Iraq (Chatelard & Morris, 2011; Pascucci, 2011).

Some of the Iraqi refugees have temporary (in)formal jobs. Whereas this puts them potentially at risk of being deported, according to Gerladine Chatelard (2016) a more

common complaint was that salaries were below those of Jordanians in similar positions. An important disclaimer in regard to informal employment in Jordan is that 44 *per cent* of Jordanians are also working informally (UNDP, 2013). Most available work in Jordan is low-skilled – factory work, services, cleaning – and workers earn around 200 to 250 JOD a month (£ 217 – £ 272). This is barely enough to cover the rent in one of the poorer areas in Amman (Pavanello & Haysom, 2012). Other Iraqi refugees get by with limited UNHCR support, by depleting their savings or by depending on relatives abroad. Especially the highly educated and formerly rich Iraqis prefer to live off their savings, but this often means a process of downward social mobility as they become increasingly impoverished and dependent on assistance (Chatty & Mansour, 2011a, p. 68; Pascucci, 2011). Meanwhile, the understanding that Iraqi refugees are rich as well as what seem to be inflated numbers of government numbers are reproduced in the media discourse, further influencing the ideas of the Jordanian host population that refugees are depleting Jordan's scarce resources are responsible for the country's inflation (Leenders, 2008). Many of the Jordanian people I met over the years continued to insist that Jordan was host to 1 million Iraqi refugees as well as 2 million Syrian refugees, who are openly blamed for the country's difficulties. This discourse further shapes how welcome Iraqi and other refugees feel in Jordan.

The Limits of Temporary Protection: Establishing Transit

In the MoU the term 'refugee' as well as the term 'asylum seeker' are recognised. Upon recognition as 'refugee' UNHCR committed itself to finding a durable solution beyond Jordan's territory (Stevens, 2013). Formally, recognized refugees were initially allowed a stay of six months. In 2014, this period has been extended to one year (Malkawi, 2014). After that designated period a durable solution should be found elsewhere. Most refugees in Jordan overstay this designated period but are aware that their stay in Jordan is only temporarily tolerated. One way to circumvent the time pressure of finding solutions elsewhere is by providing different labels. As I stated in the introduction, the Iraqi migrants I worked with self-identify as 'refugees' whereas they often are not formally recognized as such and are by UNHCR defined as 'people of concern'. Their UNHCR documents do however provide them with similar legal localized protection as recognized refugees.

UNHCR (2017) defines the three durable solutions that would enable refugees to "live

their lives in dignity and peace” as: local integration, voluntary repatriation and third country resettlement. The search for a durable solution is a crucial step of UNHCR’s protection framework (UNHCR, 2004). It is based upon the premise that a solution is found when movement stops and that such a solution would provide an ending to a refugee’s suffering (Black & Koser, 1998). In the MoU between the Jordanian Government and UNHCR it was formalized that possibilities for obtaining Jordanian citizenship, to work and integrate in other ways are restricted (Stevens, 2013). Voluntary repatriation – the voluntary return to one’s homeland – is by UNHCR still largely considered as the optimal solution for protracted refugee situations (Executive Committee of The High Commissioner’s Programme, 2016). This ‘return bias’ (Long, 2011, p. 10) builds upon the premise that there is a fixed connection between people and places and negates that during exile people and places undergo significant changes. Empirical research has shown that the assumption that a refugee wants to and simply can return ‘home’ should be questioned (Black & Koser, 1998; Chatty & Mansour, 2011a; Crisp, 2003, 2004; Hammond, 1999; Iaria, 2011, 2013; Van Hear, 2003). The major causes for protraction are indeed “to be found in the failure of major powers, including the US and the EU, to engage in countries of origin and the failure to consolidate peace agreements” (Loescher & Milner, 2005, p. 81), yet any comprehensive approach should include the voices of displaced populations who are affected by often living years in uncertainty.

The appropriation of the ‘refugee’-label by Iraqi refugees themselves can be linked to the hope that this label will provide third country resettlement (Chatelard, 2016). In comparison to other refugee populations, an extensive resettlement program for displaced Iraqi nationals was set up. In 2006 UNCHR started to encourage mostly western nation-states to consider Iraqi refugees for resettlement. In 2008 and 2009 many western countries accepted relatively large numbers of Iraqi resettlement cases (Chatelard & Morris, 2011). Between 2009 and 2014, fifty *per cent* of the people who were resettled to the United States came from Iraq. In that period a total of 98,000 Iraqi nationals travelled via the US Resettlement Program (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2013). It seems that now the resettlement slots for Iraqi refugees are limited (Interview, UNHCR Jordan Resettlement Officer, 06/08/2015).

Chantal Berman (2011) in her comparative analysis of the resettlement policies by the US and the EU, shows that both policies aimed to minimize the scale of and to control the

characteristics of those they would be considered for resettlement. The US, initially reluctant to accept resettlement cases, as this would imply a failure of the 2003 US-led invasion, reframed Iraqi resettlement as a 'strategic' interest for their national security. Other countries were hesitant because they saw the displacement of the Iraqis largely as a problem of the US' making (Cohen, 2008). EU-countries were only willing to accept those refugees that were considered as vulnerable, without an incriminating history and the potential to financially contribute. Their policies were largely aimed at containment in Iraq's neighbouring countries through economic support (Berman, 2011). Most often, in prolonged refugee issues, nation-states in the Global North accept only a small number of refugee cases, while the majority of the refugees remains in the Global South where they continue to rely on often-waning international financial assistance (Hyndman & Giles, 2011). However, a relatively large number of Iraqi nationals did find irregular means into Europe (Fandrich, 2013) An important disclaimer is that refugee recognition within European countries of Iraqi nationals was in fact higher before 2003 (Berman, 2011, p. 2) and that deportations by some EU countries reinforced the need for onwards movement towards other EU countries that were providing refugee protection for Iraqi nationals (Sperl, 2007, p. 12).

It is wrong to presume that Iraqi refugees would just embrace any solution including that of local integration in Jordan and/or return to Iraq (Chatty & Mansour, 2011b; Iaria, 2011, 2013), even if the lives of displaced Iraqis in Jordan continues to be coloured by insecurity. The experiences of prolonged conflict in Iraq means that most Iraqi refugees are reluctant regarding a future in and for Iraq. Research on Iraqi nationals who returned to Iraq after having been refugees in Jordan and Syria shows that their migration is often circular. The lack of safety and difficult living conditions in Iraq often pushes them to leave Iraq for a second time (Iaria, 2011, 2013). Sara Sadek (2010, p. 44) argues that most Iraqis in Jordan have no choice but to somehow pursue a degree of short-term local integration. This is true to the extent that life in Jordan goes on. The ongoing legal and social uncertainty in Jordan (see Chapter 6) but equally so the experiences of other Iraqi refugees who travelled onwards have however reinforced that life in Jordan is temporary and spurs the hope for and the necessity one feels for finding solutions located elsewhere (see Chapter 7). If countries find themselves in protracted conflict – like Iraq but equally other countries like Somalia, Sri Lanka or Afghanistan - complex relationships arise of people dispersed over a former home country, neighbouring territories and countries further afield (Van Hear,

2003). In Chapter 5 I consider how the experience of transit and ‘waiting’ among Iraqi refugees can be further understood through UNHCR’s communicative practices, but equally so relates to other communicative practices that Iraqi refugees engage in. In order to make that argument a better understanding of the what media and digital technologies Iraqi refugees in Jordan draw upon is important. This will be further explored in the next section of this chapter.

2.3 Developments within the Middle Eastern Transnational and Iraqi Media Landscape

Over the last 20 years the emergence of the Internet and the availability of satellite TV have changed Middle Eastern media into a transnational landscape (Gunter & Dickinson, 2013; Kraidy & Khalil, 2009; Sakr, 2012). In conjunction, these two technological advancements have fostered cross-border connections and have made households in the Middle East into media-rich environments through which people make sense of their everyday lives. These distinct technologies overlap in how they function, for instance since the consumption news happens increasingly online but often through accessing the websites of satellite channels. Online interactions and forms of communication – either peer-to-peer, peer-to-many- or many-to-many – interact with what is shown on TV and how it is interpreted (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011; Gillespie, 2006; Sakr, 2012). Moreover, both technological developments result in a reordering of private and public spheres: A wider variety of different local and foreign agendas regarding the political, commercial and moral come into the private sphere, whereas different media forms bring into the public domain issues that in patriarchal societies have been previously considered private (Khiabany & Sreberny, 2004). This all suggests the “need to think beyond the satellite-Internet divide” (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011, p. 1351). However, for the sake of further comprehending how different media are embedded in the Iraqi refugee households I do tease out the particular histories, first of satellite TV and then of Internet in the Middle Eastern context. I then focus more specifically on the Iraqi media landscape and how that has changed after the 2003 invasion.

Satellite Television

In the early 1990s, satellite technology started to transform Arab broadcasting into a transnational field that is distinct from the preceding more nationally-contained and state-controlled media systems (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009). Satellite dishes enabled Arabic-speaking audiences – reaching from Morocco to Oman and to the diasporas - to obtain reception of transnational satellite broadcasts and to circumvent the censorship that was previously tied to national borders and state interests. According to the Jordanian Department of Statistics, in 2011 98.9 *per cent* of Jordanian households owned a television set and 96.9 *per cent* had access to satellite TV (Sakr, 2015)

In 2012, the Arabic-speaking television industry consisted of approximately 700 transnational satellite channels (Kraidy, 2012) covering a wide range of issues including national and international news, debates on religious issues, sports, music videos, drama series and other kinds of shows with entertainment and educational purposes (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009). The climate and weather conditions within many Arab countries might be conducive to the popularity of the TV, as the heat reinforces the incentive to spend much time indoors in front of the TV (Awan & Steemers, 2017, p. 29). Most TV channels are in the hands of business elites and/or closely linked to nation-states and political parties these channels originate from. Transnational TV continues to be to a certain extent, controlled by national governments, political parties as well as by religious leaders, but this control is exercised inconsistently and is often guided by economic and political interests (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009).

An extensive analysis of the geopolitics of Arab Satellite TV goes beyond the scope of this PhD (See for more in-depth discussions Gunter & Dickinson, 2013; Kraidy & Khalil, 2009; Sakr, 2004, 2007, 2012; Steemers & Sakr, 2017), but some issues are important to further tease out in order to understand the TV-viewing practices of the Iraqi refugees in this study. The live-coverage by CNN of the Gulf War (1990-1991) would have generated among Arab audiences a hunger for news coverage that was not constrained by local governments and this triggered the demand for satellite TV (Gunter & Dickinson, 2013, p. 10). In 1996, the Qatari-funded news channel *Al-Jazeera* was launched enabling a flow of

information from East to West. Western politicians and analysts initially praised the channel for its democratic potentials. This enthusiasm soon turned into anxiety and hostility after the events of 9-11, partly because the channel aired videotapes of Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden (El-Nawawy & Iskandar, 2002; Kraidy, 2010).¹⁷ Mohammed El-Nawawy and Adel Iskandar (2002) relate this response also to the broadcaster's approach towards "comprehensive discussions from all possible angles on many issues" (p. 28). The channel would therefore not necessarily serve as a mouthpiece to particular political leaders or governments. El-Nawawy and Iskandar however also argue that by emphasizing radical viewpoints it neglected the more moderate voices. Moreover, regardless of its aim for 'objectivity' the Qatari-funded channel is reluctant in addressing the government it is funded by (Figenschou, 2014). In the Arabic-speaking world *Al-Jazeera* also met mixed receptions. Some praised its objectivity as they compared it to the previously government-controlled news outlets, whereas others have critiqued the ways it represents the Arab world and accused the channel of sensationalism (Gunter & Dickinson, 2013, pp. 11–12).

Following 9/11 and the Iraqi invasion, the available satellite channels multiplied radically (Sakr, 2012, p. 145). Currently, the most prominent news-channels from the Gulf are Qatari-based *Al-Jazeera*, Saudi-owned *Al Arabiya* and *Abu Dhabi TV*. Like *Al-Jazeera*, *Al-Arabiya* and *Abu Dhabi TV* are equally careful in critiquing the government they are funded by (Gunter & Dickinson, 2013, p. 36). The satellite media sphere might have increased people's awareness of regional issues and has resulted in a shared entertainment culture, but it has not resulted in a pan-Arab sense of belonging. News relies upon a version of Arabic in English known as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) or *fusHa* (meaning pure) to reflect its seriousness¹⁸ whereas entertainment television largely relies upon Lebanese and Egyptian dialects. Particular accents and identities are therefore given less attention (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009, p. 96). This also becomes evident in the work by Leila Abu-Lughod on the divide between Egyptians with a rural and urban background (1997, 2004). Regardless of using a standardized language, news outlets reveal stark differences in their news selection, choices for guests speakers, the way news anchors dress and in the positions they take for instance regarding Palestine, the Iraq invasion and women's rights (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009,

¹⁷ In later work Marwan Kraidy also shows how during the Arabic uprisings the Qatari networks were once again lauded by western politicians as the leader in global media (Kraidy, 2017)

¹⁸ Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) evolved from a combination of classical Arabic with some localized dialects, eliminating some more localized idioms (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009, p. 96).

pp. 77–98). *Al-Jazeera* would for instance focus upon “hard news” (p. 96) whereas *Al-Arabiya* would equally consider softer positive news, such as the birth of a baby panda or reporting on developments in cosmic surgery.

Naomi Sakr (2004), in her introduction to the edited volume on women and media in the Middle East, considers whether women as journalists, producers and audiences are able to participate, interpret and contest dominant meanings about gender. Sakr shows how for instance women in Saudi Arabia are able through phone-in radio discussion programs to share their thoughts on women’s rights. However - just like in the rest of the world – women’s stories and experiences are still largely obscured in Middle Eastern mainstream news stories.

Tightly-controlling state and commercial powers thus continue to exert their influence on TV, but with a wider variety of choices, viewers are able to switch to programs they like or find the least objectionable in regard to their own politics and cultural norms (Sakr, 2007, p. 2). Generalizations on television programming can neither serve as a reflection of what people think, nor presume assumptions upon how media such as television can influence thoughts. In-depth audience research on regional TV-watching practices in the Middle East continues to be sparse (Sakr, 2007). Exceptions are the work by Christopher Philips (2012) who considered Jordanian and Syrian news consumption and Dina Nassif’s PhD-thesis (2013) on talk show reception by women in Jordan. Phillips (2012) finds that Jordanian audiences tend to consider the Jordanian public broadcaster called Jordanian Radio and Television Corporation (JRTVC) as the ‘government’s message’ (p. 151). The only other Jordan-oriented broadcaster called Roya TV was launched in 2011. This private satellite channel would cultivate its audience more assiduously (Sakr, 2015, p. 21).

Entertainment channels tend to be more popular than news channels (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009, p. 146). Different channels are again linked to different countries as well as different political agendas, beliefs and commercial interests. The biggest players are the privately owned Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC-Sat), the Dubai-based but Saudi-owned Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC) and Dubai’s official broadcaster Dubai TV (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009, p. 146). These TV channels address the ‘Arab family’ and call themselves family channels. Popular entertainment range from music videos, drama series, reality shows, talk shows, game shows, religious programming and children’s programs

(Tawil-Souri, 2008). Dina Nassif (2013) shows how talk shows like *Kalaam Nawaem* (Soft talks) and *Abmar Bel Khat Al Areed* (In bold red) would open up discussions regarding gender equality and different forms of violence. They engage in debates about social change in the Arab world as they for instance discuss gendered and generational roles and expectations, but they tend to be rather conservative and conform to prevailing social and cultural norms regarding for instance sexual morals (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009, p. 55). These channels also buy the distribution rights for American series like *Friends*, *Grey's Anatomy* and *The Simpsons*, films¹⁹, talk shows like *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and *The Doctors* and cooking contests like *MasterChef*.

Drama series referred to as *Musalsalat* are extremely popular dramatic mini-series (Salamandra, 1998, p. 241). The word literally means serial or chains and the format is relatively similar to Latin-American telenovela: they are screened every night but usually one season only lasts a month (Salamandra, 2004, pp. 169–170). In-depth studies by Leila Abu-Lughod (1997, 2004) and Christa Salamandra (1998, 2004). The more recent popular drama series include series such as *Haram-al-Sultan* (*Mubteşem Yüzyıl*), broadcasted on Dubai TV, and *Bab-el-Hara* (*The Neighborhood's Gate*), broadcasted on MBC. *Haram-al-Sultan* chronicles the life of the Ottoman Sultan Suleyman the magnificent. The series *Bab-el-Hara* is set in a neighborhood in Damascus, Syria during the mandate period of 1930/1940 and shows the yearning for independence of French rule (Zaatari, 2015). Both series depict in line with Kraidy and Al Ghazzi a 'neo-Ottoman cool' (2013, cited by Yanardağoğlu & Karam, 2013, p. 567). It suggests a nostalgia towards earlier times as well as critique of further westernization and the chaotic developments within the region. 'Neo-Ottoman cool' refers to the popularity of Turkish series among Arabic-speaking audiences that depict a different conceptualisation of westernized modernity than do western series: one that also incorporates aspects of religiosity and modesty (Yanardağoğlu & Karam, 2013).

The popularity of talent shows like *Arab Idol*, *The Voice* and *Arab's got Talent* can be further explained if we, like Marwan Kraidy (2007) understand these media events also as political spaces. Young Arabs were to be the most dedicated fans, as the TV-program enabled them to vote openly and discuss contextual contested political issues. Another study (Karam, 2007) shows however that youth audiences – although they are entertained by music and films – continue to feel marginalized regarding their desire for personal freedoms and

¹⁹ Films and series are usually censored from sexual content.

employability and, in felt restricted in voicing their opinions, either in the public or in the private sphere. This enables us to further explain the rapid emergence of Internet-use within the region, as access to the Internet can provide an increased sense of empowerment and possibilities. Satire and the use of caricatures in the Arab media culture are also very important. I will further explore that increased access and availability of means to access Internet in the next section.

The latest drama series, talent shows and satirical comedies are screened during the fasting month Ramadan, while reruns and are screened through the rest of the year. The rhythm of these broadcasts shape much of TV-viewing practices, as Ramadan is the time that families are gathered together to watch the latest shows. In the rest of the year people tend to watch series and shows they have already seen making being at home at a set time less important. Satirical comedies would appeal to all family members. In 2015 a popular one was called *Selfie* critiques mostly developments in the Gulf and mocked ISIS. In regards to the rest of the Jordanian / Middle Eastern transnational TV-landscape it is important to recognize that most series and programs and especially imported shows take on a quite similar format to the *musalsalaat* they are usually screened at once. Every day at a set time in the evening a new episode is screened until the final episode has aired. Usually the evening shows are repeated in the morning.

This study does not focus upon the experiences of refugee children, but since refugee households are the focus of the research there were often children present in the houses I visited. They often watched cartoons or played computer games on their parents' smartphones. Steemers and Sakr (2017) provide a general understanding of children's TV in the Arabic-speaking world. They argue that an emphasis on political rivalries and commercial interests in pan-Arab satellite channels as well as the limited concerns for children's needs partly explain this lack of attention. In many Arabic-speaking countries there are now public policies regarding specified amounts and content of children's programming. However the main focus seems to appeal to children's vulnerability to radicalisation through social media content circulated by ISIS (Steemers & Sakr, 2017, p. 9; see also Stern & Berger, 2015) rather than the impact of hyper-commercialised media environments encountered online or to mediated constructions of boy-hood and girl-hood. Jeanette Steemers and Naomi Sakr rightfully mentions that within the Middle Eastern world, many children are growing up in conflict or as refugees (Steemers & Sakr, 2017, p.

2). These children might even spend more time in front of a screen because access to safe schools and playgrounds might be restricted. However, screened images of warfare might have a further harmful effect on their well-being. The use of media and digital technologies by children in particular goes beyond the focus of this research.

Access and availability of Internet and Internet-connecting devices

Over the last 10 years, internet penetration has risen in all Arab countries. In 2016, almost 60 % of the Middle Eastern population were using the Internet. They mostly access it through their smartphones. This spread is fastest among the younger generations. A survey in Tunisia, Qatar, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and the UAE showed that 93% of the people from ages 18-24 are online (Northwestern University in Qatar, 2013). Social media platforms like Facebook and applications like WhatsApp, Viber, YouTube and Instagram are extremely popular. Facebook is the most popular and most rapidly growing social networking platform in the Middle East (Arab Social Media Report, 2013, p. 4). As of 30 June 2017, Facebook reached a penetration of 34.6 *per cent* and has 86.7 million active users in the Arab-speaking world (Internet World Stat, 2017).

The Internet provides additional ways for social contact, news intake, faster means to access information, the ability to network with like-minded people and to express oneself in relatively safe anonymous ways, to make particular personal choices and to discuss subjects that are taboo – in particular issues related to sex and politics are popular, for entertainment and to obtain religious and moral advice (Hofheinz, 2005, 2007). For women with more conservative backgrounds the Internet played an important role, as it enabled them to make their voices heard within the confines of their homes (Radsch & Khamis, 2013). For youth new media enabled the transgressing particular gendered and social norms (Costa, 2016; Nevola, 2016). I am cautious of ideas of empowerment in regard to gendered, class, racial and sexual oppressions that seem to (en)force a mirror image of western neo-liberal capitalist conceptions of what freedom would be?. It is important to recognize that, also in the Middle East, socio-cultural norms regarding for instance gender roles and sexuality have always been negotiated. Digital technologies provide new ways and spaces for these to become (re)mediated (Costa, 2016; Menin & Costa, 2016; Nevola, 2016).

Social media has been extensively studied in connection to politics and religion, in particular in regard to its possibilities for ‘democratisation’ of the public sphere (Eickelman & Anderson, 2010). In the absence of an open media and civil society, social media played an important role in the social uprisings starting from the Green Movement in 2009 in Iran and the 2011 uprisings in many countries in the Arabic-speaking world (see among others Aouragh & Alexander, 2011; Christensen & Christensen, 2013; Fuchs, 2012; Halverson, Ruston, & Trethewey, 2013; Khondker, 2011; Salvatore, 2013; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). I do not imply that technology was the cause for social change: material grievances including growing inequalities, high unemployment among youth, corrupt and oppressive governments and rising living costs all contributed to the people’s necessity for an uprising. Social media expanded personal networks and provided a platform to broker relations between fellow activists including liberals and members of the Muslim Brotherhood and globalized their reach and resources (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011; Khondker, 2011; Lim, 2012). Iraqi blogs that emerged after the US-led invasion for instance reached Egypt via western televised media, and directly inspired the Egyptian blogosphere that played a pivotal role in the emergence of the protests (Sakr, 2012).

The interpretations of local and global news, but also of music videos and soap operas, takes place via a wide variety of televised, online and offline sources. This cross-fertilization of TV, online spaces and communication regarding of local and international news but equally regarding the latest controversial music videos or developments in soap operas is popular throughout the Middle East (Kraidy, 2012). Digital interconnectivity thus provides the means to negotiate and to interpret what is seen, as there are always competing messages. There is censorship and surveillance online, but the particularities around technological infrastructure make it more difficult to maintain as there are more ways of circumventing control. Marwan Kraidy understands this as ‘hypermedia space’: “A potentially subversive space created by various interacting media and information technologies” (2006). This ‘hypermedia space’ provides a way of understanding how different old and new media technologies provide multiple access points, but also ways of (covert) social and political control. Together these create communicative spaces. Offline as well as online power relationships – including corporate and national interests - continue to shape these access points.

The Facebook-pages of Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya enable for instance viewers to express

the sentiments regarding the TV-channels coverage. Ahmed Al-Rawi **source** finds that spaces provide means to convey political views and emotive sentiments but the comments placed are much in line with the channels' positions on particular matter. The successful use of media technologies by ISIS (Stern & Berger, 2015) suggests also the need for caution for taking on a technological determinist position celebrates digital technologies as empowering and/or liberating tools alone. In more recent work, Marwan Kraidy (2017a; 2017b) argues for an embodied understanding of hypermedia-spaces as he considers how the Islamic State's use of media leaves behind its marks in the affective realm. Kraidy argues that the ISIS is an exemplary case of "dystopian appropriation of hypermedia space" (2017a). The Islamic State has a clear media strategy of making violence spectacular. In their approach to demoralise the enemy and to rally the population, they recognize how images can operate as weapons especially if it builds upon a "Hollywood visual style" that brings "affects of terror in familiar form" (Kraidy, 2017b).²⁰

The Iraqi Media Landscape

In the next section I consider the Iraqi media landscape in particular. Previous experiences with particular media play a role in the mediation of Iraqi refugee households. Through satellite TV and the Internet they continue to be active audiences of particular Iraqi media. Moreover, newly emerging and transnational TV-channels played an active role in the chaotic developments in the country after 2003 and as I will further explore in Chapter 7 this plays an important role in how news is interpreted.

Until 2003, Iraq was largely closed off from the aforementioned transnational media landscape. There were two state-controlled and censored television channel and a later established youth-channel showing censored western films and music. For those working in print journalism, typos could result in imprisonment (Al-Rawi, 2012) and owning a satellite dish could potentially be punishable by death. However, many of the people I have spoken to over the years used to have at least a few friends or family members who owned one. My translator Ahmed emphasized the importance of trustworthy neighbours who would not disclose and more often would share the use of the satellite dish. Other people

²⁰ This also becomes clear in one of its core manifestos called *Ayyuha al-A'lamy Anta Mujahidon* (Oh Media Worker, You are a Mujahid) (Kraidy, 2017).

told me how VCRs were smuggled in from Kuwait, providing yet another way to connect to the world beyond Iraq. Kholoud remembers how her father, who lived in London for three years prior to Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, used to listen to the BBC. Access to the Internet was largely restricted to government officials and university students. There were ways to circumvent the surveillance of the state – also in order to access the Internet – but media consumption and production was largely taking place in the shadows of the state.

This changed after the 2003 US-led invasion. The ousting of Saddam Hussein's regime opened the door for satellite TV and internet. Satellite dishes became ubiquitous in Iraq and provide access to the earlier discussed and previous unavailable transnational TV-channels. Foreign players provided different takes on events happening within and beyond the country. Channels such as the newly established US-owned *Al-Hurra* television, *Russia Today Arabic* as well as BBC Arabic were trying to further influence the political landscape (Al-Rawi, 2012; Al-Rawi & Gunter, 2013; Kraidy & Khalil, 2009, pp. 25–30).

The collapse of a state-owned, centralised media system collapsed into a great variety of small media outlets representing on-the-ground factions. A broadcasting regulation law became effective in 2004, but was hardly implemented due to security and political reasons. By 2006, there were approximately 60 Iraqi channels, casting a wide variety of political, social and religious views. Major players include *Al-Iraqia*, the newly founded Iraqi state channel that would be a propaganda tool for the predominantly Shi'a government and *Al-Sharqiya*, a channel depicting programs with a pro-Saddam Hussein twist (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009, pp. 25–30)..

Many privately owned channels were dependent on the political and economic ambitions of their owner, and while Iraqis might have gained a pluralistic media, the freedoms and security of journalists were largely inhibited (Al-Rawi, 2012). Many Iraqi journalists started to fear for their lives as they were considered to oppose the views of armed groups such as *Al-Qaeda* and Shiite militias. Meanwhile the Iraqi government often pressured journalists who would have dissident views with libel suits. This forced journalists either to self-censorship or leaving the country. Several media-channels, including *Al-Sharqiya* and *Al-Jazeera* were forced to shut their offices in Iraq and/or were banned (temporarily) from screening in Iraq (Al-Rawi, 2012, pp. 2–3).

Many of the Iraqi refugees in this study have personal experiences of conflict and violence, but much experiences of the violence in Iraq were mediated and experienced through the TV-screen. This becomes also evident in how mama Heba (#41), an older Christian woman with whom I lived with for 3 months, recalls her experience of war: *“There was news and television. We saw wars on the television. This is how we knew if the army was winning or losing.”* For Iraqi men and boys, mobile phones played a crucial role in navigating the violence and insecurity in Iraq. Ismail (#33), a 33-year old man from Baghdad distinguished how life was before and after the invasion: *“When Saddam Hussein was the president. We didn’t have a phone. But we didn’t need it.”* He explains that after the 2003-invasion his mother would frequently call him to double-check on his well-being. *“But after 10 minutes she calls to check: “Habibi (my love), are you okay?” Because, of course, baba, that means I am not okay, because someone has kidnapped me...”* For Iraqi women, mobile phone use was probably equally important but did not serve to facilitate outside movement: Iraqi women used to be the most educated in the Middle-East and took part actively in the country’s labour force in the 1960s and 1970s, but decades of warfare, economic sanctions and increased religiosity has pushed Iraqi women back into their homes (Al-Ali, 2007; Al-Ali & Pratt, 2009).

An American independent federal agency called the Broadcasting Board of Governor (2016) stated that in 2016 fifty-eight *per cent* of Iraq’s population has access to the Internet, mostly through their smartphones. Internet access is higher among highly educated people (87 %) and among men (64%). Much has been written on the Iraqi blogosphere that emerged after the invasion. Mark et al (2012) counted a total of 457 different blogs, although some were written by the same authors. These blogs were predominantly written in English (31.246 of the 46.8282 posts). At the time that these blogs were written, the access to Internet and the proficiency of English in these blogs suggests that most bloggers were part of Iraq’s middle-class. These blogs do provide insight in how Iraqi nationals were actively making sense of what happened in their country in response to the further unravelling of Iraqi society as earlier discussed, through accounts of intimidating interactions with US soldiers and responses to the mediated portrayal of sanitized versions of the war²¹ and simplified narratives by western as well as by transnational broadcasters like *Al-Jazeera* (Cook, 2007; Pitchford, 2011). The accessibility and immediacy of internet

²¹ See also Aday, Livingston and Herbert (2005) on the sanitised portrayal in American broadcasters of the 2003 Iraq war devoid of bloodshed yet full of glorified combat.

provided ways to produce counter-narratives that to a large extent targeted western audiences. The most renowned blog is by a young Iraqi woman writing under the name of *Riverbend*. She maps out the complexity of the situation. Riverbend emphasizes not only how being against the occupation does not make her anti-American but equally so, how Iraqi nationals were already in 2004 deeply connected to American culture: “We watch American movies, listen to everything from Britney Spears to Nirvana and refer to every single brown, fizzy drink as Pepsi” (Riverbend, 2005, p. 295).

In this section I have shown that in the Middle East in general and in Iraq in particular political as well as technological developments have connected households. Beyond the emergence of Internet and Satellite TV have blurred what is national, transnational and international. I first explored changes in how satellite technologies opened up the ability to view TV-programs produced in other countries and with varying agendas. I however also showed how corporate and state interests continue to play an important role in media content and what is (not) screened. This further explains the popularity of Internet and Social Media in particular, as this enabled women and young people to make their voices heard beyond the confines of the home. It also provides the ability to discuss local, national and international issues as different TV-channels might bring forth competing messages that might not resonate with actual experiences. In the last section I zoomed into the Iraqi media context, and how technological changes interacted with political developments. After the 2003-invasion the state-controlled media collapsed. This opened up Iraqi homes to transnational media broadcasters like MBC for entertainment and Al-Jazeera for news and Internet. Many Iraqi-oriented news-outlets emerged, representing factions with different political agendas. Access to Satellite TV provided the space to double-check truth claims by comparing different channels whereas Internet provided the means to connect and contest. All these developments have to be considered in the context of war, through which the Iraqi nationals have been navigating their everyday life prior to and after coming to Jordan.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I considered the research context in which this PhD-thesis is situated. This chapter started with an overview of more historical political and social developments within Iraq that have led to outward migration from Iraq. Whereas most people who took

part in this study have fled in response to the chaos and conflict that have emerged after the 2003 US-led invasion, the developments in Iraq as well as Iraqi forced displacement should be considered as a continuation of Iraq's troubled past and western involvement. It is not merely a recent phenomenon that only emerged after the 2003 US-led invasion. I argued that the developments in Iraq after 2003 have further resulted in an unravelling of Iraqi society and communities and uncertainty about how Iraq's future will further develop. This can further explain why Iraqi refugees in Jordan are largely orientating their hopes towards futures elsewhere.

The legal and social uncertainty of urban refugee life in Jordan and the restricted possibilities within this country for building up a future can further contribute to the need to orient oneself beyond Jordan and Iraq. UNHCR has stepped in to provide legal and social protection for people seeking refuge in Jordan, but this protection is only temporary and limited. Western countries have made, especially in comparison to other protracted refugee situations, a significant number of resettlement slots available for Iraqi refugees, whereas other Iraqi nationals sought irregular means for travelling onwards and asking asylum in European countries. The presence of relatives and friends in so-called third, often western countries, seems to increase the wish to also travel onwards.

In the last section I explored the Middle Eastern and Iraqi media landscape, in order to further comprehend what mediated practices Iraqi refugees in Jordan might potentially be engaged in. I came back to the significance of the US-led invasion, as this has altered the Iraqi media landscape drastically. It opened up a previous state-controlled system to transnational media, to Internet and resulted in the emergence of new Iraqi-focused news outlets. This opened up communicative spaces to contest and to compare, to voice concerns and to connect, but it easily provides spaces to control, restrict and fight out wars. In Chapter 7 I will for instance further explore how Iraqi refugees connected these broadcasts to the violence and conflict in Iraq.

In the next chapter I will further explore how we can understand how digital technologies intersect and interact with social and material dimensions. They are mutually constitutive of people's experiences of, in this case, prolonged displacement.

Chapter 3 - Connecting Forced Migration to Media Ethnography

In this chapter I connect empirical research and theoretical concepts situated in media ethnography with that of forced migration studies to further understand the interactions and intersections between mediated practices and experiences of prolonged displacement and uncertainty. Digital technologies do not simply sweep in and change the already uncertain situation. Instead, mediated practices are deeply entangled in social and material circumstances.

In this study I examine how experiences of prolonged displacement and of not being at home are mediated. I therefore start this chapter with an exploration of early Non-media centric Media Studies on the mediation of home. These studies have shown the interplay between technology and domesticity as media connects the private to the public and *vice versa*. Mediated practices reconfigure domestic spaces, but social and material relations within and beyond the household equally shape mediated practices. I consider how these studies focused on TV-viewing practices in western suburban households travel and what other perspectives ethnographic studies on TV-viewing practices in the Global South have given on the interplay between 'home' and media-use. In the second part of this chapter I explore what kind of urgencies 'homes' take on in the experiences of migrants whose sense of belonging is often tied to more than one place. The intensity of digital connections have made it easier to for migrants maintain intimate connections beyond one's physical location, and therefore potentially alter one's sense of place in the world.

In the context of migration and on-going marginalization the stability of the versions of 'home' is far from given. This might even be more the case in conditions of prolonged displacement during which one's sense of place and home are perpetually unsettled. In the third section I draw upon studies that consider migrants' experiences of not being able to go back, but not being able to move on either. The inherent focus of humanitarianism on the short-term affects the refugees' subjectivity: through its focus on the temporary it considers refugees as right-optional subjects (Hyndman & Giles, 2011). This approach negates that refugees are future-oriented subjects. In the last section I explore studies on affect, hope and optimism. I consider if these studies, largely situated in the Global North, provide means to further comprehend how refugees can orient themselves despite the structural constraints they find themselves in and the roles that media play in that process.

3.1 Non-media Centric Approaches and the Mediation of Home

A place is a constellation of social relations. It is where movements, communications and social (often unequal) relations come together and meet (Massey, 1991). Place and home are interrelated complex configurations that encompasses particular social, economic, material and cultural realities. A home is generally understood as a place within which and to which we feel strong emotive, psychological and social attachments (Brun & Fábos, 2015; Morley, 2000). Home is associated with , family and a community, whereas danger, fear and the unknown are associated with what is ‘not-home’ (Morley, 2000) (Morley, 2000). The ‘home’ is not a neutral place and the rosy views of home are rightfully questioned by feminist scholars: home is also the place of discipline, abuse, boredom, control and neglect (Cresswell, 2004, pp. 24–26). Home is far from always warm and caring, but the negative and positive attributes are far from mutually exclusive. Everyday life is the site of habits and routines, of consumption and control over consumption and of contestation and resistance (De Certeau, 1984). Much of everyday life takes place in the home.

Home-making practices are and have always been deeply mediated (Massey, 1991, p. 8). Even the most localized happenings are to a large extent formed by and interpreted through media, whereas the marking out of a space as a home equally involves the mediated infusion of a place with familiar sounds, such as music and language (Bonini, 2011). This also became evident in the work of media-scholars, including scholars as David Morley (1986, 2000, 2009), Roger Silverstone (1993, 1994, 2005), Nick Couldry (2012) and Shaun Moores (2012; Krajina, Moores, & Morley, 2014) who have argued for a Non-media-centric Media Studies that does not put the main focus on text, but aims to further understand the dialectal process between media technologies, social processes and material context. A Non-media centric approach towards media-use has epistemological implications as I will further explore in Chapter 4. For now I want to zoom in on the work of Roger Silverstone (1993, 1994) and David Morley (1986) on domesticity and media-consumption.

TV-viewing practices in the Western Home

In *Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure* David Morley (1986) considered the

interplay between TV-viewing practices and social relations within the domestic sphere. He made a convincing case that different viewing practices are the effects of the particular roles women, men and children occupy in their homes. In the London-based white working class households Morley studied, masculine power became evident as a determinant of viewing choices (p. 148). Men would watch more TV and generally decide what to watch. The women were more focused on shared viewing practices. The few moments the women could free themselves of their domestic obligations the programs they personally preferred to watch were generally considered as an escape that was constrained by guilt (pp. 159 – 162). Their preference went out to fictional programs, whereas the men in the study would generally prefer ‘factual’ programs such as news and documentaries (pp. 162 – 167). Two factors that played a role in exceptions were that if the women had more cultural capital by virtue of their education (p. 163) or if women were the main breadwinners and therefore were considered to have less flexible time tables (p. 149) to watch what they would prefer. Morley therefore shows that gendered cultural and social norms and power relations play a significant role in how mediated practices take shape inside of the home, but that the concept of ‘home’ also needs to be related to its outside (Morley, 1999, p. 153). There are similarities between what occurs in households and the understanding of their place in society and the world where class, gender, ethnicity, (il)legality and power define much of everyday life.

Morley (1986) also showed that TV-viewing practices served important social functions within the confines of the home: the TV could serve to avoid tensions – for instance by retreating into one’s private space and/or to be intimate - but that they could equally evoke tensions about who is viewing what. The TV could produce comforting background noise or input for conversations and could serve as a babysitter. TV shows can enable shared identity-constructions and, especially for young people, to be in tune with their peers (see also Gillespie, 1995). TV viewing can be a ritual to structure domestic life, a “symbolic mode of participation in the national community” (Silverstone, 1981, p. 45) and an active interpretation of texts operating through ideologies (Morley & Silverstone, 1991). It operates along all these different and more dimensions at once, but not necessarily at the same time or with the same intensity.

Morley and Silverstone (1991) argued for an understanding of ‘double articulation’ of television as (but one) object of consumption that is both meaningful in itself and the

bearer of meaning. Double articulation refers to the symbolic and material values of, in this case, digital technologies. Together they produce meanings, that can be transformative but might equally so be limited due to particular circumstances. ICTs provide main routes through which information, ideas, meanings and pleasures are constructed, but they are equally objects and things with their own biographies and meanings as they become domesticated and part of the household and its culture (Silverstone, Hirsh, & Morley, 1992). Material dimensions also relate to power, ideology and interest and can define and constrain potential use (Miller, 1987, pp. 145–146). The latter is important as in the case of prolonged displacement legal and material constraints might further influence mediated practices.

For many people worldwide, the security and the stability of ‘home’ cannot be taken for granted. Roger Silverstone’s (1993) work on the role of TV for ontological security provides us an understanding how TV-viewing practices can potentially also serve to maintain a sense of ‘self’, even in times of perpetual uncertainty. Ontological security is “the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environment. A sense of reliability of persons and things...” (Giddens, 1991, p. 92). Roger Silverstone (1993) suggests that a person’s sense of ‘self’ is sustained through the predictable and familiar, through practical knowledge and symbols of everyday life. TV is part of seriality and spatiality of everyday life, occupies a transitional space and can therefore function as a cultural transitional object, relating the familiar to changing social environments. As the work on mediation and migration has shown (to which I will come back in the next section) digital technologies enable access to familiar TV-channels and to connections with the people and places left behind. This tends to be crucial for migrants to hold on to a sense of stability and self (Georgiou, 2012a; Leurs, 2014, 2016).

Media Ethnographies on TV-viewing in the Global South

The significance of media relates to its ability to link, either actively, passively or interactively, households and household members to the world beyond their front door. Households can thus be understood as transitional systems of social, cultural and economic relations that are linked to the larger society and economy of the public sphere. By crossing the boundaries from the public world into the private world (*and vice versa*)

these meanings are continuously renegotiated (Silverstone et al., 1992). Morley and Silverstone (1991, p. 45) emphasize the necessity to be “sensitive to empirical variation” and the inherent need for contextualization, yet in their own work social, cultural and geographical differences on how technologies are domesticated have not been thoroughly explored. Their focus on UK households implies that most media-consumption takes place within the domestic sphere, but the ‘house’ and ‘home’ are both constructs that vary across different contexts. The middle class white western home should not be considered as a generalizable prototype. Material and legal circumstances but equally so weather conditions and socio-cultural contexts might influence on what physical structures and space(s) are available within and beyond the house and how one’s physical living space is conceived.

Thomas Tufte (2000) shows that in Brazil the distinction between what would be private (TV-viewing practices) and public are more blurred. In his ethnography on telenovelas in urban Brazil, the media scholar shows how this genre of drama series have become intricate to Brazilian culture and to daily live. Tufte also considers how the TV as physical object has played a constitutive role in shaping a mutual ‘hybrid sphere of signification’ in between the more male-dominated street and the more women-oriented private places of the house. As such, he comes back to the applicability of Silverstone’s concept of hybrid spaces as “products of technological and social changes, but also continuously reconstructed in the daily activities of those who attend to them – distracted maybe, but nevertheless committed participants in the ongoing struggles of everyday life” (62-63, 1994, cited by Tufte, 2000, p. 232). Tufte rightfully warns for a caution to generalize and for the need for cultural-sensitive nuanced analysis. His focus goes out to development and modernity, as he shows what occurs in Brazilian urban neighborhoods “is not a slower process of development towards a modern society, but another process of development” (p. 226). Its popularity can be traced back to a history of story-telling and particular political developments such as military dictatorship, but equally so is deeply rooted in gendered ideologies around home and space. Telenovelas, like other cultural products, respond to particular characteristics and dynamics present in Brazilian’s complex society such as class conflicts, but can equally serve to conform to and confirm classed hierarchies. For the women in his study watching the lives of other, more affluent, social mobile people who like the women themselves strive for love and happiness might hold an important social function as it can serve as a “survival strategy – to endure and keep hope alive” (p. 214). Tufte’s study therefore enables me to consider how people’s struggles for belonging

– socially, culturally and politically – can be played out through mediated practices as well as the more nuanced role that mediated experiences can play in that process.

The household is grounded in often globalized as well as locally-(re)produced gendered, national and capitalist ideologies that would serve as the basis for security and identity and that serve in the creation of ‘home’ (Silverstone et al., 1992), but audiences are not passive recipients of these mediated message. This became evident in other media-ethnographies situated in non-western settings. Purmina Mankekar’s (1999) ethnography considers how state-sponsored entertainment series in post-colonial India were reinforcing particular ideas around family, duty and femininity, but equally so shows that watching and interpreting these series enabled the upward-mobile, urban women in Mankekar’s study to address the violence, tragedies and conflicts in their own lives. Another study shows how in rural Egypt television and other mass media have exposed women to life worlds and to ideas they were not previously exposed. This resulted in the women’s reflections upon their own ideas and behaviour, such as illiteracy and marriage, but these reflections are deeply grounded in the socio-historical and material constraints they experience (Abu-Lughod, 1997, 2004). Mediated discourses can reinforce gendered, national and consumerist ideologies, but mediated practices might equally provide space to contest and negotiate these discourses.

As these studies are all situated in the end of the 1990s they focus largely on TV-viewing practices. Newer media such as smartphones and the satellite TV did not replace or displaced the TV and other older media forms (press, radio): instead they have become integrated. In line with what David Morley and Roger Silverstone (1991) already recognized I consider TV as but one of a number of ICT’s that occupies and potentially restructures domestic, national and international spaces and time. Over history, different media forms have played a role in reconfigurations of ideologies around family, around belonging to a particular the nation-state, have served commercial purposes and have contributed to the organization of time (of the everyday but equally so of age-related social dynamics). The media, the social and material dimensions of domestic space have structured each other, and in turn have been structured by the other (p. 40) and are continuously in flux. Morley and Silverstone for instance consider how TV changed over time itself giving viewers more choice to decide what to watch and when to watch it. In Chapter 2 I further explained how in the 1990s satellite TV in the Middle East gained

significance, giving viewers as wide array of choices to news and entertainment productions with different socio-political agendas. This could potentially result in more fragmentation instead of a sense of communal (national) belonging (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009).

In this section I considered the roles that media and in particular TV played in regard to establishing a space in one's household, country and the world, a feeling of being at ease and of being 'at home. Nira Yuval-Davis (2012) groups these sentiments together as belonging. She considers belonging as an emotional attachment. The sense of where one belongs or does not belong is a perpetual, mediated and performative process constructing boundaries that separate human beings from 'us' and 'others'. Various political projects of belonging – such as citizenship, nationalism but also the political projects around religion, cosmopolitanism and feminist ethnics of care - can compete, but often equally co-exist and people make sense of these mediated discourses in their situated everyday life. Geography, culture and community often do not fall into neat equations. More settled as well as more recent migrant populations question can equally question where they belong. Literature on a wide variety of diasporas however suggests that doubts about one's place in the world are more present in the lives of (descendants of) migrants who are structurally reminded of not being-in-place, be it because of the colour of their skin, religion, their name, legal status and/or other, often intersecting reasons (Baubock and Faist, 2013; Brubaker, 2005; Clifford, 2007; Cohen, 2008). In the next section I will therefore further explore research on the mediated experiences of migrants, whose belonging and understanding of home tends to be less firmly rooted to one particular geographical location.

3.2 Mediation, Migration and Travelling Understandings of Home

Migration is a complex process in which people continuously balance between acts of cultural maintenance, adaption, creation, repression and control. One of the central features of globalization – the emergence of ICTs – further pushes us to rethink the intersections of migration and mediation (Hegde, 2016). The dialectical process between belonging and fitting in (and if so, in whose structures?) and holding on to differences is partly shaped by local, national and international media, but these same outlets might also provide resources to negotiate hegemonic structures (Sinclair & Cunningham, 2001). Media ethnographies on migration experiences have challenged a territorially rooted

understanding of media reception, consumption and production. Rather than adhering to one singular identity defined by citizenship or a nation-state transnational migrant populations have come to inhabit complex, liminal in-between places (Anthias, 2008; Brah, 1996; Brubaker, 2005; Clifford, 2007; Robin Cohen, 2008; Hall, 1990).

In her writing on the experiences of South Asians in Britain, Avtar Brah (1996, p. 16) proposes the concept of diaspora space to grapple with the tensions of the migrant experiences. The concept 'diaspora space' enables to decenter binaries such as insider/outsider. Instead, it draws attentions to the performative sites of power that potentially confound, differentiate and situate in relation to each other and the 'other'. Far from fixed or pre-given, migrants subjectivities are constituted within the materiality of everyday life and in interaction with the persons who are 'staying' put (p. 181) who might consider the 'other' as not rightfully belonging in place. Rahda S Hegde (2016, p. 17) argues that we can understand 'diaspora space' as "mediated transnational space" since migrants' identities are deeply situated and reconstructed within mediated worlds. This becomes more evident if we consider media ethnographies on the experiences of migrant communities.

Negotiating Identities In-between

Marie Gillespie (1995) shows how the coexistence of culturally diverse films and TV-show play an important role in the identity-formations of British Asian (predominantly Punjabi Sikh) youth living in Southall, London. The British nation state continues to define them as 'internal others' (p. 208), but the youth in Gillespie's study are able build up their cultural identities in interaction with their parents, the society they live in and the screen. This study further enables me to consider how marginalization and coming-of-age together engender the need for distinguishing oneself as 'other' – towards fellow British nationals as well as towards family members - and how digital technologies and transnational connections can make this possible. A wide variety of global and local media enables the youth in this study to continuously compare, negotiate and criticize themselves and significant others through global and local media, to foster linkages to places elsewhere and to carve out places for themselves. Their cultural and material consumption plays an important role in this regard, but through their actions they also further shape meanings and images that are circulated through different media and affect the material everyday.

As her study took place in the early 1990s, The focus of Gillespie's (1995) media ethnography is on TV, advertising and video and less so on the interconnectivity that is engendered through the more recent multi-media environment. Gillespie's theoretical concern with TV talk as "the embedding of TV experiences in conversational forms and flows" (p. 23) however proves useful to further understand the (re)creative reception of TV and other media flows. In a later article on news-viewing practices in multilingual households in post 9/11 UK, Gillespie (2006, p. 906) introduced the term 'talking spaces' to consider how events, relationships and identities are negotiated via a wide variety of televised, online and offline sources. She shows how the transnational subjects in her study are continuously comparing information and construct 'jigsaws' of truth in communication with people 'here' and 'there' (p. 917). Gillespie's understanding of 'talking spaces' resonates with Marwan Kraidy's (2006) understanding of 'hypermedia space' which I have further explored in Chapter 2. In his conceptualization of hypermedia space Kraidy seems to put more emphasis on the affective intensities of online spaces, citizenship and its possibilities for subversion and circumvention of control. For now, I contend that the TV has become integrated with other information and communication technologies and that these communicative spaces potentially play a central role in the sense-making processes of migrants.

Myria Georgiou (2012a) draws upon the work of Roger Silverstone (1993) on the role of TV regarding ontological security to further understand the role of satellite TV among Arabic-speaking audiences in different European capitals. Georgiou (2012a) argues that the anxieties of the people in her study are deeply connected to personal experiences of risks and disrupted geographies. Satellite TV enables these transnational individuals to sustain a sense of familiarity and homeliness, not only because it enables them to maintain a symbolic and physical co-presence to places and people from which they are geographically distanced. TV shows also serve as a daily reassurance that, despite all the disruptions and uncertainty, there is some continuity thus supporting one's confidence and a sense of continuity and provide ways to stay actively emotionally and/or politically engaged with people and places elsewhere. In another study Georgiou (2012b) shows how satellite TV provides female Arab audiences in London with the ability to see one self-represented as an 'ordinary person' and not as a subject that is associated with threats that are too often and too easily associated to Islam and migration. These predominantly Muslim women

reposition themselves to find a space in-between two mainstream exclusionary discourses that equally fail to represent them.

Connecting and Navigating Places

The aforementioned studies by Gillespie (1995) and Georgiou (2012a, 2012b) show how different media can enable migrant populations to negotiate their state of in-between-ness. In earlier work, Georgiou (2006) focused more directly on the place-making practices of migrants. She shows how Greek Cypriots in London and New York can overcome spatial limitations and maintain intimate social relations between distanced homes. The combination of different sensory mediated experiences, such as images of a distant homeland, pictures, the video of new-born family members and the immediacy of sounds and images, feed into and all contribute to and become part of the everyday migratory experience. Through digital communication the people in her study are able to sustain affective relationships with “absent others” and maintain an “absent co-presence” (Georgiou, 2006: p. 6) despite not being in the same physical location. The home, the public, the city, the nation and the transnational are all different spaces through which diasporic life is lived, but ICTs cut across these spaces. Georgiou however also shows that the specificities of the physical location (UK versus US) play an important role in where and how these technologies are deployed. It is therefore important to situate mediated practices. Georgiou shows that digital developments resulted in migrants being less bound by an exclusive national and that more than one physical location feeds into their experience of their place in the world.

Dana Diminescu (2008) further extended this line of thinking in her epistemological manifesto around the figure of the ‘connected migrant’. The increased availability of Internet and opportunities to maintain transnational connections, would have made ‘the migrant’ into an actor of connections, which he or she maintains while moving about. Diminescu draws upon Abdelmalek Sayad’s (1999, see also Saada, 2000) pivotal analysis of the experience of migration as a ‘twofold absence’. His understanding of the migrant who is ‘neither here, nor there’, would no longer be meaningful as digital technologies have opened up a wide variety of ways of social ‘presences’ that are less bounded by physical constraints. Places are inherently social and can override physical locations and ‘virtual’ spaces can become part of everyday life. Shaun Moores (2012) draws upon

phenomenology to show how particular media settings – such as the emergence of the mobile phone – can create social spaces that through habitual use become familiar as places and “meanings can emerge from routine practices” (Krajina et al, 2014, p. 693). Embodiment plays an important role, as through regular mundane use digital practices obtain meaning and faraway places can become familiar. The term ‘connected presence’ highlights the increased capacity for connecting communicative practices (Licoppe, 2004), while ‘absent co-presence’ refers to the on-going presence of absent others (Georgiou, 2006). This goes beyond merely communicative contact, as videos of one’s homeland, familiar sounds, pictures of distant family are all deeply sensory, mediated experiences that bridge space and time. Digital developments have enabled a more complex array of multiple presences that take place next to and aside from each other (Moores, 2012).

Experiences of migration were never a permanent break to the places left behind and to one’s embodied histories. Migrants would for instance stay in touch through letter writing and video cassettes (Madianou & Miller, 2011a; Wilding, 2006). Diminescu’s ideas also seem to celebrate mobility as they do not seem to be fully grounded within the structural societal and material constraints many migrants worldwide continue to find themselves and in which mediated practices are embedded. The figure is however interesting to think with as digital developments have made a more direct, immediate and intimate involvement possible despite geographical distance (Baldassar et al., 2016; Leurs, 2014; Licoppe, 2004; Madianou & Miller, 2011a; Nedelcu, 2012; Robertson et al., 2016; Wilding, 2006). Constraints such as lack of access, affordability and literacy for transnational communication are slowly disappearing and there are more opportunities available to maintain transnational connections across physical distance. Madianou and Miller’s (2011a, 2011b) ethnography about transnational parenthood, which I will further unpack in the next section, demonstrates how mediated connections can bring about a sense of closeness, familiarity and embodied experiences to those far away. However, how these transnational relationships occur and evolve is largely influenced by normative ideologies around motherhood as well as by the histories of these social relationships.

The Environment of Polymedia and Transnational Intimacy

In Chapter 1 I introduced the concept ‘polymedia’ by Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller (2011a, 2011b) An environment of ‘polymedia’ is more than simply the proliferation and

the choices new media provide. It refers to the inability to understand one media form or application in isolation: their meanings and use are relative to each other. 'Polymedia' is the choice of particular media over others that influences and configures the social relationships and takes place in particular material context. In their study on transnational communication between Filipino mothers in the UK and their children in the Philippines, Madianou and Miller show for instance that the distinction between voice or text is an important parameter of choice. For the people in their study, the interactions over mobile phones and applications like Skype imply certain closeness, which makes it easier to convey emotions. The affordances of multimediality and simultaneity evoke a more tangible sense of 'being there' for each other (Baldassar, 2016, p. 138) as despite and across distance one can see and talk to each other at the same time. An e-mail however would come across as more direct and effective but is equally considered to be more distant, and was therefore deployed for more business-like messages. The different characteristics that are appropriated to different media and the choices individuals make for particular media are shaped through one's social, cultural and personal realities, but though their decisions for particular media they are also actively reshaping social relationships and their situated realities. Considering what digital technologies are (not) used therefore provides a way for further understanding the cultural socio-historical and material context in which communication and representation take place and equally so, how different ways of mediated connections shape the experiences of migrants and their family members elsewhere.

Digital developments might also alter what messages are or are not conveyed. In earlier work Loretta Baldassar (2007) considered the persistence of emotional bonds among Italian Australian migrants from the 1950s to 2007 and the role changing communication technologies played. Baldassar argues that in the past, the Italian migrants in Australia would often reassure in their letter-writing that 'all was well' despite it being the opposite in order not to upset their kin. The presence of new digital technologies make it more difficult – but not impossible - to conceal difficulties in life. In her follow-up on transnational parenthood and polymedia, Madianou (2014) suggests that the smartphone in of itself can act as an environment of polymedia. The device provides means to switch between different applications with different functions in order to manage emotions and relationships. Moreover, the ability to be 'always on' further contributes to the ongoing awareness of others, despite lack of face-to-face contact. With the term 'ambient co-

presence' Madianou refers to the ubiquity and pervasiveness of polymedia environments. This might enhance one's sense of belonging and opportunities for 'being together' but it can equally be experienced as invasive or as surveillance.

Access to digital technologies does not determine whether and how migrants sustain social relations over place and time: they are built upon layers of the specific histories of those relationships and upon cultural gendered and age-specific expectations and roles (Baldassar et al., 2016). The presence of multiple ways of contact do not solve already distorted relationships, and might further aggravate tensions and conflicts. For instance, in Madianou and Millers's (2011a, 2011b) study children who thought their mothers' online behaviour was invasive, were the ones who had already troubled relationships prior to online connections. In other circumstances, ICTs enable kin to increase pressure upon migrants, for instance by asking for money (Baldassar, 2016; Lindley, 2007; Wilding, 2006). This suggests the importance of being wary of celebrating digital connectivity. It is also important to be hesitant for presuming that there is a hierarchy of physical co-presence over virtual co-presence in new lived environments. As Loretta Baldassar (2016, p. 146) rightfully notes: "Kin can be close to each other and not 'be there' for each other."

In this section I have shown that studies on media-use and migration have shown how digital technologies play crucial roles in the identity-formation, place-making processes and for connections. These studies have also shown that, in the lives of migrants, the use of digital technologies need to be situated in relation to other technologies as well as to one's socio-historical context and material conditions. Physical separation of loved ones as well as social marginalization in place might reinforce a need for virtual spaces and for transnational connections. This begs the question why so little in-depth research has considered how the lives of forced migrants who are often forcefully separated from their kin and who are frequently living not only in social but also in legal uncertainty has been mediated. Some studies have been conducted on the mediated experiences of forced migrants in the Global North (Moore & Clifford, 2007; Witteborn, 2014, 2015). Most of the studies that focus on media-use by forced migrants in the Global South focus on the instrumental use of digital technologies (Betts, Bloom, Kaplan, & Omata, 2014; University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, 2011) and have not considered the social and subjective functions that mediated practices have and the social changes that digital technologies can bring about. The figure of the 'connected migrant', who maintains digital connections and

holds onto a wide array of presences should therefore be extended to the mediated experience of forced migrants in the Global South as I will further explore in the next section.

3.3 Forced migration and mediated practices

In the first section of this chapter I considered the interplay between technology, and in particular TV, plays in regard to feeling ‘at home’. A central question however in the lives of forced migrants living in prolonged displacement is: what is home? What do home-making practices mean in prolonged uncertainty, especially if we understand ‘home’ as an “on-going project entailing a sense of hope for the future” (Hage, 1997, p. 103)? Where is home if it is unclear where the future is located? In the upcoming section I will further explore how in the lives of refugees one’s future and place in the world becomes contested and how this relates to humanitarianism. What makes the mediated experiences of forced migrants different than that of other migrants? There is no straightforward answer to this, but there are a few generalizable dynamics in the lives of people who are forced to migrate. These include the context and reasons for often immediate migration, including the personal, often traumatic, experiences with violence and persecution, and the legal, social and material uncertainty many conflict-affected migrants often find themselves in. As the earlier mentioned studies on mediation have suggested one’s socio-historical context and social positions, relating to gender, generation, racial, class and other identity markers, also play important intersecting roles in regard to the freedoms and restrictions forced migrants might feel for deploying particular mediated practices.

Whereas we might live in connected worlds, physical mobility as well as digital connectivity continues to be unevenly distributed. Not every person who becomes forcibly displaced has (equal) access to digital technologies. The communication of young Karenni refugees who have been resettled to Australia (Robertson et al., 2016) with their family members continues to be challenging, yet they still produce a mediated ‘sense of being with’ as they use digital media to construct a family imaginary that enables them to hold on despite their forced separation. Robertson, Wilding and Gifford (2016, p. 221) call this ‘imaginary co-presence’: a ‘sense’ of family relations when actual interactions have become impossible.

Another important constraint that potentially influences one’s mediated experience is that

refugee families are not only often separated by force and that their opportunities to physically reunite are few because of legal and material restrictions as well as ongoing warfare (Gifford & Wilding, 2013; Opas & McMurray, 2015). This not only limits potential contact to the digital realm only, but potentially also limits what is and what is not communicated. Opas and McMurray (2015) for instance show that for Eritrean refugees, transnational communication brings about the fear that contact can potentially endanger the loved ones that stayed behind. This resulted in self-censorship or even avoiding contact at all.

In this section my main focus goes out to the legal and social uncertainty many forced and other migrants find themselves in. Worldwide, large numbers of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants who have been affected by conflict spend extended time waiting: in camps, in transit, for papers, in detention or simply whilst enduring illegalization (Khosravi, 2014). Studies on migrants' experiences in the UK show that indeterminacy, uncertainty and unpredictability over how long waiting will last and what will happen next define much of how their everyday lives are considered as time that is lost and/or needs to be killed (Griffiths, 2014; Rotter, 2016; Rotter, 2010; Turnbull, 2016). In the Global North as well as in the Global South forced migrants increasingly are living in prolonged legal and social uncertainty as right-optional subjects (Doná, 2015). These experiences are not situations people passively endure: refugees are also sense-making human beings and digital technologies play an important role in this sense-making as becomes evident in this literature review and the rest of this PhD. Amidst waiting and living in legal uncertainty, everyday continues and life goes on. Rebecca Rotter (2016; 2010) shows how asylum seekers in Glasgow are deeply engaged in mediated and situated activities that have a meaning in the present and their anticipated future, such as learning English or trying to improve chances for leave to remain. However, many structural forces tend to curtail the parameters for refugees' agency and subjectivity and can therefore potentially influence one's media use.

This became evident in research on the role of satellite TV among asylum seekers in the UK (Moore & Clifford, 2007). For them, satellite TV played a role in obtaining a sense of familiarity, closely linked to Silverstone's understanding of ontological security. But it also brought about concerns that not having the 'right' TV-viewing practices (See a similar finding in Skeggs, Thumim, & Wood, 2008) would mark them out as not belonging in the

UK. These anxieties resonate with the prevalent xenophobic conservative political discourse that wrongfully presumes that through what one watches and listens to, one would disclose one's actual primordial belonging (Madianou, 2005b, p. 522). It shows that anxieties about everyday border politics are actively played out in the home: who watches what you watch? In legal and social uncertainty, borders can be ever-present and pervasive, and as such they affect everyday life. Borders are "arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural and physis; territories to be patrolled against those whom they construct as outsider" (Brah, 1996, p. 195). They are far from pre-given or fixed and function as performative sites of power. Borders can have deep impact on people's lives and subjectivities and are deeply situated within the legal, material and social circumstances people find themselves in.

Humanitarian Reason and the Experience of Waiting

Especially in the Global South, the 'waiting' experience can be connected to humanitarianism. Its main focus on the short term and on saving lives reinforces the experience of living prolonged lives in temporary-ness. The urgency in humanitarian aid is crucial at the beginning of a conflict or disaster, but its short-term focus becomes problematic in the long run as people tend to become 'stuck' in the humanitarian system (Brun, 2016). A prolonged policy of 'don't die survival' (Horst, 2008, p. 10) might ensure physical survival but without fully considering the social and subjective dynamics and needs of human beings who are living for years in prolonged uncertainty. Refugees, like other human beings, also have a "biographical life, the life through which they could independently give a meaning to their existence" (Fassin, 2012, p. 245). They operate in a present that is infused by thoughts on the past and ideas about the future (Munn, 1992)

The temporary scope of humanitarianism relates to what anthropologist Didier Fassin (2012) defines as "humanitarian reason". Humanitarian reason is a governing principle²² that brings moral sentiments and concerns for situations that are characterized by precariousness into the public sphere. Fassin draws on ethnographic research on

²² Didier Fassin builds upon a broad Foucauldian understanding of government, the "set of procedures established and actions conducted in order to manage, regulate and support the existence of human beings" (2012, p. 1).

organizational structures in France, Peru, Iraq and South Africa to show how humanitarian reason “mobilizes sympathy and technology, physicians and logisticians” (Fassin, 2012, p. x) to address suffering. Lillie Chouliaraki (2013) work on humanitarian sentiments and communication overlaps with that of Fassin in many regards. Both scholars critique the superficiality and fleetingness of compassion. Suffering has the potential to move and mobilize people, but can easily turn into compassion fatigue if the moral sentiments have worn down. Moreover, they point out that humanitarianism builds upon an inherent paradox: it spurs compassion through the awareness of inequality and elicits a fantasy of moral community, yet the politics of compassion is inherently built upon the politics of inequality. The spectacle of and acts towards suffering requires the domination it supposedly acts against. Often the language of moral sentiments is deployed while policies are implemented that actually increase social inequality. Humanitarian governing processes consists of moral categorizations, exclusions and judgments of experts and tend to negate the histories and voices of the people affected.²³.

Chouliaraki (2013) argues that the marketization of aid, the loss of grand narratives regarding a shared humanity and technological developments have further contributed to a cynical “celebration of a neoliberal lifestyle of ‘feel good’ altruism” (2013, p. 4) The West has become both the actor and spectator of its own performances through for instance pop concerts and refrains from asking important questions on power and its/our own role in the persistence of inequalities. This has contributed to a further marginalization of the voices of distant others in favour of narcissistic self-indulgence. Like in Chouliaraki’s earlier work on the mediation of distant suffering (2008), however her focus on western spectatorship potentially reifies a Global North/Global South dichotomy and negates that people who suffer are equally interpreting spectators/actors of how their suffering is portrayed in media.

²³ Chouliaraki (2013) however groups all moral socio-political acts towards ‘others’ in the Global South as humanitarian. This includes Marxist-oriented solidarity approaches and neo-liberal technocratic interventions working in line with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. This way of grouping might be useful for Chouliaraki as she focuses upon (what seem to be privileged) western spectators who might be unaware of these differences. She considers how the Global South becomes known to the West through mediated acts. For the people who directly experience the workings of aid however it matters whether that particular aid is humanitarian or more development and/or solidarity focused.

Chouliaraki (2013, p. 198) however does argue that technological developments can potentially contribute to social change, for instance through more actively listening to people affected by suffering. When first introduced, there was a similar hope that technologies could potentially contribute to the democratization of the humanitarian process by giving affected populations in and beyond the Global South the opportunity to voice their concerns, enabling two-way communication and to hold agencies accountable. The interactive nature and the low costs of digital technologies gave further rise to optimism, yet there is little academic evidence to support this enthusiasm. The existing research on technology use by refugee populations in the Global South largely focuses on the immediate, practical potentials of technologies to improve the living conditions of refugees and IDP's (Betts, Bloom, Kaplan, & Omata, 2014; Refugee Studies Centre, 2011). It does not consider how the technology use intersects and interacts with the persisting structural inequalities and the unequal power relations that are inherently embedded in humanitarian reason.

An important exception is the ethnographic work on the use of humanitarian technologies among disaster-affected populations in the Philippines by Madianou, Longboan and Ong (2015). They show that the opportunities to voice concerns through digital technologies and ways of being effectively listened to are stratified and map into already existing social inequalities around class and gender. This confirms Jo Tacchi's (2011) argument that digital technologies will not give people voice. She argues that the idea of voice is directly connected to listening: without listening, voice does not materialize. Listening – including what matters as voice and what voices are listened to – are deeply grounded in unequal power relations.

Jennifer Hyndman and Wenona Giles (2011) contrast the suspicious perception of 'the migrant' on the move as one that requires control with the material circumstances and stereotypical depictions of refugees as passive and immobile in prolonged displacement in places beyond the West. The latter contributes to what they call a 'feminization of asylum'. The externalization of asylum to the Global South, the "purported benevolence of humanitarian aid" (p. 362) and the prolonged suspension of refugees' human rights contributions to a feminization and depoliticisation of those who are kept in place. They define feminization as the further creation of inequalities that does not necessarily refers to women. For instance, refugee men often are emasculated because of their unemployment

status (Hyndman & Giles, 2011, p. 363; see also Matsuoka & Sorenson, 1999; McSpadden, 1999; Rajasignham-Senanayake, 2004). Waiting serves as an ordering principle that (re)produces voiceless refugee subjectivities through technologies of 'care and control' (Hyndman & Giles, 2011, p. 366). Such an analysis is useful to further understand the working of the humanitarian regime, but this does not suggest that refugees are passively waiting or passive in their waiting.

The simplified depiction of refugee life as 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998) or 'wasted' (Bauman, 2004) is a macro-political theoretical act of violence to the agency and creativity that migrants do deploy in making life bearable. Originally described in anthropological work on rituals (Turner, 1967, 1969; Van Gennep, 1960) Liisa Malkki (1995) draws upon the concept of liminality to describe the in-between-ness of refugees. Liminality refers to a transitional state in between two structural contexts that marks a linear transition from an old to a new state. In the lives of many refugees and other migrants living in prolonged insecurity there is no guarantee for an exit. What is supposed to be a temporary phase becomes stretched out and endured (Tsoni, 2016). However, whereas (especially) refugee camps are extremely organized secluded spaces that are aimed to keep individuals outside of the nation-state, Malkki (1995) shows that in these particular geographical locations Burundian refugees in camps in Tanzania make sense of their situation in interactions with the host population, the international community, the homeland and beyond. Later work, also conducted among Burundian refugees shows media also plays a role in this process: radio enables the refugees to stay hopeful that the international community will somehow provide a solution that goes beyond Tanzania (Turner, 2004).

When liminality turns into prolonged waiting the groundwork for social life might be temporally suspended, but as Sharam Khosravi (2007, 2014) shows waiting can also be a strategy of defiance in the hope that refugee policies might change or for making plans to move onwards. In between his ethnographic studies on organizational structures in France and beyond, Fassin (2012) considers the governance of Europe's borders and the ambiguity of the hospitality refugees are received with. He argues that waiting zones perform filtering functions. A language that signifies suffering and moves officials (p. 47) or the witness of medical experts can be used to surmount the obstacles of waiting, but these forced migrants are recognized through humanitarian reason rather than through their right to asylum (p. 157).

Digital technologies play crucial roles in searching for and finding ways to travel onwards. Social media platforms and more personalized online connections are crucial for circumventing 'digital border policing', for comparing and double-checking the accuracy of information on ever-changing routes and policies in destination countries, but equally so for managing insecurities in new, foreign context (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012; Frouws et al., 2016; Gillespie et al., 2016; Witteborn, 2014, 2015; Zijlstra & Van Liempt, 2017). 'Digital border policing' (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, & Tsianos, 2008; Wilding & Gifford, 2013) often needs to be circumvented and this requires knowledge and communication (Witteborn, 2015). Spaces for potential connectivity and open-ness are easily morphed into spaces of control and exclusion (Papadopoulos et al., 2008). There is therefore no reason to be celebratory about digital connectivity. Mobility and control reflect and reinforce the power of some bodies over the bodies of others.

Research that focuses digital technologies and border-crossings might misrecognize that migration often involves long-standing periods of waiting and prolonged uncertainty (Khosravi, 2007; Schapendonk & Van Moppes, 2007; Schapendonk, 2012). Journeys are often a stretched-out zigzag shaped processes, shaped and slowed down by often exclusionary, bureaucratic border regimes within and beyond western countries (Anderson, 2014; Khosravi, 2007; 2014). In the process of journey-ing the use of digital technologies goes beyond the functional alone. Michael Collyer (2007) showed for instance that for journey-ing migrants, when maintaining transnational contact was still a costly endeavour, the affective 'strong' connections with far-away relatives formed an important incentive to endure but that their 'absent presence' equally served as a barrier for returning without success (Collyer, 2007). Moreover, in transit and/or in illegality localized social networks are equally crucial for mitigating and circumventing the insecurities around informal employment (Collyer, 2007; Harney, 2013; J. Schapendonk & Van Moppes, 2007; Schapendonk, 2012). The physical presence of localized co-nationals provides a sense of shared experience of suffering and a meaning to the many years of not arriving (Collyer, 2007; Schapendonk, 2012). However the cruel economic, legal and social realities many of the migrants find themselves make it difficult to engage in sustainable physical place-making processes (Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou, & Tsianos, 2015).

In prolonged legal and social uncertainty static notions of home and place are perpetually unsettled, but this does not make them absent. Anita Fábos and Catrine Brun (2015) developed the triadic conceptualization ‘home-Home-HOME’ to further explore what home actually means in prolonged conditions of displacement. Through this triad Brun and Fabos are able to further tease out an understanding of home as a practice, rather than as a static notion. ‘HOME’ refers to the broader geographical, historical and political context defined by the borders of nation-states, whereas ‘Home’ describes memories and imaginations of (often) idealised homes. The last element ‘home’ are the day-to-day meanings and practices within the places people inhabit. Fabos and Brun (2015) emphasize the fluid relationship between the material and the symbolic, between multiple places and spaces and between the past, present and the future, as they emphasize how these three notions interplay in how refugees negotiate and make temporary homes, even in prolonged uncertainty.

Georgia Doná (2015) draws upon this HOME-Home-home-triad as she argues that in prolonged legal and social uncertainty, refugees tend to resort to virtual home-making practices. In response to their doubts about one’s place in the (physical) world, home-making practices have been largely relocated to the virtual. Dona coins the term ‘virtual home-making practices’ in the editorial for the special issue of the journal *Refuge* on meanings of home for displaced people, yet the focus of most contributions goes out to material and physical homemaking strategies and not so much to the virtual. Her own contribution shows how digital technologies enable migrant populations in the Global North to remain politically involved with the politics of their distanced homeland (2015, see also Bernal, 2005; Godin & Doná, 2016; Leurs, 2016; Sinclair & Cunningham, 2001). Digital technologies can provide access to a community, to people and places one is closed off from. Online practices enabled Palestinian people dispersed over many different locations not only to connect but also to see the places they are not able to visit (Aouragh, 2011a). Koen Leurs (2014) draws on Silverstone’s (1993) and Georgiou’s (2012a, 2012b) work on ontological security as he extends these ideas to the online and to the experience of prolonged displacement of Somalian migrants in Ethiopia. He shows how in perpetual legal and social uncertainty online virtual spaces might provide a sense of stability that one’s physical location does not offer. For asylum-seekers in Germany, virtual practices

provide ways of presenting themselves as the person they want to be or become, rather than the one that is being restricted by a lack of opportunities: as such it is the process of unbecoming a victimized refugee (Witteborn, 2015).

The aforementioned studies provide insights in how online spaces might play crucial roles in the experiences of legal and social uncertainty. Reasons for forced migration as well as the prolonged legally and social marginalization potentially influences one's mediated practices. Digital technologies enable connections to places and people elsewhere, for navigating onwards journeys, for managing everyday insecurities and for carving out spaces to express oneself. However, none of these studies specifically focus on how mediated home-making practices interact with one's situated precarious context. As such I argue for an in-depth, context-specific understanding of the mediation of prolonged displacement, much in line with the work by Morley (1986), Gillespie (1995), Georgiou (2006) and Madianou and Miller (2011a, 2011b) that considers how mediated practices are configured around social and material circumstances and *vice versa* how mediated practices influence these situated experiences.

In this section I also explained how many forced migrants consider their experience as waiting, and how especially in the Global South the experience of temporary-ness is linked to humanitarianism. The experience of waiting – for third country resettlement, for documents, for finding other ways of travelling and/or for peace and return – is a deeply affective phenomenon (Hage, 2009) as it is structured around the promise or hope for change. In the next section I will therefore further explore the workings of affect and how affects are mediated.

3.4 Affect, optimism and hope

The work by affect theorists Lauren Berlant (2011) and Sara Ahmed (2006, 2013) enabled me to further explore how mediated attachment can enable people to stay optimistic in the present yet hopefully oriented towards the future. I understand affect to be different from emotion. Affect is a pre-linguistic, relational and social phenomenon, that is in-between and in interactions with bodies, emotions and reason. It is a dynamic, open and flexible process that is entangled with cultural meaning-making, material process and social relationships. “Affective activity is a form of social practice” (Wetherell, 2015, p. 9).

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed (2013) argues that the circulation of emotions takes place through specific cultural and social processes. Ahmed draws upon Marxist theory as she maintains that affect can potentially operate in a similar fashion as surplus value, intensifying and accumulating through its movement and circulation between people and objects. Affect often accumulates around a figure, such as ‘the asylum seeker’. Such figures, in Ahmed’s understanding, are ‘sticky’ as affects cluster and group around, but the circulation of affects requires ongoing labour. Affects project desires into the future but draws upon sediments of the past, making particular orientations more likely. Ahmed’s focus on emotions instead of affects as unit of analysis has been critiqued (Berlant, 2011, pp. 12–13; Wetherell, 2015). This focus would not necessarily align with contemporary knowledge in psychobiology and would decontextualize and depersonalize. However, Ahmed’s focus (2013) on what ‘emotions do’ is useful as she shows how feelings can circulate, resonate and accumulate over time, therefore obtaining affective value.

In *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant (2011) discusses how people’s constructions of the future are about endurance in the present. The present is perceived affectively: it is a mediated affect, that is sensed and under constant revision. Berlant considers how in the neoliberal context of post-Cold War Europe and the US, people hold onto fantasies of the ‘good life’ despite deteriorating economic and social conditions. People manage the incoherence of and stay attached to their lives in the most unlikely circumstances. Fantasies of the ‘good life’, Berlant argues, are deeply related to actual experiences of precarity and crisis as well as to cultural production. Berlant speaks of an ‘impasse’ as a situation in which one cannot or will not move forward. She argues that in such a situation there is a creative, anxious assessment of information and possibilities (2011, p. 4). An impasse is an unforclosed experience. Major shifts can but most of the time do not happen. Especially when there are no promises for material betterment in the present there is the need to hold onto the idea that future life is and will be meaningful.

Optimism then is the complexity of being bound to life, a negotiated substance that makes life bearable as it is. It is “a social relation involving attachments that organize the present” (2011, p. 14). These attachments can make life possible or bearable. They can also be cruel, as the actual belief in the promise of upward mobility and the ‘good life’ can become the actual obstacle for changing one’s circumstances. Both Berlant (2011) and Ahmed (2006,

2013) situate their work in neoliberal, late modern societies in the Global North. In the following sections I will further explore if their thoughts can be translated to non-western settings of prolonged uncertainty.

Transnational affect

Amanda Wise and Selvaraj Velayutham (2006) developed the concept of ‘transnational affect’ to consider how embodied, emotive affects circulate across borders and (re)produce transnational belonging. Transnational affect is defined as “the circulation of bodily emotive affect between transnational subjects and between subjects and symbolic fields which give qualitative intensity to vectors and routes thus reproducing belonging to and boundaries of transnational fields” (2006, p. 3). Through their work on East Timorese migrants in Australia and people from Tamil Nadu in Singapore, Wise and Velayutham show how moral intensities, such as shame and pride, are embodied and are circulated across space and reconfigure transnational belonging. In another study, migrants living between Hong Kong and Australia draw upon hope to wishfully integrate different social imaginaries of ‘the good life’ (Mar, 2005). Stories of ‘hope in motion’ fuel and shape spatial and temporal strategies that often result in the splitting of families, relationships and selves across different locations but that equally connect to an imagined full existence. For the people in Mar’s study, Australia stands for time and nature versus the hard, but necessary, capitalism that Hong Kong has come to represent.

In work I earlier mentioned, Koen Leurs (2014) connects transnational affect, mediated connections and the everyday experience of young Somali migrants living in Ethiopia. As the Somali migrants in his study have little access to forms of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital, transnational affective capital has become a crucial resource in their lives in order to manage precariousness. Through digital connections feelings bridge distances and become embodied. Internet-based transnational communication evoke affective responses such as feeling ‘happy’ or ‘together. They are connected and they are living in limbo. Leurs rightfully wonders whether the emotions these interactions bring about are just a temporary suspension or leave behind a lasting impression.

Leurs (2016) returns to this question on the effects of transnational affective resources in a later article. He argues the fantasies of his informants reflect a Berlantian sense of ‘cruel

optimism': "In articulating their daily routines, it seems their subjectivity is completely future oriented. They feel stuck, their life is at a standstill, and they live in total dependency of loved ones and strangers abroad..." (Leurs, 2016, p. 28) His notion of 'total dependency' seems to preclude any sign of agency. Remaining optimistic and hopeful in unstable circumstances however requires hard work (Pedersen, 2012, p 141 in Horst & Grabska, 2015, p. 15) and implies an active attitude. This is where Ahmed's and Berlant's work come together: Ahmed's focus on labour and unequal productions of affect that take shape through past experiences meets in Berlant's understanding of optimism as something that is construed in and around the present. This optimism also overlaps with Ghassan Hage's understanding of hope, as both are attachments to life. The main difference is that hope is future-oriented. In the next section I will therefore more closely explore how hope but also nostalgia are focused on the potential for change and how these affects are mediated.

Mediated hope and nostalgia

Hope is the understanding that, over time, there is potential for change (Jansen, 2016). is the capacity to be optimistic about something that is not yet. The work by Ghassan Hage (2003), like the studies by Ahmed and Berlant, is situated in a late modern society in the Global North. In *Against Paranoid Nationalism* he considers the culture of worries among the white working class in Australia. This book, although situated in a very different context, provides valuable insights in the workings and production of hope. Hage (2003) draws upon Bourdieu's differentiation between societal and dispositional hope (Bourdieu, 2000). Societal hope refers to one's access and recognition as a human being by a state and/or society and, related to this, the trust that this institution can and will generate and distribute fair social opportunities. As refugees tend to be construed as 'matter out of place' and outside of the 'national order of things' (Malkki, 1995), dispositional hope might therefore become crucial as there is no society refugees can rely on. Dispositional hope is the will to live and the ability "to face the uncertainties of the future" (Hage, 2003, p. 26), against all odds. It is the deep belief in the importance of one's life's pursuit and an important tool to confront certainty. Berlant's optimism overlaps with Hage's understanding of hope as both are attachments to life. The main difference is that hope is future-oriented, while Berlant (2011) considers optimism in relation to enduring the present.

Diana Allan's (2014) ethnographic study on everyday experiences of uncertainty among exiled Palestinian in Lebanon equally points us to the importance and "pragmatics of hope" (p. 140). Allan (2014, p. 140) argues that "resources by which selves remain phenomenologically rooted in futurity – has been not only preserved, but even refined in the face of an objectively narrowed range of possibilities". The people in her study find dynamic, diverse forms of shaping the past, present and future that does not neatly fit with the exclusionary national identity thinking international policy, nationalist politics and NGO-driven metanarratives regarding exclusionary national identity thinking that does not recognize the evolving dynamics of belonging, identity and place-making.²⁴ Allan shows how the everyday lives of the people in her study are oriented to futures elsewhere but also largely formed by past experiences and actively shaped through the present in Lebanon.

Especially young Palestinian men had two different registers for thinking and talking about the future: one that was focused on return to Palestine and the other towards out-migration. Through their mediated imagination they were able to create space for themselves and carve out places that were not yet. One of Allan's interlocutors had even memorized London's underground system. In his dreams he was already there (2014, p. 166). These dreams are, as Allan shows, not about financial security, but it is about reclaiming agency and a meaningful life. It is about being able to map out future life in a safe and stable manner. Allan also makes a convincing argument that some imaginations of the future, such as dreams for outward migration, can become more resonant if other routes such as return to Palestine or a future in Lebanon seem foreclosed and how different seemingly contrasting future imaginaries can co-exist in the present: among Palestine camp refugees in Lebanon. The desire for collective return goes together with attachments to the life in the camp and with dreaming of more individualized futures elsewhere.

²⁴ This exclusionary nation-identity thinking is deeply grounded in the Right of Return (*Haq al 'anda*). Allan rightfully critiques the emphasis of policies and NGOs on physical return as this notions goes beyond returning to a place or the past. It is the dedication of and for Palestinians to national self-determination and to restitution and recognition for displaced Palestinians. In 1948, approximately 750,000 Palestinians have been displaced from their homes in Palestine and forced upon neighboring Arab countries where legal marginalization continues until today. Some but not all Palestinians in Jordan are the exception as they are recognized as Jordanian citizens (Allan, 2014, p. 10).

The works of Allan (2014) and Hage (2003) meet as they both draw upon Bourdieu's (2000) notion of *Illusio*, one's ability to invest, belief and hold on to life as meaningful. It is the ability to make life bearable, even if barred from means to pursue personal advancement in life. This functional understanding of hope as making the present bearable somewhat resonates with a nuanced understanding of nostalgia as proposed by Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley (2006). Contrary to hope and belief in progress, nostalgia might be considered as a longing for (segments of the) past, yet Pickering and Keightley critique the general idea that nostalgia would only be a reactionary and sentimental retreat from the present. Nostalgia is a response to experiences of loss, yet its meanings are multiple and potentially also contribute to utopian impulses towards the future. Particular dynamics and characteristics of the past can also serve as the basis for imaginations of potential futures. "Nostalgia can then be seen as not only a search for ontological security in the past, but also a means of taking one's bearing for the road ahead in the uncertainties of the present (p. 921)." Nostalgia can therefore contain positive dimensions, associated with a wish for change and engagement with the present and aspirations for the future.

Hope and nostalgia are tightly linked to the mediated imagination. Sneath, Holbraad and Pederson (2009) consider that imaginative effects are mediated through a wide variety of digital and non-digital objects, but argue against an idea of the imagination that would suggest progress or is new. The letters migrants would send to their relatives in the 1980s would actually have left more room for the imaginative and for the opportunity to idealize far away relationships and places (Wilding, 2006). The ubiquitous connectivity of today brings the mundane into focus and this would go at the expense of the imaginative narrative. Yet the increased awareness that life in Europe is nothing like seen on the screen and that the dangerous journey often takes years does not withhold Senegalese youngsters from dreaming and eventually travelling to Europe (Schapendonk & Van Moppes, 2007).

Hope can also easily turn into disillusion and disappointment. Among Somalian refugees in Kenya the word *buufis* refers not only to the longing for resettlement to a third country, but also to the madness and suicide that can occur when this dream for a future elsewhere is shattered (Horst, 2003). Sara Bishop (2016) explores if the mediated expectations of different refugee populations who have been resettled to the US meets reality. This includes Iraqi refugees who have been selected for US resettlement. Bishop considers how

the information provided by the US government on life in the US but also how TV shows, films and personal contacts have informed and contributed to imagining life in the US, and therefore provides a more in-depth understanding of how in the experience of forced migration hopes can be circulated through mediated content. Among most refugee populations life in the US did not meet their expectations, but among the Iraqis this was not only because they had idealized a western life. Many Iraqi resettled refugees, like the Iraqi refugees in this study, were formerly middle-class. Their new life was very different from how life prior to displacement used to be and this informed their hopes and therefore also their disappointment. Their feelings contrasted with the gratitude that was expected of them towards the very country that played a large role in their very displacement.

The circulation of information, images and stories of people who have managed to migrate onwards can foster the social imagination of futures elsewhere but can also influence how one's lack of mobility is experienced as a failure and seems to inhibit collective mobility (Tuckett, 2016; Vigh, 2009). Seeing and hearing about lives elsewhere might spur hope, but can equally evoke feelings of what Hage defines in later work as 'stuckedness'. Hage's (2009, 2015) characterizes 'stuckedness' by invisibility, immobility, uncertainty and arbitrariness. 'Stuckedness', according to Hage, is the sense that one is not moving in life and that one is socially or physically stuck. It is the opposite of mobility. Hage (2015, p. 2) differentiates between a waiting that is (still) fulfilled with hope whereas 'stuckedness' would presume a paralysis of the imagination. In an earlier interview with Dimitris Papadopoulos, Hage (2004) however also argued that that being 'stuck' in a particular place - not moving symbolically and having the sense that there is 'no future' in one's location - could also result in the dream of moving physically in the hope that that new place will provide us (once again) with the symbolic mobility we yearn for. In my understanding this means that there is no paralysis of the imagination: the imagination is still there, but has located the future elsewhere. One's experience of being 'stuck' and not moving in life is deeply connected with the experience or idea that other people are moving. Henrik Vigh (2009) shows how Guinean young men understand outward migration as a necessary break with the past and with life in Guinea where a better future is perceived as possible. The social dynamics and shared experiences of precarity among the young Guinean men are equally crucial as they stimulate among each other the importance for making the journey.

In this section I have considered how waiting is an affective phenomenon. I have first

unpacked the work of Sara Ahmed (2013) and Lauren Berlant (2011). Ahmed (2013) considers how particular affects ‘stick’ around particular images and ideas. Berlant (2011) considers how in unlikely and unlucky circumstances people can stay optimistic. I then zoomed in on the productions and labour around hope and the imagination. Remaining hopefully oriented towards change might be considered as ‘cruel’ as this hope might seem unrealistic. Yet, as Thomas Tufte (2000) and David Morley (1986) also have shown in their work on TV-viewing practices, mediated escapes and imagined dreams of lives elsewhere can serve important social and subjective functions to make difficult lives at least temporarily bearable. In the upcoming empirical chapters I further explore if the work of Hage, Berlant and Ahmed which are all situated in late modern societies in the global north, travel and can be applied to experiences of prolonged conditions of displacement in the Global South.

3.5 Conclusion: media ethnography in the temporary refugee home

I started this chapter with an exploration of early Non-media centric Media Studies that have shown that TV as but one digital technologies plays an important role in feeling ‘at home’ and feeling secure. In domestic spaces, mediated practices and social relations intersect and interact, suggesting that some people within the household would feel more at home than others. Media consumption has important symbolic and material values, referred to as ‘double articulation’, but these meanings are context-specific and therefore need to be situated. I further explored how media ethnographies in non-western settings have shown that context matters as women in India, Egypt and Brazil were making sense of their own particular circumstances through their TV-practices. Social realities influence how technologies are incorporated into the home and how mediated messages are interpreted.

In the second section, I considered ethnographic studies that explores how experiences of migration and marginalization can unsettle one’s sense of belonging, and how digital technologies play a role in finding spaces in-between where one can feel at ease and obtain a sense of self. However, as media ethnographies by Marie Gillespie (1995) and Myria Georgiou (2006) have shown the physical experiences of being marked out as not-belonging might reinforce the need to contest and negotiate one’s identity and sense of place in the world. The interconnectivity that the more recent environment of ‘polymedia’

engenders shows how different technologies relate and obtain meaning in relation to each other (Madianou & Miller, 2011a, 2011b). This media-richness comes back in understanding of these the communicative spaces as ‘talking spaces’ (Gillespie, 2006) or ‘hypermedia space’ (Kraidy, 2006). Developments in digital technologies have contributed to the ability to establish intimate relationship with people elsewhere and in the complex array of presences and connections with the world that come into being and potentially reconfigure the migrant home.

In the third section I explained how many migrants experience their lives as in waiting. In the Global South the governing principle called ‘humanitarian reason’ (2012) further mark refugee houses out as only temporary. I have shown how digital technologies play crucial roles in managing the insecurities that are characteristic of living in prolonged displacement. Moreover, whereas notions of ‘home’ and ‘place’ are unsettled and chaotic, situated and virtual home-making practices (Doná, 2015) do take place. The home-Home-HOME constellation by Brun and Fabos (2015) enables a further understanding of home as a continuous project and practice, inspired by the past and by hopes for a better future.

This brings me to the fourth and last section of this chapter as I explored how to understand the roles that digital technologies can play in circulating affects. Sara Ahmed describes migration as “a process of disorientation and reorientation” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 9) of finding one’s way in place and feeling home (again). In the three empirical chapters of this thesis I aim to explore the multiple, intersecting and interacting roles of digital technologies for making sense of and negotiating with the humanitarian regime (Chapter 5), in managing localized insecurities and carving out temporary homes (Chapter 6) and in remaining hopeful (Chapter 7). Together they provide more insight in how everyday experiences of displacement are mediated and how digital technologies play into the affective worlds of forced migrants living in the Global South.

Chapter 4 –Ethnography as a Methodological Approach

This chapter considers the epistemological, ethical and reflexive concerns around ethnography with forced migrants in Jordan. Not any single method has a “monopoly on virtue” (Morley, 1992, p. 13). The choice for a particular method depends on the research question and the resources available. In Chapter 1, I explained how I became fascinated by the mediated lives of Iraqi refugees who were considered ‘stuck’ in Jordan. I became intrigued with how digital connectivity, enabling people to go beyond the borders of nation-states despite other legal and social constraints, would influence that experience of ‘stuckedness’ (Hage, 2009). The question therefore is what method would enable me to further understand the mediated experience of ‘others’. In the previous chapter, I explained how different academic fields – Non-Media Centric Media Studies and Forced Migration Studies – come together in this research project. I have made a theoretical argument for the need for understanding the mediation of forced displacement: the interaction between mediated and situated practices constitutes meaning-making processes and experiences of perpetual legal and social uncertainty. Ethnography as a methodological approach provides a means to capture the complexity of mediated and social dynamics that shape everyday practices and experiences (Horst & Miller, 2012). It enables to further understand how media and digital technologies are domesticated and even become mundane within an insecure, temporary context.

In the following chapter, I will first unpack the epistemological reasons for choosing ethnography over other methods. I then consider how ethnography as a methodological approach has obtained a place within the fields of Forced Migration Studies and Non-media-centric Media Studies, but how this methodological approach has been equally and rightfully critiqued. This points us to the importance of ethnographic rigour. In the second section I talk through the different stages of the research process as I consider the epistemological choices I made and the dilemmas that occurred while conducting this research. Ethnography is a process, and this becomes clear in the ways of disseminating findings. In the third section I therefore reflect upon the analysis and writing process. I end this chapter with describing some of the participants who play a central role in this research.

4.1 Epistemological arguments for ethnography

Ethnography is not a method, but a “theory of the research process” (Skeggs, 1995, p. 192) to study people’s actions and accounts in the context of the everyday. It is a transdisciplinary, flexible and rather messy approach that draws upon multiple methods to collect data as it recognizes the importance of seeking multiple ways to obtain information to come closer in comprehending the lived realities of other people. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 3) provide a rather practical description of ethnography: “the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artifacts.” This also opens up the space to use innovative tools and online methods, as will be discussed later in this chapter. There is an ongoing interaction with the field, its interpretative open-ended approach and its back-and-forth-going movements between theory and data. “Ethnographic practices shape and are shaped by contexts of study” (Horst, Hjorth, & Tacchi, 2012, p. 92). It aims to contribute to theoretical understandings and is from the start deeply informed by theoretical discussions (Skeggs, 1995). The main argument for choosing ethnography over other methodological approaches is that it can produce situated knowledge on experiences and meaning-making process in a way that less encompassing research methods cannot (Gillespie, 1995, p. 54). Ethnography as a methodological approach over only semi-structured interviews relates to the epistemological advantages of participant observations and long-term involvement.

Participant observations allows to obtain additional data that complements with what people ‘say’ they do. When participants rationalize their experience for interviews this might produce different readings to that observed by the researcher in the participant observation. These observations potentially reveal processes of power, ambivalence and affect in everyday life and provide the opportunity for the researcher to notice things that tend to be taken for granted because they are part of the mundane or not considered of interest to the researcher. Long-term involvement enables me to play part in a lived spatial environment and to observe and process changes that occur over time (Madianou, 2005)

Long-term social immersion in the lives of others provides in-depth contextual information to help the research to understand and interpret what people say and do in their environments. Ethnography builds upon in-depth accounts based upon empirical

investigation and exploration of the cultural practices and beliefs of a group of people. Many ethnographers build upon Clifford Geertz' (1983) understanding of 'thick description' that refers to extensively describing a phenomenon within its particular localized context. The ethnographer continuously and consciously seeks to connect the empirical with the theoretical, and the micro with the macro. Spending time with people and the in-depth immersion into their lives requires a relationship of trust. It brings me – as an outsider – closer to comprehending the lived realities of other people and of for instance, understanding a media landscape and a language that is foreign to me. Relationships of trust not only means that people could potentially feel safe to trust me with more personal information. It is equally vital for access to homes and to the intimate dimensions of everyday life of which media are an intricate part.

This long-term commitment has an additional value. Mirca Madianou (2015, p. 5) suggests that "slow research" can be an important means for further understanding emergencies. In Chapter 3, I further explained that humanitarianism is prone to focus on the short-term and temporary. Ethnography as a method can to a certain extent be considered as critique to this temporary-ness. Instead of a snapshot, long-term immersion can potentially provide a more sustained account of the experiences of people who are affected by humanitarian disasters, be they affected by conflict or natural hazards, for listening to the perspectives of people who are otherwise less listened to and to situate narratives in particular contexts.

The choice of ethnography as methodological approach however has important implications. Ethnography in and of itself has a tainted legacy as it originates from colonization and empire. Its aim to have a closer look at exoticized 'others' (Ahmed, 2000) resulted in a justified postcolonial critique that discusses the ethnographer as one who makes off with tribal lore yet gives nothing in return, who imposes crude pictures of complex issues and/or serves as a dupe or even supporter of powerful repressive regimes (Clifford & Marcus, 1986, p. 9). Ethnography is enmeshed within a world of power inequalities. This pushes me towards the need for reflexivity during all steps of the research process. Discussions within the discipline of anthropology in regard to its legacy of objectification and exploitation have resulted in an understanding that the knowledge ethnography generates is contingent, partial and that the truths it produces are contestable (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). If applied in a reflexive manner this research method has the potential to build personal connections, care and solidarity. The choice for ethnography as

a methodological approach has been critiqued in by scholars in the fields Forced Migration studies as well as Non-media-centric Media Studies. I will now further discuss these debates.

Ethnography and Forced Migration Studies

The field of Forced Migration Studies connects perspectives from different disciplines such as law, political science and anthropology (Chatty & Marfleet, 2013). Research on forced migration issues is interdisciplinary in nature as it crosses a number of social science disciplines. The methods and methodologies applied for research range from large-scale survey to small-scale ethnography. The academic interest for ethnography has increased over the last 30 years. In response to the exclusionary politics of nation-states and the emergency-driven, policy-oriented work by the international community and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), researchers have focused upon the predicaments and experiences of refugees themselves (Chatty & Marfleet, 2013). Ethnographies conducted in the 1990s and 2000s have shown that migrants' experiences are deeply affected by the workings of the humanitarian system and by the socio-political environments they find refuge in (Harrell-Bond, 1986; Harrell-Bond & Verdirame, 2005; Horst, 2003; Malkki, 1995; Monsutti, 2008; Van Hear, 1998, 2003; Zetter, 1991).

Some migration scholars have argued that ethnography would put too much emphasis on 'personal' and local experiences of forced displacement without linking it to broader structures and institutions (Castles, 2003; Jacobsen & Landau, 2003). Stephen Castles (2003, p. 21) states that an "emphasis on the subjective and cultural aspects of forced migration" could neglect the structural dimensions of forced migration. A sociology of forced migration should, in his view, focus on the international failures of managing global inequality. According to Castles (2003) a further understanding is needed at the global level, beyond the situated experiences of forced migrants themselves. I agree with the importance of linkages to larger political, social and economic structures, but these links are part and parcel of what ethnography is and are crucial to further understand situate experiences and meanings (Abu-Lughod, 1997, 2000; Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, & Larkin, 2002; Rodgers, 2004).

Karen Jacobsen and Loren Landau (2003) address their concerns regarding research with

small samples and in-depth interviews situated in the field of forced migration studies. They argue that many of these studies do not meet the demands of academic credibility. I certainly agree with their plea for accountability, on-going reflexivity, openness and a critical viewpoint toward the methods used, but as Jacobsen and Landau stress the need of an “expansive data set” (p.190) to test hypotheses and for data to be ‘replicable’ (p. 201) they seem to plea for more positivist-oriented research. Jacobsen and Landau rightfully emphasize the need for reflections upon ethical problems but misrecognize that ‘hard data’ is not void from ethical or practical obstacles. Alice Bloch (2007) shows how conducting quantitative research with refugee populations has a number of practical difficulties. This includes the difficulty to access and to sample enough representative respondents, primarily due to issues relating to legal status, power differentials, insecurity, language and literacy. Bloch does not make a plea for a particular method. Instead, she foregrounds that any research method that considers the plight of forced migrants should be applied within a ‘context of vulnerability’ and brings important ethical issues to the fore.

Feminist researchers have shown how issues of power, knowledge, values, social relations and social locations cannot be divorced from social research (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991). Rather than ignoring the link between power and knowledge, I consider it imperative to recognize the role of the researcher and of social research in (re)producing particular power relations. Data might be used as a tool for policymakers to improve the lives of refugees, but can also easily be misused to further exploit or exclude already marginalized people. Through a deeper interpretative process, ethnography enables one to gain insight into situated meanings but also of vulnerabilities. By having this in-depth insight, ethnographers are able to be careful for making crude generalizations that can be misused or misread. The lack of straightforward answers is not a justification for self-absorption or over-reflexivity. Instead, it suggests the importance (and potential) of “thinking with care” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012), not only in order to counter dominant discourses that suppress the voices of people who tend to be framed as ‘others’, and equally as important, in order to not further marginalize them through particular short-sighted or even exploitative research practices.

My research focuses upon everyday mediated experiences of insecurity. It is difficult to quantify experiences. Moreover, I am interested in the contextual details that produce the dynamics between micro-practices and macro-structures. Knowledge generated through

ethnography with forced migrants provides a means to capture the complexity of forced migration and keeps open the channel for the voices of forced migrants without the claim to definitely represent them (Rodgers, 2004). Paying closer attention to small, localized experiences is useful to further understanding globalized oppression and broader struggles (De Genova, 2013). A focus on the mediated practices of refugees living in prolonged uncertainty enables me to better understand how their experiences of time and place are connected to globalization, but also to the macro structures of imperialism, capitalism and patriarchy. In the next section I will further explore epistemological discussions in the field of Non-media-centric Media Studies more general and Media Ethnography more specific, also since access and availability of digital technologies have opened up new directions for conducting research.

Ethnography and Non-media centric Media Studies

In Chapter 3 I have explored how Non-media centric approaches (Couldry, 2012; Krajina et al., 2014; Moores, 2012; Morley, 2009) towards media research enabled me to further comprehend the dialectal process between mediated practices and social processes. Non-media-centric Media studies move away from a focus on particular media objects or texts as was the tradition in media audience research. De-centring the media makes it possible to untangle the interwoven nature of everyday life and media processes (Morley, 2007, p 200). This does not necessarily mean a turn to ethnography, as there are other methodologies that make this contextualization possible. Shaun Moores for instance draws upon historical analysis (1988) and phenomenology (2012) and the early work of David Morley (1986) was based upon interviews only. I argued earlier that ethnography as a methodological approach can produce situated knowledge on mediated practices in ways that less immersive and less participatory research methods cannot.

The ethnographic turn in Media Studies partly emerged in response to methods that constructed audiences as passive (Ang, 1991). This turn coincided with an increased interest among anthropologists to conduct research in Western homes as well as the recognition of intensified socio-cultural and political traffic between the Global South and Global North (Ginsburg et al., 2002). Marie Gillespie (1995, p. 55) however argued that much 'ethnographic' audience research does not follow the iterative, long-term and

multimethod practices that are part and parcel of ethnography. More recently, media scholars expressed similar critiques. Patrick Murphey (2011) distinguishes ethnographic research from ethnography. Ethnography as a methodological approach refers to the process of data-collection (in-depth fieldwork), the way of organizing data and the way the data is disseminated. The ethnographic process ought to become clear in the product as it follows a dialogical and reflexive model. Technological developments have resulted in important discussions on how to apply ethnography if media and technologies are pervasive. David Morley argued recently that ethnographic studies on ‘new’ media focus on virtual geographies, without recognizing how they relate to material geographies. They are layered over one another, and to pick out only the virtual tends to negate that relation (Krajina et al., 2014, p. 688). Online domains are part of and interact with everyday offline contexts (Miller & Slater, 2000; Postill, 2011). This is the approach that I take as I explore how interactions between online and offline worlds interact and constitute the experience of living in prolonged displacement.

The emergence of digital environments has increased the volume of available data to study, the means to acquire data through innovative research tools and extended what constitutes a field to the online. As I stated in the beginning of this chapter, ethnographic fieldwork is characterized by long-term immersion in a field. The emergence of digital technologies further complicated the notion of what immersion in a ‘field’ means. Anthropologists like Ulf Hannerz (2003) and Ghassan Hage (2005) have considered whether the Internet and other technological developments have replaced the need for physically being present for prolonged stretches of time²⁵. Technological developments have made it possible to conduct ethnographic studies that considers the linkages and connections between different places, and/or to immerse oneself on online communicative spaces. However, even if a field is less bounded or concrete, there seems to be the agreement that ethnographic rigour continues to be important. Ethnographic rigour, comes from and through experiences of ‘being in the field’ be it offline or online: “there are no shortcuts” (Horst et al., 2012, p. 89). Any study that claims to be ethnographic requires context and needs to be situated within people’s lived realities.

²⁵ Whereas Hage (2005) has a more pessimistic/realistic take on the possibility and practical difficulties of multisided fieldwork, both Hage (2005) and Hannerz (2003) argue that the term ‘multilocal’ or ‘multisided’ ethnography is misleading: the field of study is the connections and not necessarily two or more places.

Postill and Pink (2012) put forward an approach they call Internet-related ethnography, as they engage with internet practices and relate it to locality-based realities. I turn this idea around, as I focus on locality-based realities and consider how mediated practices feed into these situated experiences. This focus had an epistemological reason: my main interest did not go out to particular texts but to how different messages and images feed into everyday meaning-making processes. In the media-rich environments of Iraqi refugee households it was not that straightforward to discern what messages and texts matter in the myriad of data flows and flickering of TV shows, and this was therefore an iterative process. I therefore approach online digital practices in a very similar way as I approached TV-viewing practices: as matter to talk with and through. Online talk as well as broadcast talk feed into everyday talk. The people in this study would often look at and show me photos and videos of past-Iraq, discuss developments and ‘truth claims’ in online and broadcast news, and Skype with faraway loved ones with the TV in the background serving as an ambient affective atmosphere. People do not experience the world through a singular medium. The mediated input of different technologies are enmeshed in their everyday lives (Madianou & Miller, 2011a, 2011b).

This focus on the everyday mediated practices also had some practical reasons. First, conducting online ethnographic research raises some important ethical concerns that need to be considered prior to conducting fieldwork (Robards, 2013; Sin, 2015). I became *Facebook*-friends with many of the participants, as I understood that for the Iraqi refugees in this study it was an inherent part of building connections and friendships. I was extremely careful how to use what they posted online for my research purposes. I used their posts as material for discussion in offline conversations as this was where they had given consent (see next section). A second practical consideration relates to the language used. Most televised broadcasts are either in MSA or dialects which I cannot understand (see Chapter 2.3). This would make it difficult to analyse texts more in-depth.

In the first three sections of this chapter, I considered what epistemological advantages ethnography has over other methods. Ethnography as a methodological approach goes beyond the application of particular methods. Whereas long-term social immersion and participant observations are important in order to contextualize and to further comprehend how mediated practices feed into everyday experiences of prolonged displacement, conducting ethnography also requires to move back and forth between

theory and practice and on-going reflexivity. Ethnography is a process, but this process also needs to become clear in the written work. I have considered how particular migration scholars have been sceptical of small scale studies. It is however its contextualising small scale design that makes ethnography a valuable and careful approach that links the personal experiences of refugees to broader discussions regarding power and inequality. I then discussed how ethnography as a methodological approach has been deployed by media scholars and how the emergence of media and digital technologies have contributed to more and less clearly-marked out spaces for conducting ethnographic fieldwork. The online input this research draws upon is however discussed in offline interactions with the people who took part in this study. In the next part of this chapter I will further discuss the research process: how it was designed, took place and how it eventually resulted in this product.

4.2 Fieldwork among Iraqi Refugee Households in Jordan

In this section of the chapter I discuss the different stages of the fieldwork. I begin with the preparations taken before fieldwork. I then discuss the further disseminate different phases of fieldwork before discussing the analysis and the writing. Ethnography is often a messy process of following leads that are not necessarily planned. The stages in this process are not mutually exclusive and would often overlap (Gillespie, 1995, pp. 60–61).

Preparing Media Ethnography among Iraqi Refugee Households

My focus on Iraqi refugee households in Jordan to further the understanding of the mediation of prolonged displacement is deeply related to my own prior experiences. In 2012, a year before I started my PhD, I spent 6 months working with Iraqi refugees located in Jordan. I undertook an internship at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the international agency assigned by the US government to run its US resettlement program (see also Chapter 5 and Appendix 5). The work of this organisation is in many countries highly controversial. After my internship I conducted research for a Master's degree on the experiences of Iraqi refugees who were formally rejected for third country resettlement (Tiwigt, 2013). The work of this organisation is in many countries highly controversial. In 2012 and the following years, people from Syria were increasingly seeking refuge in Jordan. After leaving Jordan I stayed in contact via *Facebook* with several Iraqi refugees who continued to wait in Jordan. As the nature of humanitarian assistance is

short-term and temporary (see Chapter 3) my academic interest turned to what would happen if humanitarian and media attention dried up but people stayed displaced. A second, entwined reason was because of these previous yet ongoing connections, I felt a closeness and concern as some of the Iraqi people I had previously worked with had become close friends. The emotional intensity of this research inspired and motivated me (Skeggs, 1995). This also implied a caution as I would run the risk of losing my critical analytic perspective (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 90) or exhausting myself, something I will later reflect upon.

Preparing for ethnographic fieldwork raises questions regarding access. Karin Jacobsen and Rebecca Furst Nichols (2012) assert that one of the main difficulties for conducting research with urban displaced population is the difficulty to locate refugees. Living in the cities makes it difficult to locate urban refugees, as they tend to geographically spread out and/or strategically live in the shadows. My own experiences had been different. Jordan's capital Amman hosts more than 4 million people (DoS & UNICEF, 2015) but in 2012 it had been relatively easy to meet Iraqi nationals via local NGOs. They invited me to their homes and introduced me to their friends. Mobility and invisibility are known livelihood strategies for refugees (Monsutti, 2008) and I was concerned with the fluidity of the research context. The lack of up-to-date information on the situation of Iraqi refugees in Jordan made me doubt whether this was a matter that needed to be examined. I had stayed in touch with some people, yet I had lost touch with others and builds upon deeply unequal power relations.

For this reason I conducted preliminary fieldwork in the summer of 2014. I was reassured about the feasibility and the potential of my research design: old friends introduced me to people who like them had been in Jordan for years or who had only recently arrived in response to the atrocities by ISIS. They were open to the idea of partaking in my ethnographic research. Moreover, the atrocities by ISIS had resulted in a new influx of Iraqi refugees. I also came to the realization that waning interest for the plight of Iraqi refugees in Jordan would have a methodological advantage. In 2012, I observed research fatigue among the Iraqi refugee population in Jordan, as they felt that the attention of foreign researchers had done little to improve their individual cases. When I returned in 2014, there seemed to be a sense of relief that foreign people like me were still concerned with the plight of Iraqi refugees. This equally reminded me that the presence of the (often

western) researcher can result in expectations and false hopes.

Based upon my previous experiences, I knew that much of Iraqi refugee life takes place within the confines of the home. I decided to focus on refugee households as points from which to access multiple experiences and a node of social life. Experiences of displacement are strongly connected to socio-cultural norms around gender and age, but as I have shown in Chapter 3 so are technology use and ways of being in 'at home' in the house. As I explained in Chapter 1, much literature within refugee studies is positioned as gender-neutral, but by doing so they tend to put forward a male-dominated perspective. Other studies focus upon women alone (Indra, 1999). A focus on households therefore enabled me to consider gender and other differences such as class, religion and race as relational constructs that refer to power differences and socio-cultural expectations (Crenshaw, 1991)

In her media ethnography on TV-viewing in India, Purnima Mankekar (1998) explores the analytical differences between the concepts family and household. Mankekar shows that neither families nor households are discrete, bounded social units. Like the family, the household is a normative ideal and a web of affect, practices and institutions. Forced displacement often results in fragmentation of families over different geographical areas and therefore also in a reconfiguration of who lives where. My focus goes out to the material circumstances of living in Jordan and the spatial dynamics of living physically together. Familial 'homely' spaces – that are in the case of Mankekar created around and by the television – are entangled with other political and social sites. This does not suggest that family members who live elsewhere cannot continue to play an important role. As I have shown in Chapter 3, they might continue to play an important role in the refugee home through digital connections.

The in-depth immersion into people's lives that is part and parcel of ethnography is already deeply intrusive. This would be even more the case as I was aiming to conduct research within the private settings of people's households. In the next section I will discuss how access was negotiated. It was crucial to clearly explain the intentions of my presence, the aims of my research and the ability for people to hold control over their participation. I designed information sheets, for participant observation as well as semi-structured interview, and information consent forms. These were translated in Arabic by an Arabic-speaking friend and double-checked by an Iraqi friend (see Appendix 2).

Another important consideration before leaving for the field was language. My understanding of colloquial Arabic at that time was mediocre. I knew it would improve during my immersion in the field, but I also was aware that for in-depth interviews I would be reliant on translators or English-speaking Iraqis. This would not only result in a loss in translation but also raised ethical concerns. The presence of and translation by family members might make asking personal questions more difficult, while an ‘external’ translator could result in issues of trust and (in)security. Working with translation also provide a number of epistemological difficulties, adding ‘layers of meaning’ and power differentials (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 367). Experiences are interpreted by those who experience (Skeggs, 1995) and who might or might not have the words or the leverage to express them. The presence of a translator means yet another interpretation. The necessity to translate could potentially mean that particular emotive states are lost in the process. These difficulties were partly, but never fully, overcome by diligent double-checking and always critically testing interpretations. In the writing process I sometimes asked my Iraqi friends and former participants to proofread to see if what I was writing made sense to them and their experiences. Working with translators can also have advantages as they can help to explain particular cultural contexts and my ‘foreignness’ makes me more receptive to potential issues that tend to be taken for granted (Borchgrevink, 2003).

It is important to ask questions such as: can I ever do justice to ‘their’ everyday experiences? Whose voice I would/could (not) represent? Do if I reproduce Eurocentrism by reproducing my privileged ‘right to knowledge’? I found space in Donna Haraway’s (Haraway, 1988) argument for situated, partial knowledge: for engagement, for power-sensitive conversations and for solidarities with people that might be called subjugated. I can only come to a partial understanding of the world I am part of by investigating its pictures and narratives in detail. Responsible research means that you are able to be called to account and to be answerable for my interpretations (p. 583) as vision is always a question of the power to see and how to see. Throughout this chapter and the further chapters I will therefore reflect upon my role and position as a white, western, female researcher with Dutch citizenship conducting research in the Middle East among a displaced marginalized population.

Immersion

From the 5th of January until the 14th of September 2015, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork among Iraqi refugee households living in Amman. Upon my arrival in Jordan I regularly visited the Iraqi people I already knew, visited NGOs and managed to build trust and relationships. Trust is something that needs to be discussed continuously during the ethnographic research process. Much of this trust relates to how my presence was read as I will further explore. I discuss the interviews I conducted and further reflect the decisions to move in with an Iraqi refugee family and what additional lessons this taught me. I end this chapter with leaving the field, and how the emotions related to my departure further enable me to reflect upon the power relations in play.

Upon my arrival, I strengthened my previous connections with Iraqi nationals who were still in Jordan, whereas other Iraqi nationals who had travelled onwards introduced me online to their relatives and friends. I also met Iraqi refugees while I was volunteering at a Community Based Organization (CBO), visiting other organisations and standing in front of the offices of IOM and UNHCR Jordan, for instance during the sit-in described in Chapter 5 of this thesis. I informed all the people willing to participate about the nature of the research, its confidentiality and their ability to withdraw without any consequences at any point in the research process. Anonymity was secured through, sometimes self-chosen, pseudonyms.

I started paying regular visits to several Iraqi refugee households to ‘hang out’ (Rodgers, 2004) and observe. Some families I visited more than others as they seemed more willing to partake in the research and to let me be part of their lives. Their experiences and stories therefore played a more central role in this PhD-thesis than some of the people I only met few times. This becomes evident in the quotes and vignettes used. In most of the households I came to visit more frequently there was at least one person who was fluent in English. This made it easier to establish closer, more intimate relationships. I recognize that this might give a distorted image as the focus therefore would go out to the educated middle class (see Appendix 1 and Figure 4.1). I tried to balance this through interviews (with or without) the presence of a translator. Moreover, as I have shown in Chapter 2 the Iraqi refugee population in Jordan is generally characterised as ‘middle class’ suggesting that my findings to a certain extent might be representative.

'Hanging out' (Rodgers, 2004) with women and men, children and their parents, enabled me to consider how they live and experience their lives differently. Social immersion is deeply intrusive. Yet it seemed that most people enjoyed my company, also because it provided a sort of break with the perpetual boredom they were experiencing. Despite my ongoing emphasis that my research project would most likely do nothing regarding their lives' betterment many remained hopeful toward the idea that I could be of some help. Some people started calling me their sister and I became known as an aunt to the children of respondents, making it sometimes difficult to negotiate my double role as a researcher and friend. I was invited to social occasions and festive gatherings such as birthday parties, christenings and Iftar meals²⁶ but also to sorrowful events like hospitals visits and the funeral of a young Iraqi man. I became a confidant for many young people who felt free to share their personal difficulties and intimacies because I was considered an outsider with different, perhaps less normative, socio-cultural norms. We often had contact through Facebook Messenger and Viber, a popular Voice over IP-application. I do not use online information that I have not discussed offline with people in this study. However, it is difficult to 'unsee' things meaning that general observations on online behaviour did influence into my conversations and comprehension of how the everyday experience of living in prolonged displacement are deeply mediated.

I wrote extensive field notes and kept a personal diary, but I felt uncomfortable taking notes on the spot so I wrote them afterwards. I had to train my memory and I often wrote my observations as soon as possible. I was often scribbling my notes in the dark backseat of a taxi. While 'hanging out' (Rodgers, 2004) resulted in closer relationships, it also meant that my presence was sometimes taken for granted. I repeatedly had to remind people of my double role as researcher/friend, and I also had to remind myself of my own needs to sometimes take time and space to reflect. Some contacts faded away, perhaps because they were busy with informal employment or childrearing, or perhaps because they no longer wanted to participate, as there was little to be gained from the experience. Urban refugee situations are characterised by legal and socio-economic precariousness. Onwards movement within the city – for instance moving to a cheaper accommodation or a better area can be a strategy for living in these circumstances as I will show in Chapter 6. Other

²⁶An Iftar-meal is the evening meal when Muslims end their fast, during the, for Muslims, holy month of Ramadan

strategies are becoming more invisible through for instance changes the privacy settings on Facebook. One young female Iraqi refugee blocked my phone number which I took as a sign she no longer wanted to participate in this study. As such, the urban landscape of Jordan enables the Iraqi refugees to strategize and maintain a sense of independence and control and to build social networks in a way that fits best with their current situation (Chatelard & Morris, 2011; Fabos & Kibreab, 2007).

Conducting semi-structured interviews

The information acquired through home visits directly informed my interview guide (see Appendix 3). The interview guide consisted of questions regarding one's life in Jordan, being and becoming a refugee, one's access and use of different media forms, more targeted questions regarding different media forms (TV, mobile phone, the Internet) and particular usage, and connections with fellow Iraqi refugees and other people in Jordan, with Iraq and friends and family in and beyond Iraq. In total I conducted 42 in-depth semi-structured interviews. In Appendix 1, I provide a detailed overview of the respondents including more in-depth information and circumstances in which that particular person found themselves at the time of the interviews. The numbers used (ranging from 1 to 42) refer to the temporal order in which the interviews took place. All but two interviews took place within the confines of their household. Often the TV was on during our interview, forming an ambient presence in the household, and family members were present. The presence of an extra person might mean that people are more guarded about what they say and suggests that people could potentially omit important information (Borchgrevink, 2003). In a similar fashion to the participant observations, people were informed about the nature of the research, its confidentiality and their ability to withdraw at any point. Informed consent forms were offered but many informants were reluctant to sign official documents, yet expressed their willingness to take part. People were asked whether they felt comfortable with me recording the interview and if they expressed any doubts I resorted to writing notes.

My understanding of Arabic developed over time and had become good enough to comprehend discussions during participant observations in the household. I did require the help of translators to conduct most of the interviews. Twelve of the semi-structured interviews took place in English, as several men (8) and women (4) were fluent in English.

The other 30 interviews were conducted with the help of an Arabic-English translator. Most of the time I worked with a young Iraqi man I call Ahmed, who because of his training as a medical doctor and his personality was able to make people feel at ease during often emotive interviews. I also worked with Adam (#34) and Nour (#35). Nour's translation skills were crucial for interviewing Iraqi women without the presence of their husband or their father. My three research assistants signed confidentiality agreements, and I paid them a small fee for their services.

In figure 4.1 I provide a breakdown of the characteristics of the people I interviewed. I interviewed 18 individual men (married or single), 15 individual women (married or single) and 9 married couples. Six of the people or couples I interviewed had been in Jordan for more than 4 years, eight interviewees had been in Jordan for more than two years at the time the interview took place and 28 interviews took place with people who had been in Jordan for less than two years. Most of the people partaking in this study originated from Iraq's capital Baghdad. Religious / sectarian background is an important identity marker as this directly influences chances for resettlement (See Appendix 5), how life in Jordan is experienced and potentially affects mediated practices. It was and is a contentious matter that is directly linked to Iraq's warscape (see Chapter 2). Interviews took place with 17 people who have a Sunni Muslim background, 4 people with a Shi'a background and 3 people with a mixed Sunni / Shi'a Muslim background. Twelve of the people interviewed were Christians who overwhelmingly left Iraq because of the atrocities by ISIS and 5 people interviewed belonged to a religious minority called Sabeans. I only interviewed one Kurdish person. The Fafo-data (2007) mentioned in Chapter 2 also suggests that the number of Kurdish Iraqis in Jordan is relatively low. I was told that for people with a Kurdish background who fled from other parts of Iraq their legal and social position was better in Iraqi Kurdistan than it was in Jordan. Other studies suggest that the Iraqi refugee population is predominantly middle-class. I got a similar impression that many people in this study came from middle-class backgrounds, but attributing a classed status to the people in this study seemed to me a rather crude, almost violent act. It not only creates a western way of situating people that might not fit well with what used to be a rather equal socialist-oriented Iraqi society: people from poorer backgrounds could equally enter into universities, the state offered health services and most people were affected by the economic embargo and conscription (see Chapter 2.1).

Figure 4.1. Breakdown of the characteristics of the participants



Moreover, one's social class does not necessarily move along with transnational migration. Especially in conditions of prolonged conditions of displacement people often experience down-ward social mobility (Doná, 2015; Pascucci, 2011). This means that estimating one's classed disposition is not only more guess work but also provides more of a hint to the past than to the present. However, one's class background might play a role in what expectations people have of life.

Interviews with UNHCR's resettlement officer, the Regional Deputy Manager of the Resettlement Support Centre at the IOM and with a some people working for NGOs providing assistance to Iraqi refugees enabled me to further understand (changes within) Jordan's protection context. The interview with Omar (#42), an engineer from Baghdad, took place over Skype after I had left the field. In Jordan, Omar had been very reluctant to hold an informal interview because of the uncertainty he still felt and attributed to being in the Middle East. We had many informal conversations relating to his experiences of uncertainty and Jordan and his media-use (see also Chapter 5). Upon his arrival in Europe, he emphasized he wanted to tell me his story 'on the record'. His interview was conducted over Skype in January 2015

My presence, positionality and focus

At CBOs, I was considered as one of the many foreigners (*Ajnabia*) working with refugees, but my physical presence in Iraqi refugee households and during social gatherings raised questions, ranging from what the benefits of my research could be to questions about my personal life and how life in The Netherlands was like. The most memorable question was by Omar (#42), the above-mentioned engineer, who asked me upon our first meeting whether I was one of these western women who would go to Palestine because she has emptiness in her heart. I was stupefied as no one had been as spot-on as he was. His thoughts make sense: why would a white western woman seek out the very situation he was trying to leave? Questions such as "Why am I not married?" "Why am I not living with my parents?" and "Why don't I have my driver's license?" were often balanced with questions whether I could help them in their difficult circumstances and how The Netherlands would be if they would manage to go there. These questions resulted in interesting discussions and gave me a better understanding of their particular concerns in Jordan, worries about Iraq and hopes for the future.

People who were aware of my previous work at the IOM were more vocal in expressing their hopes about whether I could help them. I repeatedly had to disappoint them. My work in 2012 at this organization was focused on providing financial assistance to Iraqi refugees, but since this organization has been contracted by the United States to run its resettlement program I was associated with it. This was most evident in my interactions with Abu Mahmoud who I was introduced to by his son Mahmoud via Facebook. I had

met Mahmoud and his wife Ruru in 2012 when the young couple was waiting for resettlement to the US through IOM. In 2015, Mahmoud and his family were living in the US, and they were hoping that his parents and youngest brother Osman could travel via family re-unification (see Appendix 5). Until my departure from the field, Abu Mahmoud kept asking whether I could obtain more information regarding the progress of his case at IOM. This made me feel guilty, powerless and doubtful about his comprehension of my research. It also made me aware of the strain Iraqi refugees might feel and subsequently put on humanitarian agencies in the hope for travelling onwards (See Chapter 5).

Ethnography is a process that requires ongoing reflections on what you are exploring and on whose experiences you are (not) focusing. As I explained in Chapter 2, the Iraqi migrants registered at UNHCR self-identity as ‘refugee’, regardless of whether they are legally recognized as such. Those Iraqi nationals who do not appropriate the ‘refugee’-label are generally not registered at UNHCR and had upon their arrival enough financial and social capital to stabilise their lives. In Jordan, I started to doubt whether I should also consider the mediated experience of richer Iraqis. I came to the realization that their financial and legal security made their everyday experiences in Jordan significantly different (see also Chapter 6). An upper-class Iraqi woman had obtained Jordanian citizenship through family connections. She went on holidays to Turkey and was volunteering for her co-nationals whom she described as ‘poor refugees’.

Two other encounters with richer Iraqi nationals were fraught in many ways. Both meetings took place in Amman’s most extravagant, Iraqi-owned hotel. An older man told me of his individual political ambitions and repeatedly asked me to put in a good word for him with the American ambassador, giving me the impression that he thought that I worked for the CIA. Another man read my presence differently as he insinuated that I should become his mistress and travel around the world with him. This reminded me of my own vulnerability and the intersections of power relations, in this case relating to (my) gender. Several other Iraqi men who did identify as ‘refugee’ read my presence in a somewhat similar way. One man started to send me inappropriate text messages as he had somehow presumed or hoped that I would be sexually available. Other men seemed to have more romantic intentions and would often send me pictures of flowers via Facebook messenger. These encounters point to my own vulnerability, which I need to recognize, but they are sadly far from unique to Jordan. I have experienced similar forms of sexual

harassment in the UK and the Netherlands.

These interactions however did reinforce my interest in refugee households: places I considered as safe spaces and among people I felt comfortable with. I often was invited for lunch or dinner into their homes, especially as I was very enthusiastic about Iraqi cuisine. In that regard my gender had an advantage: only and just because I am and identify as a woman I gained entrance to people's houses, as homes are associated with the women's sanctity (Abu-Lughod, 2002, p. 783). I often helped with child rearing. Aside from few occasions when I asked for and was given Iraqi cooking lessons I did not help with cooking or cleaning. This was related to my presence as a 'family member' yet guest. In the household of Simon and Linda it also seemed that since I was one of the 'breadwinners' with an outside job, I was not supposed to partake in the domestic activities. Finally, in that and other households, there was the understanding that I, as a western, unmarried but educated woman, would somehow not know how to cook or even clean the dishes. This was confirmed on few occasions that I insisted on washing up. I was told I spoiled too much water and was reminded of the sparsity of water in the Middle East. It seemed that the kitchen was the space and a source of authority of the women I hung out with.

Moving closer in(to) and barriers to the field

In the first six months of the fieldwork I lived in an area close to downtown Amman. I regularly travelled to and from the places where the Iraqi refugees I met were living. The two areas I visited the most were *Hashmi Schmali* (from now on abbreviated as *Hashmi*) and *Gardens*. These places are very different, providing contrasting experiences of displacement in Jordan. In Chapter 6 I will further consider these places and how experiences within localities further influence experiences of being 'out of place'. These areas take less prominence in the rest of the thesis, primarily because the material and affective experiences in Amman suggest that many resort to the safety of their temporary homes.

I only lived a 15-minute taxi drive away from *Hashmi* and I had started to spend many afternoons and evenings there. I often had to leave around 11 pm to the middle-class gentrified area where I was living. Many of the Iraqi refugees were night owls and this meant that I missed large segments of their "everyday". I also started to feel more uncomfortable with the realization that I associated being 'there' with pleasant times,

hanging out with friends and learning about their experiences, whereas they associated their lives with that of a 'prison'. I therefore decided to move to *Hashmi* and make that as my base. An important reason for the decision to move was not necessarily that travelling back and forth was physically tiresome. What I found fatiguing was the switching between significantly different, compartmentalized social realities. It was emotionally draining: going back and forth from cappuccinos and beers in a laidback hipster culture to the more conservative yet lively encounters in *Hashmi*.

In *Hashmi* living as a woman by myself would be difficult, just because in that area it would be considered as inappropriate and perhaps, as I was told by my Iraqi refugee friends, not safe. I needed to find a family who was willing to host me, but I was afraid that my presence and the intensity of me being there as a researcher would only increase tensions in what were often already cramped household. Aram (#14), one of my informants, put me in contact with friends of his. They had a room to spare and – like many Iraqi refugees – difficulties with paying their rent. I moved in with what would become my Iraqi host family in *Hashmi*: Simon and Linda (#40), a young Christian Iraqi couple and their little baby daughter, Simon's mother Mama Heba (#41) and Simon's younger brother. For Linda and Simon it seemed important that they considered me as a Christian like them. I was clear about my anti-dogmatic inclinations towards organized religion, but my upbringing in a Christian family or merely being western seemed sufficient yet important to them. They often shared their disappointment in western countries and questioned why they were not helping fellow Christians like them (see Chapter 5).

Prior to moving in, I had told them in-depth about my research and about my methodological approach. I had also handed them the participant observation information and informed consent sheets, translated into Arabic. I soon came to the understanding that this might not have been sufficient, when Linda asked me the day after I moved in at what time I would leave for my office. Continuously explaining while leaving room and time for questions then and in the three months that followed helped. This became clear when the family was going through some personal difficulties. Simon asked me straightforwardly not to write about this. I was, as he said, his sister now. I was allowed to be present during these difficult times with them, but I was not meant to expose them in greater detail. Initially I found this somewhat frustrating, but this soon turned into relief that Simon and Linda were setting the boundaries as before the distinction between what was private and

personal had not been so clear.

The close relationship with Adam (#34) and his family as well as living together with Simon and Linda's family enabled me to obtain insight in the loaded affective transnational practices as I became affected myself, trying to remain hopeful for them against the odds as I started to consider that hoping for better lives elsewhere was perhaps all that could be done. It was my personal choice to be where they were and I had access to alternatives and the possibility for and privilege of escape. Besides, their boredom was my busy-ness as it had become one of my research interests. My own experiences of living in *Hashmi* for instance of boredom are therefore by no means comparable to the Iraqi refugees dwelling in prolonged social and legal uncertainty, living in doubt about the future and dealing with the loss of their past.

The reality of ethnographic fieldwork is that it is messy and intense. As affects transgress, ethical codes tend to become blurred (Scheper-Hughes, 2000; Beverley Skeggs, 1995). I felt most overwhelmed by my powerlessness during the summer of 2015 when Europe's 'refugee/migrant crisis' also gained momentum in Jordan. Prior to that summer Iraqi people were already often talking about possibilities to traveling onward, but in the host summer months travelling onwards seemed to become a more realistic possibility. The ease in which I could move in the world contrasted starkly with the difficulties and dangers my friends felt forced to expose themselves to. My partisan politics, the need I felt to reciprocate and the situated knowledge I had acquired about the difficult circumstances many Iraqi and other refugees were living in, meant that I understood the decision to leave as an act of resistance against a cruel border and refugee regime and towards overcoming one's 'stuckness' (Ghassan Hage, 2015, see also Chapter 5). If I was asked targeted questions, I tried to inform the people asking as well as possible on issues such the different refugee policies regarding refugee recognition for Iraqi nationals within different EU-states and potential difficulties they might encounter *en route*. It was my main concern that refugees made safe well-informed choices in the face of difficult circumstances. I have wondered whether I was overstepping my role and what the potential repercussions could be if people would act upon what I told them. Yet it felt like it was all I could do and the only 'right' thing I could do. I felt relatively confident because I realized that all the information obtained is always double checked through other channels. I had become a resource and but one of the many mediated channels through which they obtained and

cross-checked particular messages.

I also became concerned about how to write about their experiences and if this could be harmful or misinterpreted through how I would represent them. I had to be extra careful of what was 'writable' and what is 'readable' (Skeggs, 1995) something I will reflect on in the next section describing the writing process. For now, I want to discuss an important remaining matter. Older men tended to be more articulate than their wives and the adult children who did not speak English. There are relations of power that structure who speaks and who is spoken for (Spivak, 1988). The question: "who is speaking here" grants the opportunity to explore the position from which this particular speech is made. In my aim to balance this, I conducted separate interviews with these older women and young adults, but I also hoped a more visual method with a more participatory input would be helpful.

I observed Iraqi women taking selfies and other pictures with their mobile phones and was inspired by the work of Sarah Pink (2009) on visual anthropology and the potential for mobile camera phones as ethnographic data-collection tools. I decided to ask the older women, younger women and younger men with whom I had spent much time, but who had spoken less than the father/husband or their more outspoken brothers to make a number of pictures that could represent their everyday lives in Jordan and to further discuss these images. I explained the process with the help of my research-assistant and provided an Arabic explanation. In the end, only 1 out of the selected 6 women had taken pictures of her life, and 2 of the selected 2 young men. I realized that especially for women, selfies and pictures were only shared in personal, private online and offline conversations and were not meant for a broader audience (see also Chapter 6 and how physical location plays a role in online representations). This pointed to my western assumption that selfies are for public consumption. Moreover, and perhaps this is quite similar in western settings, the pictures that are shared in personal communication but even more so, these pictures that are shared on public places such as Facebook are often the pictures in which the women wear full makeup and look gorgeous, beautiful dishes are prepared and where life – even in displacement - seems to be a continuation of parties and other happy events. Pictures that are shared do not show the difficulties of everyday life, of cleaning the floor in one's pajamas or of the boredom whilst watching TV.

An ethnographic approach might enable us to further understand these different representations of the self, but I cannot but ask myself if the women are content with how I am writing about their lives. Perhaps not everyone wants to be represented or made visible. Perhaps Iraqi refugees do not want to expose their actual distress and instead prefer to hold a continuation and public representation of a life that is dignified. An important lesson for the future therefore is the recognition that participatory methods ought to start bottom-up from the very beginning with input of the women themselves and require time and patience to develop the methods. For now I have to trust their consent and my own capabilities to do justice to their experiences.

Leaving the field

Leaving the field after in-depth ethnographic fieldwork is always difficult because of its inherent intensity. I was deeply aware that ethnography can be an exploitative research form and there are risks of betrayal, exploitation and abandonment. My insistence on reciprocity and friendship could not mask the unequal power relations in place (Skeggs, 1995, p. 197). My departure felt like a betrayal to the people I was working with who I was leaving behind in structural crisis and uncertainty. The ease by which I could cross the borders of nation-states – to the UK via a family visit to The Netherlands - juxtaposed and emphasized the very immobility and the difficulties the people I had come to care about would face if they stayed but also if they find ways to leave. I therefore asked Adam (#34) how my own movement and that of other western foreigners (*adjaneeb*) - made him feel:

I: So, I know there are many people like me, 'adjaneeb', who come to Jordan, to help the 'poor' refugees with our western passports. And we come and go. How does that make you feel?

Adam: I got nothing to do with it. They help the refugees... Okay. But... it's, it is hard to say that, but I appreciate what they do... They help. First of all, they let the people know what is really going on and that is really important... Uhm, there is a lot of good things in it... But if you come to me, as a refugee, I am not going to give a fuck.

I: No.

Adam: Ask me why!?

I: Why?

Adam: Because I am still sitting here. I appreciate it, whatever YOU - no, you are something else, I am talking about other foreigners - so, other foreigners who come and help refugees, come and go, I appreciate what they do, for real, because who will else going to know about us. Maybe we will never ever going to

travel. So, without them, we are not going to travel. Without them there are no stories. We will not just be stuck but we are going to be fucked. Literally.

(Silence)

Adam: Mirjam, the most important thing is that you guys CARE.

Adam's opinion shifts from anger, as the attention of the refugee regime has only resulted in temporary relief, to the realization that he is in fact dependent on these mobile 'foreigners' to tell his story. Without their 'care', no one would hear about the plight of Adam and his family in Jordan. What this care has delivered is not sufficient but he considers it as better than nothing. Adam sometimes groups me with other western foreigners as 'you guys', but he also states that I would be 'something else', suggesting I would have entered an in-between-state. His words and those of Abu Adam who told me I had to leave to write his story were necessary incentives for me to leave the field.

This doesn't mean I am not implicated. It hurts to see friends hurt, to be reminded of our own implications as well as the frustrations and inabilities to 'fix' and the general lack and limits of care in the world towards injustices that happen. This research project has been a highly emotional affair. My research project and my ideas and feelings around it involves me, especially since it involves people I started to care about. I want to reciprocate and not exploit. Bev Skeggs (1995, p 198) suggests that ethnographic friendships require commitment, increase one's emotional involvement and can enhance feelings of powerlessness. I therefore started to reflect whether it is possible to conduct ethnographic fieldwork among displaced population in a safe and ethical manner that also takes in consideration the well-being of the researchers. It seems to me a somewhat of privileged paradox: to be able keep boundaries if you explore the violence inflicted by and through these borders.

Adam's words pushed me to rethink 'care'. In her feminist understanding of thinking care, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2012) argues that grief and anxiety are unavoidable when paying serious attention to the dislocated world we live in. Thinking care "cannot be grounded in a longing for a smooth harmonious world, but in vital ethico-affective everyday practices that engage with the inescapable troubles of interdependent existencies" (p. 199). Perhaps this is even more the case if we consider the lives and experience of people living in perpetual uncertainty as we get affected by their sorrows and worries. Care is a political act, while ignoring or forgetting – non-care – makes one further complicit. Caring practices

include acknowledging our own involvement in dominant values and aiming to rethink these, rather than retreating in our secured position as an academic or outsider. I had the privileged position of 'going places' (Hage, 2004). I believe this privilege comes with a responsibility of care that includes but does not foreground self-care. The need for care for oneself and others needs to be considered prior to starting such an endeavour that outstretches far beyond the fieldwork, especially since we are now all 'connected', not just as human beings but also on Facebook.

A few days after I left Jordan, I spoke to Omar (#42) over Facebook. He told me his 6-year old daughter kept looking at the televised news on the 'refugee/migrant crisis'. As she was aware I had left for Europe, she was hoping she would recognize me amidst the people she saw on the TV screen who were travelling across the fields of Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary. My heart broke as this little child does not yet realize that legal documents make the world easier for some and that they are used to differentiate and order people. Her looking out for me and her father reaching out to me also made me hopeful for the blurring of boundaries and for ongoing connections.

4.3 Analysis and writing

Back from the field, I was eager to start my analysis. I had hoped to transcribe my interviews while I was in the field, as this would better enable me to feedback the obtained information into the continuation of my data gathering. This had proven simply not to be possible. Not only was I already very busy (and exhausted of) dividing my time between home visits, interviews, writing my reflective notes and spending time with my host family. The processing of my messy notes into my computer was already a challenge as I was sharing a house with a 1-year old child who was very intrigued by my computer.

I transcribed the 30 interviews I had recorded, and carefully read through the notes taken on the other 12 interviews. These interviews had lasted between 1 hour and 3 hours, and transcriptions consisted therefore from 15 pages to a maximum of 42 pages. My field notes consisted of more than 400 typed out pages. I carefully read through all my fieldwork notes and interview material multiple times. I made mind maps of common themes which I then grouped together. I became deeply overwhelmed by my data, but the qualitative analysis data software NVivo enabled me to manage my data and to code, categorize and analyze

my interviews.

The most common themes were:

- ‘Mediated refugeeness’ and include themes as ‘communication with the UN/IOM’, ‘obtaining information’ and ‘technology-induced changes during be(com)ing a refugee’;
- ‘Everyday’ which included themes like ‘livelihoods’, ‘coping’, ‘home’, ‘family’ and ‘experiences of Jordan’.
- ‘Time’ under which I grouped ‘Future-oriented Hope’, ‘Loss/Past’ ‘Measuring time/waiting’, ‘boredom’ and ‘overcoming and shaping time’.
- ‘Transnational connections and orientations’ which included ‘affective mediated connections’, ‘dispersal’, ‘comparing’ and ‘belonging’.

All of these main themes were often related to particular emotive responses which were separately grouped, and included ‘anger’, ‘sadness’, ‘confusion’, ‘anxiety/worries’, but also ‘apathy/depression’ as some people had sometimes resorted to a numbness in response to the grievances they had experienced in Iraq, but also during waiting in Jordan. I also grouped for what could be generational or gendered difference of how life in Jordan was experienced and mediated.

Like conducting fieldwork, writing ethnography is a complex process because it is a reconstruction and representation of messy notes into a somewhat coherent narrative. By highlighting particular features, it obscures others (Skeggs, 1995, pp. 195–196). Bev Skeggs (1995, p. 200) discusses the dilemma of how to describe the people in your study, especially if research subjects do not speak of the concepts the ethnographic researcher recognizes (in her case working class) after balancing between the narratives of the people studied and theory. The fact that people do not discuss some issues does not mean they are not salient for academic research. Many of the refugees were surprised about my long-term engagement and my interest in their media use, as it was not their main concern. Yet in this PhD thesis I hope to point out that digital technologies play a crucial role in the subjective and social experiences of refugees who are beyond vulnerable also sense-making future-oriented objects.

The thematic analysis eventually resulted in the upcoming empirical Chapters 5 through 7.

Chapter 5 considers the communication with and obtaining information about UN/IOM, and how digital technologies play important roles in how the Iraqi refugees negotiate and contest the legal circumstances of their waiting. Chapter 6 considers the role of Jordan as a physical place in displacement and how digital technologies enable to manage their insecurities. Through virtual home-making practices Iraqi refugees are able to establish an 'absent presence' in Jordan by confining to their temporary homes. In Chapter 7 I consider how through digital technologies emotions can cross over, enabling the Iraqi refugees to (re)attach and orient oneself to places and times elsewhere and to stay hopeful in the present.

Writing about the experiences of others requires caution and ongoing reflexivity. This becomes evident in the experiences of Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2000). The Irish farmers in her study recognized themselves in her study and felt that she had attacked their lifestyle. Scheper-Hughes retrospectively questions whether anonymity does not make the ethnographer unmindful of empathy and insensitive towards the symbolic violence anthropologists are inflicting. In this particular study it is deeply uncertain where the future journeys of people in this study will lead to and whether openly partaking in this study could in any way potentially endanger a successful or even safe outcome. For that reason I hold on to the importance of anonymity and pseudonyms of the people in this study.

In response to ethnographers' inability to represent the experience of others the 'reflexive turn' pointed to the importance of looking in the mirror: contingencies like language, power dynamics, history and rhetoric and the position of the researcher must be openly confronted in the process of writing, as ethnographic techniques can potentially reify fellow human beings as strangers. Sara Ahmed (2000) states however that this can equally result into a tendency to write about how we make sense of others by making 'them' into constructions of ourselves. It is the simplified translation of strange cultures into the language of the one who knows. Ahmed is in particular critical of Vincent Crapanzano's (1986) contribution to the pivotal volume *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. His phrase 'coming to terms' involves re-termining and de-termining what is foreign. It is not the knowledge of the stranger, but that of the familiar: "knowledge which creates the stranger in the familial in order to destroy it" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 58). Ethnographic knowledge can potentially recreate the 'strange' it into something 'not-quite-strange'. This can be considered as a westernising act of violence.

Another critique on ethnographic knowledge is that it can easily result in the author becoming more dominant and absorbed with oneself. I find it important to be cautious of this tendency as this PhD is not about me, but about people living in difficult legal and social circumstances. I try to connect how their particular experiences relate to broader questions of power and inequality and how colonial and capitalist entanglements come into force within refugee households beyond Europe's borders (Ponzanesi & Leurs, 2014). I cannot overcome Eurocentrism as I reproduce the privileged 'right' to knowledge, yet by writing about people beyond Europe I aim to show how their very experiences are deeply connected to ours. The upcoming three empirical chapters aim to further show this by further teasing out the roles digital technologies play in the experience of Iraqi refugees in Jordan of prolonged displacement. Before I continue I will first further introduce the people that play a central role in this thesis.

4.4 Introducing the people

Unfortunately, I won't be able to provide a detailed description of all the people who took part in this research as there is not enough space. In Appendix 1 I give a full description of the people in this study, and as such this provides the background on who is speaking. However, in this section I further introduce six households that play a more central role throughout the thesis, primarily because I often 'hung out' in their homes and this contributed to my understanding of the mediation of displacement.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I already introduced Kholoud (#36) and Abu Adam and their three children Samar, Adam (#34) and Solomon. The family left Iraq in 2006, shortly after Abu Adam was abducted by a militia and then released after paying ransom. They lived in Syria for 5 years, until war broke out after which they sought secondary refuge in Jordan. Samar got married in Jordan to an Iraqi relative and gave birth to a girl. As the child fell ill, Samar and her husband got priority for resettlement to the US. In 2015, Adam was 21 years old and his brother Solomon was 15. Solomon hadn't been to school for several years, partly because he thought that - like several other young Iraqi refugees - higher education does not necessarily put you in a better position in Jordan.

In the last three months of fieldwork I shared a house with Simon, Linda (#40), their

young daughter, Simon's mother Mama Heba (#41), and Simon's younger brother in *Hashmi*. They come from what used to be a middle-sized Christian town that was raided by ISIS. Linda (#40) was 8 months pregnant when they initially sought refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan. They initially returned to their village when the Iraqi army said it was safe. However, ISIS returned and destroyed their town. This experience – of returning and fleeing again – very much shaped their decision to move onwards. From Iraqi Kurdistan they left for Jordan from where they were hoping to travel onwards. Mama Heba is a widowed mother of 4. At the time of fieldwork, her eldest daughter had been living in the United States for 7 years. Another daughter fled from the same village and was now also living in *Hashmi* with her husband Michael (#19), her son and her family-in-law. Simon is old friends with Aram (#14). They used to work together. Aram and his family were also living in *Hashmi*.

Abu Mahmoud (#5), his wife and their three children Osman (#37), Amal (#38) and Ibtisam (#39) and her family came to Jordan in the winter of 2013-2014. Abu Mahmoud, Um Mahmoud and Osman were hoping to join Mahmoud through the family reunification process. Amal was married to Ibrahim, an Iraqi relative with a passport of a Scandinavian country. She was waiting for re-unification with her husband. Ibtisam (#39) her husband and her two children were recognised by UNHCR as refugees and were hoping to be resettled through UNHCR's resettlement program (see Appendix 5 and Chapter 5).

Omar and Zeineb (#42) are a couple in their thirties. They are both trained as engineers and come from Baghdad. Omar was kidnapped by Al Qaeda in 2004. He stayed in Iraq until in 2015 the emergence of ISIS and ongoing violence in Baghdad made him increasingly worried for the future of their two young daughters. Equally or even more important, Zeineb's sister is living in Belgium, which spurred Zeineb's dream of a future elsewhere. Omar's mixture of honesty and curiosity made him an excellent person to explain issues and discuss concerns with. Omar, Zeineb and their two wonderful daughters are now in a European country.

When I met Nabila (#7) she carried a damaged car plate with her as proof that her husband and eldest son were killed in a bomb explosion. Nabila's eldest living son works for a renowned media technology company in the United States. Nabila and her two younger sons came to Jordan to spend the holidays together with him. While they were in

Jordan, her house in Baghdad was raided, and she decided to register as a refugee in Jordan. Nabila invited me to her house in Gardens, into her life and introduced me to her friends. A week after I left Jordan, Nabila and her two sons got resettled to Canada. Before we said goodbye, She told me: *“I want the world to know that Iraqis, that not all of them are criminals or suicide bombers. It is our responsibility, that someone should tell the world, that not all the people are bad people.”* Whereas this is not the main aim of this study, I do hope this study helps to contribute to providing a more nuanced understanding of the complexities Iraqi refugees find themselves in.

This thesis now turns to my interpretation of the lives of these participants and the mediation of their experiences.

Chapter 5 - Navigating ‘waiting’ – searching for solutions out of prolonged uncertainty

In Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 I explained that many forced migrants find themselves in years of prolonged uncertainty. The Iraqi refugees in Jordan predominantly argue that the main purpose of being in Jordan, is ‘waiting’ for onward outward mobility. In this chapter I further explore the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) play in understanding and negotiating the humanitarian regime. Ghassan Hage (2015) characterizes ‘stuckness’ by invisibility, immobility, uncertainty and arbitrariness. I consider it as a mediated and situated process. I unpack how the Iraqi refugees have come to an understanding of UNHCR as the agency that can potentially get them ‘unstuck’, but also how Iraqi refugees find alternative means for physical movement. This enables me to make an argument for an understanding of stuckness as a social and subjective perspective of prolonged uncertainty that is deeply grounded in material injustices, but that also provides limited space for negotiation.

I first consider how the account of a UNHCR resettlement-officer regarding expectations for third country resettlement of Iraqi refugees seems to juxtapose with the hopes of Iraqi refugees for third country resettlement. These expectations relate to the communication process between UNHCR and the Iraqi refugees. The unequal power relations between humanitarian agencies and the Iraqi refugees are reflected through their mediated interactions, yet the unclear messages and the power attributed to UNHCR equally sustain the hope for futures elsewhere.

In the second section I consider the strategies that the Iraqi refugees deploy to understand the system and try to get a grip on their uncertain situation. This occurs through an interplay between the offline and online, in what Gillespie (2006) called ‘talking spaces’. Whereas ICTs play a central role, I also point to the importance of offline interactions between fellow Iraqi and other refugees who are (still) in Jordan.

This brings me to the third section. Through online groups and text messages, the Iraqi refugees were able to organize a protest at UNHCR’s office to address the organisation regarding the lack of their insecurity for the future and the lack of communication they experience. In the fourth section I explore another act of resistance,

as several Iraqi refugees managed to overcome their ‘stuckedness’ in Jordan through irregular physical outward mobility. I show how the decision to leave Jordan was not taken lightly, and was deeply informed by mediated input.

5.1 Humanitarian Communication and its Role in Waiting for Resettlement

The three identified durable solutions for protraction are voluntary repatriation, local integration and third-country resettlement, as I have further explained in Chapter 2. As repatriation to Iraq and local integration in Jordan are not deemed possible, resettlement is the only formal durable solution that would enable refugees in Jordan the opportunity to obtain permanent legal and social security. This is actually in line with the preference of the Iraqi refugees in Jordan who continue to orient their hopes on resettlement to a western country. All but two Iraqi refugees I spoke with explained that the possibility for third country resettlement was their main reason for registration at UNHCR. The motivation to be resettled was deeply connected to the desire to live in a safe and stable environment, for themselves and their children, but equally relates to the experiences of fellow Iraqi nationals – often family members and friends – who have been resettled before them.

Five people in this study have spent 9 years or more waiting for third-country resettlement. Hasan (#3), a 45-year-old man from the south of Iraq, explained the reason why he registered: *“It is because I wanted to see my future in another place... They told us: this is UNHCR, they ask for Iraqi or any refugees, you can apply using this institute... This place... And you will be able to live in another country.”* Hasan registered in 2006, but it was only in 2007 that third country resettlement became a realistic option for Iraqi refugees, perhaps suggesting how his hope might have altered his memories. Ever since, there has been a relatively extensive US resettlement program. This has resulted in the resettlement of more than 98,000 Iraqi refugees, predominantly leaving from Turkey, Syria and Jordan (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2013).

The Iraqi refugees who only recently arrived in Jordan were closely following in the footsteps their relatives who had been successfully resettled and who had thoroughly explained the process to them. Prior to leaving Iraq, they had carefully planned their journeys by obtaining in-depth information on the experiences of friends and family through social media platforms. They spoke to close friends on WhatsApp and Viber, on

Facebook to more distant friends whose posts suggested that they were now in western countries and read the discussions about the workings of UNHCR, IOM and other ways of traveling on Facebook groups. They also compared the different mediated experiences across different ‘transiting’ countries – Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. They had eventually chosen for Jordan as it was their common understanding that UNHCR’s procedures to resettlement in Jordan were the fastest and because of the shared language. Some also mentioned they came to Jordan with the idea that they would at least receive financial help to bridge the time they had to wait.

The hope to be resettled contrasted starkly to what the resettlement officer of UNHCR Jordan deemed likely in August 2015. Chances for resettlement depend on whether one falls within the resettlement criteria and on the availability of resettlement quotas, provided by ‘good willing’ third, often western countries (see Appendix 5). UNHCR’s resettlement officer told me in an interview that that she presumed that less than 5 *per cent* of the Iraqis registered with UNHCR Jordan would be resettled through the agency’s resettlement program, which in comparison to other protracted refugee population is relatively high.²⁷ This message was not conveyed to the Iraqi refugees. Instead, most of the Iraqi refugees told that main message from UNHCR’s information line was to ‘wait’. This message suggests there is something to wait for. The Iraqi refugees and the humanitarian aid workers have different notions of what potential futures could look like (Brun, 2016). In this section I further explore how this is played out through the communication with UNHCR and the Iraqi refugees.

In the case of conflict-induced displacement, the humanitarian system of which UNHCR is part might step in to temporarily fill the void of a state. In Chapter 2 I considered how, in Jordan, UNHCR has started to act as a surrogate state, but without the capacity to recognize the social and legal rights of Jordan’s displaced population (Kagan, 2011). It is bound by the goodwill of Jordan and other nation-states through an ongoing focus on physical suffering, but this focus negates that refugees are also sense-making and future-oriented subjects who get ‘stuck’ in the humanitarian system (Brun, 2016). In the interview I had with UNHCR’s resettlement officer, she emphasized that UNHCR is a protection agency and not a resettlement agency. Protection of refugees is indeed the mandate of

²⁷ Less than 1% of all refugees worldwide receive the option for resettlement (Lindsay, 2017)

UNHCR, and for many Iraqi refugees an important additional reason for registration to protect themselves against deportation to Iraq. In Chapter 6 I will show how UNHCR's capacities to guarantee physical and material safety are limited. Moreover, UNHCR's core message is that their protection cannot be meaningful without the outlook for a durable solution (UNHCR, 2004, p. 5). In Jordan, UNHCR finds itself in a difficult position because the Jordanian government makes it challenging to provide more than temporary protection, and third countries provide them with too few resettlement slots.

The resettlement officer seemed to struggle with the discrepancy between the expectations of the Iraqi refugees and the actual capacities of the refugee agency. She emphasized that there are not enough places and that UNHCR cannot create a country. She also expressed that there seems to be the misunderstanding among the Iraqi refugees that everyone who is waiting will be at one point be called for resettlement, even after 10 years. The resettlement officer contrasted the refugees' expectations in Jordan to what she seems to consider more dire needs in the African country she worked prior to being deployed in Jordan. For example, she said that in Jordan, not having a refrigerator is flagged as 'vulnerable' whereas in the African country she previously worked none of the refugees had access to a refrigerator. The resettlement officer's words suggest that the Iraqi refugee population in Jordan have too high expectations as they continue to be hopeful for an unlikely solution. As she moved from a very different refugee context and considers the situation through the universalising language of humanitarianism (Brun, 2016) she does not seem to fully consider the situated realities of people living in very different, but not necessarily less difficult, conditions of displacement.

In our conversation, the UNHCR's resettlement officer also stated that the agency is looking for grassroots organizations working with the refugee populations to ensure the most vulnerable are selected for resettlement. This reflects UNHCR's interest in working with organizations that know the local context well. Her line of thinking resonates with Didier Fassin's (2012) argument on 'humanitarian reason'. According to Fassin's argument the judgment of the 'expert' tends to be valued over the accounts of affected populations to determine who is suffering the most and therefore most deserving of stability. The resettlement officer also seemed to assess the concerns of the Iraqi refugees with suspicion as she mentioned how Iraqi refugees would have misused their resettlement opportunities

and had travelled back to Iraq or Jordan.²⁸ She pointed to the importance of carefully selecting people for resettlement as she emphasized that slots are only meant for people who cannot return to their home country.

There is something to say for UNHCR working with organizations who know the local context well, and it is important to recognise that resettlement slots are sparse. But in her line of reasoning, she fails to consider that Iraqi refugees are active interpreters and misrecognizes the role that the refugee agency's communication plays in expectations for resettlement. The unequal relationship between the UN refugee agency and the refugees feeds into particular readings of the messages conveyed. The Iraqi refugees often mentioned communication with UNHCR was difficult, yet UNHCR's resettlement officer argued that UNHCR's communication strategy was ample, including UNHCR's information line, SMS services and a Facebook group page. An information brochure that explicitly provided background information on the services available for Iraqi refugees was in the pipeline. The Iraqi refugees often mentioned communication with UNHCR was difficult, but their experienced difficulty did not relate to access. This becomes clear in Lillian's (#15) description of her friends' calling practices: "*She calls UNHCR a lot. It is her bobby. She thinks that if she calls them a lot they will tell her that the next day: Yalla!*"²⁹

The difficulties in communication are therefore not so much related to lacking possibilities for communication. They relate much more to the message, how it is conveyed and whether the Iraqi refugees feel heard (Tacchi, 2011). Power differentials become very clear in the mediated interactions between Iraqi refugees and UNHCR. Some people would call every month or even every week. The overarching message that the Iraqi refugees received while speaking to UNHCR representatives at their registrations, while contacting UNHCR information line, and during their yearly updates of their UNHCR paper is to wait. Hasan (#3) who had been waiting for resettlement for more than 10 years stated:

²⁸ The resettlement officer seems to deny that western travel documents might equally serve as a form of insurance that provides the ability to travel, to visit relatives and places left behind but with the security of being able to leave (again) if necessary. Moreover, whereas formally western travel documents might not necessarily provide more legal and social rights in Jordan, I draw upon my own and my western friends' experiences that western travel documents do make everyday life in Jordan substantially easier.

²⁹ The Arabic word or expression *Yalla* is often translated as "Let's go", suggesting that Lillian interprets and relates her friends' calling practices to the hope that calling UNHCR will somehow speed up her process for third country resettlement.

“Every time I call UNHCR they tell me: Wait, we will check your file. And they check it and then they let me know: It is at the protection level... So, it is with the protection right now: nothing new. Habababa. One time I called them, and I was like: I will send you two of my friends to clean my file, because they became dusty because they are old files.”

Whereas Hasan seemed able to cope with the uncertainty and lack of progress through a sense of humour, many had difficulties with what sociologist Barry Schwarz (1974) has called the punitive characteristics of waiting: the feeling of not being in control of one’s life and future as it was unclear how long waiting would last or if it would be ‘rewarding’. Nabila (#7), the widowed mother living in *Gardens*, believes that UNHCR knows exactly how long her wait will be, but that the organization is somehow deliberately withholding this information from her: *“I call every month and they say: we will call you. Your future is put on hold. At least give us an estimate of time.”* She seems to believe that UNHCR knows more about her future than she does. Most Iraqi refugees ascribed UNHCR power to change their destinies. In their disappointment many Iraqi refugees - those who had been waiting for years in Jordan but equally so more recent arrivals - felt indignation towards UNHCR.

UNHCR is blamed for not providing a durable solution, as it seems the general understanding that UNHCR has the capacity to decide who is and who is not resettled. The indignation of the Iraqi refugees is misdirected and should be directed at governments instead. Western governments appear to be humane by granting a limited group of people a legal way to travel while keeping the large majority in a state of waiting (Papadopoulos et al., 2008, p. 175), whereas the Jordanian government equally only considers the refugees as right-optional human being. UNHCR does not have access to territory or prospects of where the future will be of many of the Iraqi refugees in Jordan. UNHCR act as the messenger, but a messenger that refrains from providing a clear message.

Yet it is important to recognize that the temporary scope and lack of clear prospects on the future, inherent to humanitarian programming, has influence on how being displaced in Jordan is experienced (Brun, 2016). UNHCR’s communication has practical, material and affective consequences on how being displaced in Jordan is experienced. The implementation of an extensive resettlement program can alter the experience of displacement, as also became visible in the experiences of camp refugees in Kenya (Jansen,

2008) if only because it excludes at some while including others. Humanitarian communication is perceived through that reality, but also influences how that reality takes further shape. Especially as viable legal alternative for stable futures are few, remaining hopeful – even if there is no solid ground for this – to be selected for resettlement might be crucial to make the present bearable and to maintain an active attitude towards the search for ways out of Jordan.

The power attributed to UNHCR imbued a mode of waiting that is deeply associated with the mobile phone, which further illustrates the power discrepancy. There might be an information line, but for important calls, UNHCR will call the refugees. Abu Mahmoud (#5) explained he ‘uses’ his ‘telephone to wait for the UN to call’. The Iraqi refugees instil power and emotions to this device that could potentially but may never bring good news. Most Iraqi refugees owned at least two phones. A simple mobile phone often serves as the UNHCR phone as it doesn’t run out of battery as quickly as their smartphone. Aram (#14), a 37-year old Iraqi Christian, carried his phone around him all the time, as you never know when they will call: *“Sometimes they call nighttime, uhm... morning time, evening time. 24 hours, 9 months, this has been in my head. I don't leave this mobile. Because this is our life now. I don't know what we can do but (sigh) it is difficult. When I go outside, when I reach to USA or anywhere... I promise I don't use the mobile. Because I hate the mobile. 24 HOURS WITH ME!!! LIKE THIS.”* The future elsewhere is therefore not just a life freed from waiting, but also one that is freed from the mobile phone. The need to “always on” (Madianou, 2016) is deeply associated around stories of the ‘missed phone call’: the narrated experience of missing the decisive telephone call that could result in missing one’s chance for resettlement. Several Iraqi refugees know who people are still in Jordan and who believe it is for that very reason. Aram explains the experience of his friend: *“When they called him. It was on silent. [...] Somebody had called. It was the UN number.”* Missing this phone call, Aram believes, made his friend wait for another 8 months in Jordan. Madianou, Longboam and Ong (2015) show that technologies do not necessarily improve the conditions of populations affected by humanitarian crisis. Aram’s account suggest his mobile phone increases his anxiety, showing that technologies can even increase the plight of Iraqi refugees like him as they can evoke negative emotions. .

The procedures around who is and who is not resettled are elusive and leave much room for guesswork. The absence of clear communication on resettlement policies can result in the circulation of stories and potential strategies that could potentially but not necessarily

result in resettlement (Horst, 2003; Jansen, 2008; Turner, 2004). Some people like Lilian's friend would call every month or more often. Others like Rima (#30) are reluctant to ever call UNHCR's information line as she doesn't want to seem impatient. She explains: "*We are just waiting and we are even afraid to call UNHCR because we are afraid to close our case*". The strategy she and her husband chose is to comply with what they believe to be the rules of resettlement. Rima's words also suggested fear: the organisation that should protect her has power over her, just because she believes that its employees are able to determine her fate.

In Chapters 1 and 4, I already introduced the family of Kholoud and Adam (#33). I explained how they have been refugees since 2006, first in Syria and now in Jordan. Over the years Adam has said goodbye to his sister and to many of his friends who have been resettled. He was continuously looking for explanations for why he and his family were still in Jordan. This search for explanations can be exhausting and results in self-doubt as becomes clear in following extensive quote of Adam:

"I ask myself, why am I not travelling, what is wrong with me? I am just normal. I want a... nice quiet life. Why? I am not a terrorist, to wait for 9 years. I want a good reason! What is wrong?! Am I a terrorist? Did I do something? I start to... asking myself, even my parents, because I started asking myself... ourselves. What is going on? We start to like think about ourselves in a bad way. Because it has been 9 years and nothing from them."

(Silence)

"The worse part of it: you are waiting for a whole long time, but they never tell you: where are you now. Or what kind of stop you are now. Or where did you reach? Where are you!? It looks like... we are just animals."

UNHCR's overarching message to 'wait' might have provided hope that there are or will be options to travel, but it has also produced uncertainty, anger and anxiety as becomes clear in Adam's words. Waiting is a means to exert or that is experienced as power: waiting is expecting something from another and it is often the less powerful groups in society that are kept waiting, often without knowing how long it will take and without having the feeling that one is in command of one's life.

In line with Michael Kagan (2011) Jordan's international community, spearheaded by UNHCR, can be considered as a surrogate state. Does this also mean that we can also

consider the hope projected upon UNHCR and to a lesser extent upon IOM – the organisation that is subcontracted to run the resettlement program of the US (see Appendix 5) – as societal hope? Ghassan Hage (2003) draws upon Bourdieu (2000), as he argues that societal hope refers to the trust a citizen subject puts in a state or society to distribute social opportunities in a fair way. Like Adam and Hassan, Naima (#27) had been waiting for resettlement for years. She still held on to the blue paper that UNHCR gave her as she stated “*we are accepted to get a homeland*”. Her hope is rooted in this blue document that proves her official ‘refugee status’ and that in line with the MoU between UNHCR and the Jordanian government should provide her with an exit. This blue paper contrasts to the white UNHCR documents that later arrivals have received. Perhaps we can better understand the hope put in UNHCR as a lifeline towards the opportunity to fit back into a society? This therefore bears more resemblance to Bourdieu’s understanding of ‘dispositional hope’ as the hope to live against the odds. Naima’s realises her actual chances to travel are very small, yet she holds on to the object that symbolised that hope.

5.2 Strategies of sense-making in waiting

Waiting is marked by uncertainty, unpredictability and what seems to be arbitrariness: there is powerlessness in not knowing as is clear in Adam’s words. In these circumstances, it is therefore crucial to try and grasp the rules of the game and if necessary, find potential alternatives. The prolonged condition of displacement of Iraqi refugees in Jordan resembles Lauren Berlant’s (2011) understanding of ‘impasse’: a situation where someone cannot or will not move forward, and in which there is a creative, anxious assessment of information and possibilities. In the following section, I further explore how Iraqi refugees deal with the lack of clear information about the future. I show how the Iraqi refugees in Jordan were continuously searching for information for ways out of Jordan. Their information management occurs through ‘talking spaces’ (Gillespie, 2006) on online as well as offline spaces, and in interactions between the offline and the online. I will also explore how UNHCR’s policy changes were initially interpreted and eventually seemed to extinguish the promise for third country resettlement for some.

I focus on the experience of Omar (#42) and his wife Zeineb, both engineers from Baghdad, to show how their active ongoing search for information occurred through online and offline spaces. This couple was extremely active in searching for ways out of

Jordan. Their search started in Iraq when they had lost faith in a stable and secure future for their country. They started planning potential legalized and irregular ways out of Iraq and the Middle East more generally. At the time of writing, the US had a special resettlement program for Iraqi nationals who have been employed by the US Army or US government in Iraq (See Appendix 5). A former translator for the US, Omar had already enrolled himself online for the US resettlement program in Iraq. This program is implemented by IOM Jordan, located in Amman, but applications can be completed online. Omar and Zeineb started to follow Facebook-groups with names like *IOM Jordan*, *Iraqi IOM siv*, *UN & IOM*, *Iraqi SIV & IOM*. As these titles suggest, these groups primarily exist to exchange information on the procedures for US resettlement, but they are also the online forums to discuss UNHCR resettlement programs and alternative ways of travelling onwards.

In Jordan, a country they considered as a ‘transit’ place, Omar and Zeineb registered with UNHCR to also get access to the agency’s resettlement program. Omar visited several embassies as they would have separate resettlement programs, that were not directly linked to UNHCR (See Appendix 5). Much time was spent online on public and closed-off Facebook groups and through more personal online communication through Facebook Messenger. Through the help of a Canadian minister he met online, Omar was able to apply for a sponsorship program in Montreal. Meanwhile Zeineb had been strengthening the ties with family in Canada in the hopes this could help. Online connections were important to obtain information and discuss options, but Omar came to the realization that the offline opportunities were also crucial. He could obtain and double-check information with other Iraqi male refugees who he would meet at public places such as Iraqi-owned cafes in one of the more affluent Iraqi areas but also at the offices of IOM and UNHCR. Some Iraqi men, like Omar, were struggling with the loss of the masculine role as the breadwinner as I will further explore in Chapter 6. For these men, searching for ways out of Jordan almost had become a job: it was a way of providing, not through material support, but by providing a better future elsewhere. Most Iraqi women were equally oriented to outward-movement, but they had to balance this with the management of everyday insecurities, such as obtaining livelihood, giving their children access to school, and running a household. NGOs became hubs where the especially the Iraqi women would gather and continuously compare their progress and share information.

In offline interactions, Iraqi refugees in Jordan would often discuss and compare the number of UNHCR interviews they've had and how long they had to wait for the next interview. The process towards resettlement required at least three formal interviews, including the interview at registration, the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interview and finally, the resettlement interview. The number and the speed at which interviews would take place was interpreted as a sign of progress towards and likelihood for resettlement (See Figure 5.1).

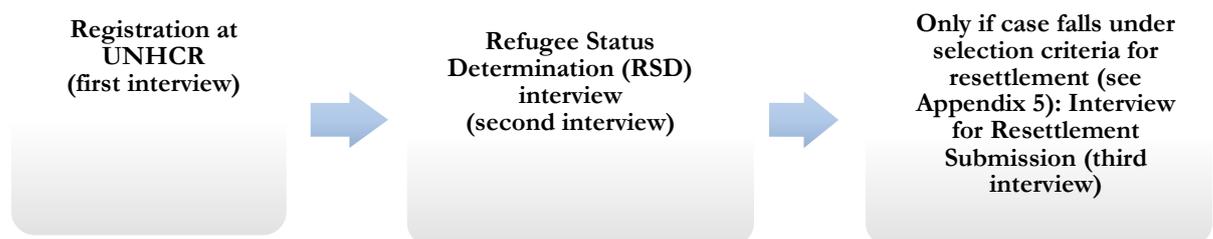


Figure 5.1. Overview UNHCR-policy Iraqi nationals, prior to policy changes

Beyond obtaining information that might be useful for one's personal plans and strategies or knowing what to expect, these comparisons have a more subjective dimension: the realisation or idea that you are in a better position than the other provides reassurance. If the other was in a better place, you could try to find out what steps that person has taken in order to progress in a similar fashion. Kholoud (#36), Adam's mother, would go almost every day to a local CBO to participate in yoga classes and a handicraft program. She told me these visits do not give her relief or a sense of community. She explains: *"The routine question is [...]: How long have you been here? When do you travel? These are the everyday questions we have: why are you here for 4 years and you haven't travelled?"* Through these questions Kholoud (#36) is continuously reminded of her 'stuckness' and that she might never be able to leave Jordan.

Sense-making and comparing also happened online. There are official pages, like UNHCR Jordan's Facebook page, but there are also a wide variety of Facebook groups like the one's I previously mentioned. Most of these groups were initially open to the public, but in August 2015 some groups changed their settings to 'closed communities'. The 'European refugee/migrant crisis' and the increased attention of mainstream media to the use of smartphones and social media for journeying migrants might have made administrators

aware that Facebook can be used as a means of surveillance, although none of the Iraqi refugees I have spoken to commented on this. Most Iraqi refugees I spoke to knew about these Facebook groups and were ‘following’ them through their personal Facebook-accounts. They were equally aware that what was presented online as ‘fact’ was by far from always accurate. Abu Ali (#17), a 47-year old journalist, joked that the administrators of these groups would “*pretend they are professors in resettlement*” but were in fact stuck in Jordan, like him.

What is talked about on online forums is discussed offline with fellow refugees in Jordan, by calling UNHCR, by visiting the IOM and/or through more private online communication such as Facebook Messenger and Viber. The ‘talking spaces’ (Gillespie, 2006) and the need of personalised channels were not just important to consider different truth claims. Friends and family members in western countries might have access to different information and/or personal experiences with European border policies. Moreover, personal online conversations tend to be more trustworthy than is the case on a public, open or closed, forum. This example makes clear how Iraqi refugees are active sense-making human beings who try to get a grip on their uncertain situation, through the interplay between online and offline connections.

The presence of rumours and interpretations as facts online, point us to the difficulty of obtaining clear information on refugee procedures that are rather elusive and ever changing, and might also be the result of immense uncertainty and desperation. According to Omar (#42) there were people that intentionally deceive others: “*If he finds out that he is in some way in advantage over you, he will rather... not show you or lie to you, so you wouldn't take his place*”. The awareness that resettlement slots are limited means that you need to be strategic in obtaining and sharing information: who could you trust and with whom would you share what information. The distrust among fellow Iraqi refugees seems to be also connected to experiences in past. As discussed in Chapter 2, Mohammad Al-Haydar (2012) has shown that the violence in Iraq has broken down any form of trust that would go beyond the family and long-time friends. It seems that this distrust only has increased because of experiences of prolonged insecurity in Jordan and the limited possibilities for futures elsewhere. Several people I have met over the years who have been resettled would withhold the precise details of their travels such as their departure date from their closest

friends. Only upon arrival they would inform their friends – via Facebook - that they had left.

Understanding waiting through the discourse of deservingness

As third country resettlement is the main legal route out of Jordan, the search for information is directly related to trying to understand how UNHCR works and how this could potentially work in favour of which Iraqi refugees. These interpretations are deeply grounded in certain beliefs around what UNHCR is and ought to be doing. This relates to ideas of order and fairness, beliefs that one's personal suffering is worse than that of other refugees and an/or that one's behaviour or cultural practices are more in line with what life in a western country would look like than that of 'others'. The resettlement program sits alongside the fact that different forms of migration is enabled by particular criteria. The struggle is over which criteria, and which criteria would or should be used by UNHCR.

One of the ways through which UNHCR's work is understood is through the discourse on suffering and 'humanitarian reason' (Fassin, 2012): suffering can evoke compassion, but as compassion is sparse there is a hierarchy in who is suffering the most. This process, like the other criteria or ways of understanding is largely self-referential. There seems to be the belief or hope that one's self and family (through belonging to a minority, having a distinguishing identity marker, because the years spent in displacement) is suffering more. somehow should have priority over (the) other(s) and the denial that one's own refugee-ness can be a prolonged condition. Simon, the young Christian Iraqi man I was living with, often expressed his disappointment as he had presumed western "Christian" countries would help fellow-Christians like him. Other Iraqi Christians were equally perplexed that UNHCR would "prioritize" resettlement slots for conservative Muslims over Iraqi Christians.

Closely related is the discourse around the hierarchy of deservingness, that plays a role in how UNHCR's work is interpreted. Seth Holmes and Heide Castenada (2016) speak of a 'discourse of deservingness' to further discuss how during what was framed as "Europe's refugee/migrant crisis" mediated representations shift the blame from political-economic structures causing displacement to displaced persons themselves. By making the differentiation between the 'undeserving' migrant and the 'deserving' refugee it contributes to a discussion of who has rights to right and care, instead of holding state actors –

especially those who have ratified the 1951 refugee convention responsible for recognizing (and violating) these rights. Proving allegiance or potential usefulness for the ‘new country’ can be other ways of increasing one’s deservingness. The latter becomes mixed up with other migratory regimes. Several medical-trained Iraqis were confused they were not resettled as they had presumed that other countries would need their skills.

Some Iraqi refugees – Christians as well as Muslims - proposed that a potential solution for Jordan’s Syrian refugee crisis was in fact the resettlement of all Iraqi refugees. It was their belief that this could potentially motivate Jordan to integrate the displaced Syrians. Another logic behind this was also that they felt Iraqis refugees had been struggling longer with warfare than the refugees from Syria.³⁰ This would make them more in need of or entitled to a future elsewhere, again suggesting how Iraqi refugees have internalised a logic of (personal) deservingness. But it was also directly related to specific changes in UNHCR’s policy for Iraqi nationals, as I will point out in the next section.

Disruptions in the order of waiting

In the previous section I explored how the Iraqi refugees try to make sense of their situation through the interplay between online and offline spaces. I also showed how these sense-making processes are largely self-referential but equally relate to how UNHCR’s role is interpreted as working on behalf of western nation-states. In March, I started to notice distress among the Iraqi refugee community as UNHCR started cancelling many RSD-interviews or what the Iraqi refugees referred to as the second interview (see Figure 5.1). The ongoing rumour and hoped-for explanation was that the second interview would be merged with the third interview for resettlement submission. Michael (#19), Simon’s brother-in-law, told me how it was his hope that by the 1st of July UNHCR would “*stop with the Syrians and start with the Iraqis*”.

The reality turned out different. On the 3rd of August, UNCHR put out the following notification that was directly shared on the *IOM Jordan* Facebook group (Fig 5.2, on page 139). Omar (#42) immediately sent a picture of the notification to me via *WhatsApp* as he

³⁰ This idea neglects that the conflict in Iraq continues and results in the arrival of new Iraqi refugees, in Jordan and beyond.

asked me whether I could tell him what the implications were. The message stated that all RSD interviews were cancelled for Iraqi nationals, and that only the most ‘vulnerable’ would be considered and interviewed for resettlement purposes (see Figure 5.3. on page 139) for a further explanation regarding the changes). Progress to resettlement was suddenly stalled. For many this actively disrupted the idea of progress towards a potential exit. UNHCR’s resettlement officer however told me she did not understand how this change would matter as she considered RSD only as a formality. She explained that persons registered with UNHCR were already entitled to UNHCR’s protection. As Jordan lacks a full refugee regime, RSD would only be necessary to determine eligibility for resettlement.

This can lead to the question whether this breaches UNHCR’s humanitarian principles of universality as their change in policy focuses only upon ‘Iraqi nationals’ and whether UNHCR personnel can determine a person’s vulnerability based upon one very brief interview upon registration. These questions go beyond the focus of this thesis. Instead, I consider how the Iraqi refugee community interpreted this change. The inability to progress towards the second interview and from there onwards to a potential legal exit seemed for many to foreclose the possibility for third country resettlement via UNHCR. Several people I have spoken to started seeking more actively for alternative ways out of Jordan, for instance by visiting embassies of countries that run resettlement and family-reunification programmes outside of UNHCR’s program (See Appendix 5).

In the past two sections I have shown how Iraqi refugees actively try to obtain an understanding of their chance and progress towards resettlement. Information obtained via online spaces such as *Facebook* groups and more personalised online communication, is double checked and extensively discussed in offline interactions. Moreover, friends and family in western countries are equally consulted, not only because they are successful experts who have managed to travel but also because they might have different insights and access to different media. The awareness that resettlement slots are sparse results in an anxious drive for comprehending the system. However, there was also a belief in logic and order in waiting and an understanding that UNHCR, as it was perceived to be working on behalf of western societies, would work along their own logic of suffering and deservingness – the belief that some refugees are more entitled to resettlement as durable solution than others. This sense of order in waiting was disrupted by a change in

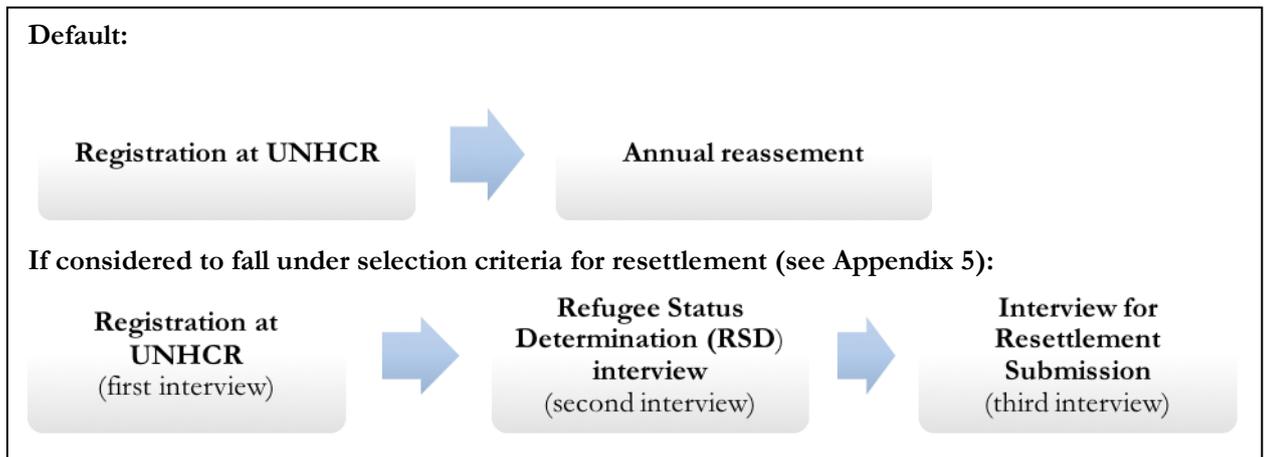
UNHCR's policies for Iraqi nationals only. The cancellation of refugee status determination interviews was perceived by many as foreclosing the chance for resettlement.

Omar and Zeineb ceased to believe that 'waiting out' (Hage, 2015, p. 4) would be worthwhile. Retrospectively, Omar and Zeineb linked their decision to leave through irregular means for Europe to the changed UN policy. I am reluctant on making any suggestions about the potential implications. However, Omar explained me much later via Skype how his belief that the UN (and to a limited extent IOM) would provide a solution faded away: *"we were calling for UNHCR for updates... asking for IOM any updates. Anything. And they didn't give us anything. That thing (- he refers to the notification shown in Figure 5.2., MT -) broke our spirits. [...] I started to think about the sea."* Their thoughts on progress were disrupted, and this partly resulted in Omar and Zeineb's decision to leave through irregular means. I will show in the fourth section that there were more mediated prompts necessary before Zeineb and Omar eventually left. Travelling through irregular means is one of the two ways of addressing the regime. In the next section I will first discuss how through protests Iraqi refugees challenged the regime. In the last section of this chapter I will consider the potentials for physical escape.

Figure 5.2. Notification at UNHCR Jordan on changed policies



Figure 5.3. Altered UNHCR Jordan policy for Iraqi Nationals



5.3 Protesting against the Humanitarian Regime

In the beginning of May, Iraqi refugees organized a three-day protest in front of the office of UNHCR. They decided to directly challenge the organization they held responsible for the betterment of their living conditions. Protests by migrants are not new: Europe has witnessed large amounts of migrant protests. In the Middle East, over 3,000 Sudanese refugees organized a sit-in in Cairo to contest UNHCR's politics of care, protection and mobility. These intense protests eventually resulted in the death of at least 28 people (Grabska, 2006). Refugees – people who are often wrongfully thought of as non-political beings – were speaking up. With the slogan “We live in a country of UNHCR” their claims were not targeted to the Egyptian society but to UNHCR. By appropriating the practices and rights-language of governmentality, these refugees spoke up in order to have a say in the “solution to their plight” (Moulin & Nyers, 2007, p. 370). A central question in literature on refugee protests is whether these protests would exceed politics of citizenship (Tyler & Marciniak, 2013) but the question whether these and other refugees act against the exclusionary logic of citizenship goes beyond the scope of this PhD-thesis. Instead, I consider this protest as a communicative act of the Iraqi refugees speaking back.

Through the Facebook groups (*IOM Jordan, Iraqi IOM siv, UN & IOM, Iraqi SIV & IOM*), the organisers of the protest raised awareness, and booked buses for people to attend. For many migrants worldwide, visibility through protest is a risky activity of last resort (Tyler & Marciniak, 2013). Um Sanghar (#24), an active member of the Iraqi refugee community in *Hashmi*, notified Kholoud (#36) about the protest via text message. Kholoud's husband Abu Adam however argued against going. His concerns were not targeted towards the Jordanian state, a country where he is legally tolerated.³¹ His concerns were oriented

³¹ Protesting in Jordan can be dangerous and the lenience towards Iraqi and other refugees in Jordan can have an expiry date. This became evident during another protest taking place on the 18th of December 17, three months after I left Jordan. Hundreds of Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers who had been demonstrating in front of UNHCR's office were forcefully returned to Sudan's capital Khartoum. Most deportees had UNHCR documents that should have guaranteed their protection, making their forced repatriation a violation of international humanitarian law (Staton, 2016). An interesting question is why did this happen to Sudanese and not to Iraqi nationals who are ‘Arabs’ like the Jordanians? Sudanese refugees in Jordan struggle with everyday racism (Haddad, 2012) and this misguided act seems to be yet another, devastating example of this.

towards potential retaliations from UNHCR, as he said that Iraqi refugees who had protested before were not resettled for this reason. This illustrates how Iraqi refugees in Jordan perceive the role and power of UNHCR.

When I joined the Iraqi refugees in May at what they called a ‘sit-in’ (as they were using the English word), approximately 100 Iraqi men, 50 Iraqi women and perhaps 10 Sudanese men had gathered. One of the organisers thanked me for, as he said, joining their revolution. He expressed gratefulness to the Jordanian king for letting him stay in Jordan and emphasized that everyone who was present had their own personal story but that they all had gathered for the same purpose: to demand communication with the UN about their cases. Connectivity through Facebook and phone calls seemed to also serve as a means to maintain distance and to divert responsibility. I got the impression by listening to the protestors present that it was not necessarily communication that the Iraqi refugees were insisting on but the opportunity to tell their story in offline interactions and for the assurance that they were not forgotten. The protestors held banners stating that they demanded their ‘right for resettlement’ and were chanted slogans such as “We want a solution” (*Nurid hel*). The most outspoken people were interviewed for a small Iraqi TV-channel. Some weeks later Abeer and Muadh (#8) who had also been present at the demonstration drew upon this example to point out that there was no media attention for Iraqi refugees. The protestors actually had gathered money to buy airtime on one of the Iraqi narrowcasting channels, suggesting the fleetingness of media attention and humanitarianism (Chouliaraki, 2013; Fassin, 2012). After two days of protesting, UNHCR promised to change its communication policy.

It did not seem that any changes occurred in response to the sit-in of May 2015. In September 2015 another demonstration took place. It was much less crowded than previous time. I knew that some of the main organisers of last demonstration had found irregular means to leave Jordan in the mean time, and I got the impression that many other Iraqi refugees had left. There were also many familiar faces. I recognized the placard of a woman that stated her file number, her 12 years of being in Jordan and her request to speak to a UN lawyer. A young woman was holding a picture of Angela Merkel, who had become the “compassionate mother’ of the Syrian refugees (Olterman, 2015) and apparently also the hope of that particular Iraqi refugee woman (see Figure 5.4.). During this demonstration, UNHCR’s senior information coordinator, a person who had not

responded to my earlier e-mail requests for a meeting, approached me. He asked what I was doing ‘there’ as it was ‘his’ mandate to protect the people present. He explained that the people present expressed a lot of emotions, and that I should come to his office to hear the ‘real’ story. Emotional language is often used to pathologise and is often excluded from the register of legitimate speech (Ahmed, 2013) This is equally the case in humanitarian settings (Fassin, 2012) and in humanitarian communication, as became evident in the research of Madianou, Longboan and Ong (2015) on disaster-affected people from the Philippines. The complaints of one of their informants were not taken seriously as they were discounted as emotional outbursts.



Figure 5.4. Protesting at UNHCR, picture by author

I agreed for a meeting with UNHCR’s senior information coordinator, but he never responded to my email to confirm. He was right about the emotive stories people tell. The stakes are high. The most heart-breaking story I heard was by an elderly widow. Her son had been resettled to Canada in 2009. After working night shifts to support his elderly parents in Jordan, he died in a car accident. His mother was allowed to go to Canada on a temporary visa, but after the burial she returned to Jordan. Upon return, a UNHCR official

had asked her: “Why did you come back!?” implying that she should have overstayed her temporary visa and/or should have asked asylum there. She asked me how it was possible for UNHCR to ask that question, as she stated she didn’t want to do something illegal. The most tragic part of this story might be that the woman apparently did not know that applying for asylum in Canada would have been a legal act as no one had ever explained this to her.

An important contrast to the earlier May-demonstration was that people asked me many questions about the refugee policies in different European countries. A recurring question was: Why was it that the EU helping those people who had come illegally, while they had been waiting legally for years? They seemed to hold onto the idea that there was a just, linear order towards who was allowed to rebuild a new life and to establish a new future in a western country. They tried to consolidate the deservingness they had internalised: because they fled first and had been ‘sticking’ it out (Ghassan Hage, 2015) they believed they were more entitled to a future elsewhere than those others. Travelling illegally was considered jumping the queue and illegal behaviour that was unjustly rewarded. Omar (#42) was holding onto a similar logic, yet he and his family eventually travelled onwards to a European country where they sought asylum. In the next section of this chapter I further explore Omar’s decision-making process in-depth. I already explained how the lack of hope for UNHCR resettlement was one push, but he needed many more that were closely linked to the changes within EU policies that reached the Iraqi refugees through social media and television. I will link his thoughts to perceptions of many other Iraqi refugees who went through similar deliberations and eventually did or did not move on.

5.4 Escaping Jordan’s Surrogate Refugee regime

In the summer of 2015, it seemed that there was an increase in Iraqi refugees in Jordan I knew who had decided to travel onwards from Turkey in(to) Europe. The Iraqis referred to *tabrib* (migration) or *katjak* (Turkish word for smuggling) when they would discuss travelling through other means and contrasted this with what the Iraqis call *travelling* (*safer and/or tawtin*) as being resettled. Some people kept their plans to themselves and left without saying goodbye. In this section I want to highlight the ongoing uncertainty, of never knowing what the right step to take is and the paradox that the ‘right’ step might be dangerous and illegal. Uncertainty is only aggravated through the different and ever-

changing refugee policies of different countries within and beyond the EU and excessive, often contradictory information that is shared online. In this section I will focus in particular on how Omar (#42) and Zeineb made sense of the changes that occurred in the summer of 2015 and eventually decided to leave. Omar and Zeineb were very open about their plans for travelling onwards via irregular means. This confused me because these intended border-crossing acts are considered as 'illegal'. Omar explained to me that everyone was looking for ways out, and he had nothing to lose. He believed that being sent back to Iraq was worse than waiting in Jordan. Omar, like many other Iraqi refugees, felt burdened under the heaviness of living in uncertainty in Jordan, and felt that nothing was worse than living in these circumstances. Moreover, waiting is an affective phenomenon that builds upon hope. His loss of a belief that waiting in Jordan would have the outcome he was hoping for further pushed him to travelling onwards.

In the last section I explained how Omar initially understood illegalised travelling was morally wrong. He did not understand how it could be that the EU was not only tolerating but even rewarding 'illegal' behaviour. Omar had internalised the border regime, and considered borders of nation-states as natural lines that should be respected. It was reporting on changing EU policies that was an important push for Omar to leave as it meant he would have to break lesser rules and decreased his perception of risk dramatically: *"And then Europe takes action. And suddenly it was: there is only the sea, the problem of the sea you are facing. And after that: no. Because, I don't know if you know, but one year ago, there was, a police and all this country problem, but as... when the EU take this action, it was only the sea..."* Omar was talking about the (temporary) suspension of the Dublin Regulation, which formally suggested that refugees must apply for asylum in the first EU country they enter. This suspension made it much easier for refugees to travel onwards to their preferred destination. Omar did not take his decision lightly. His main reason to go was for his children's future and what is the point of taking that risk if they would drown in the Mediterranean Sea? He carefully planned his journey in what he considered to be the safest way and taught his wife how to swim in a swimming pool close to the Dead Sea.

Omar felt, like many other Iraqi refugees, pressure and anxiety to leave because so many people were going: *"On the Facebook, some guys were in safe cities in the south (of Iraq, MT)... And he broadcast this video on Facebook... We felt a mix of sadness, anger and pressure. They took our chance and... We are just sitting here, waiting for UNHCR without no job"*. Omar and Zeineb's final

push was shaped by the media they consumed. Seeing journeying people who he didn't consider entitled to receive a future in Europe again, pointed to Omar and Zeineb that they could not trust in the logic and hierarchy of deservingness. The realisation that the goodwill of western countries has its limits and that other people are taking the limited slots that would make a new future elsewhere available, made Omar and Zeineb eventually decide to leave. Omar sent an animation and poem (Figure 5.5.) to me suggesting how *katjak* was considered as a hopeful act.



Figure 5.5. I travel... I travel

Through the air, overland, overseas,
 Through the sky, across the earth.
 UN, Boe N, No N
 Any way, the most important thing is that I
 will travel
 Smuggled, Fuggled, Buggled,
 Even if you put me in a soup pot,
 the most important thing is that I will travel.

There was an excitement in the air regarding travelling onwards that should be situated in the desperation that people felt and but equally in the mediated messages that made it seem like travelling onwards was easy. Moreover, the UN might not 'help' with travelling, but they would also not stop people from leaving (Figure 5.5.). In the beginning of August I spoke to Um Sanghar (#24) who was excited about the news that Iraqi refugee families who had been living in *Hashmi* had left for Europe. She talked about the videos that were shared online of their journeys, making it seem easy and safe. I knew the videos she was talking about as my Iraqi Facebook friends had also started sharing them. A few days later, news channels like Al Jazeera and BBC Arabic caught up. Adam (#34) was excited as many friends and acquaintance were leaving or thinking of leaving. He started to consider onward journeying, but did not have the financial resources necessary and was reluctant to leave his sickly parents behind. Adam was also confused because the practices he saw on TV and the rumours he heard via friends did not align with the stories of his brother-in-law who had lived illegally in Greece for 9 years. *"They are ignored! Some even go voluntarily to*

the police to register.” Many Iraqi refugees knew people with personal success stories, but there were also always the devastating journeys of former neighbours or acquaintances who didn’t make it as pictures of their funerals were shared online. Online platforms were equally useful for warning people for putting trust in the wrong persons. In the beginning of August, multiple Iraqi refugees I know were sharing the same message, showing the picture of a man who is called a ‘dog’ who would pretend to be a smuggler but was instead involved in organ trafficking.

Access to an overload of ever-changing information can perhaps provide a (false) sense of control, but the impersonal nature of social media is also unsettling (Frouws et al., 2016; Gillespie et al., 2016). Online acquired information through Facebook groups is therefore always double-checked through more personalized channels, including WhatsApp, Viber and Facebook Messenger. Making the decision to travel onwards is always a bet. In order to make that horrible and potentially devastating decision in a somewhat safe way, one needs social networks, financial resources and desperation. The last two are directly linked to each other and to the waiting experience in Jordan. Omar told me that ‘waiting’ in Jordan for another year would have meant that Omar and Zeineb, since they were living from their savings, they would no longer have the financial resources necessary to cover the costs to make travelling illegalised as safe as possible.

Abu Mamoud (#5) had seen on TV that UNHCR was stepping in to support the EU in what was soon framed as crisis. He was confused about UNHCR’s role. He associated UNHCR’s logo with chaos and conflict and not to the peace he was hoping for in Europe. Abu Mahmoud also tried to comprehend what possibilities his daughter Ibtisam (#39) and her family would have if she managed to get into Europe. Unlike the other family members, Ibtisam and her husband had obtained a recognised refugee status and they were told by UNHCR to wait for a resettlement slot. Ibtisam’s refugee status however did not guarantee that she would be equally recognized as refugee if she made it to Europe. As I explained in Chapter 2, Jordan has not ratified the 1951 refugee convention. UNHCR has stepped in to provide temporary protection. However, in European countries refugee recognition is done at state level. Upon arrival in Europe Ibtisam and her family would again have to go through the asylum-seeker process. Travelling in an irregular way would make her status invalid, but would provide her with the opportunity but not the guarantee to obtain refugee recognition in a western country. Travelling and arriving onwards could

eventually result in more legal certainty, but it would most likely initially at least result in more waiting but elsewhere.

Another means of travelling is to marry a person with western citizenship. This could start romantically, but it could also be a more business-like agreement. Any form of *tabrib* or *katjak* needs careful planning and might indeed take determination, time, money and risk (Joris Schapendonk, 2012). The same could be said for any legalised way of travelling. Amal (#38), the youngest daughter of Abu Mahmoud, got married to an Iraqi relative with a Scandinavian passport. They fell in love over Facebook. Amal came to Jordan with the idea that waiting for family re-unification with her husband in Northern Europe would only take 6 months. When I interviewed her she had been waiting for more than 1.5 years. In the waiting time, Amal's husband visited her regularly in Jordan. She became pregnant and gave birth to a child. The bureaucracy of the country Amal's husband was citizen-subject of meant that when the time had come that Amal was allowed to travel she was not allowed to take her newborn child as the child's case had not been processed.

Omar and Zeineb's narrative demonstrates that the actual decision-making process to travel is deeply mediated. It was shaped by UNHCR's message that implicitly suggested that waiting in Jordan was not likely to result in third country resettlement, by the realization that journeying in(to) Europe had become easier because of changed applications of refugee policies were applied differently, and by seeing and hearing people reaching Europe's shores who they do not consider as entitled refugees. For others, it seemed to increase anxiety about what the changes in EU policies would mean for them as became evident in the section on the protests at UNHCR's office.

5.5 Conclusion

In the absence of futures deemed possible in Iraq or Jordan, most Iraqi refugees in Jordan consider their experience as waiting to travel onwards. Amidst legal and social uncertainty, Iraqi refugees were trying to obtain control and make sense of their situation. Much of their hope was projected upon UNHCR. UNHCR serves and is interpreted as messengers of western governments but the main message to 'wait' seems to suggest there is something to wait for. The anxiety for travelling evokes the need to obtain as much information as possible and to maintain order in the disorder. There is an ongoing anxious

assessment of one's situation, just because the Iraqi refugees in Jordan seem to feel stuck. It also resulted in significance of 'talking spaces' as there was the ongoing need to seek and double-checking information through a wide variety of public online sources, more private online conversations and through offline interactions. Much of the information obtained is interpreted and judged through a discourse of deservingness and the idea that some (and in particular they themselves) would be more entitled to resettlement than others.

Ghassan Hage's (2015) concept of 'stuckedness' enables me to further understand how experiences of immobility and uncertainty are deeply grounded in material injustices, but despite these constraints they can be undone making the search for exits worthwhile. Demonstrations at UNHCR and travelling onwards in(to) Europe are both ways of addressing the experience of 'stuckedness' in Jordan. These acts require courage and desperation and the decisions to act in such matters are never taken lightly. Decisions for mobilization and onwards mobility are deeply mediated processes during which people continuously have to balance what information is shared and what information is trustworthy.

Chapter 6 - Managing Insecurities and the Mediation of an ‘Absent Presence’

In this chapter I consider how the experiences of considering oneself as ‘matter out of place’ (Malkki, 1995) yet being ‘at home’ in Iraqi refugee households in Jordan is a situated and mediated practice. I describe the physical and material dynamics of the experience of Iraqi refugees living in displacement in Jordan and how managing insecurity creates an absent presence. In the previous chapter I explored how the communication of UNHCR contributed to experiences of waiting and ‘stuckness’ that relate to the inability for outward mobility. I also showed how this situation was negotiated, challenged and necessitates virtual places. In this chapter I aim to show how the experience of being ‘stuck’ equally relates to experiences of restricted physical, social and subjective mobility in Jordan.

This chapter begins with a brief exploration of two areas in Amman, *Hashmi Schmali* and *Gardens*. These descriptions show how both spaces are deeply gendered, but equally serve as background for the second section in which I show that different localised and situated experiences contribute to a multi-layered experience of uncertainty. Feeling (in)secure goes far beyond experiencing physical safety. It is a situated and mediated experience that equally relates to restricted abilities to work, limited financial security, feeling like an outsider and uncomfortable encounters and sounds. Experiences of immobility in Jordan relate to feeling insecure. The mobile phone and familiarity with place enable some movement, but in response to experiences of uncertainty the Iraqi refugees maintain largely what I call an ‘absent presence’ in Jordan. Most of daily life takes place in their homes, behind locked doors. In the third section I explore how this ‘absent presence’ is partly possible, just because mediated practices enable virtual homemaking practices (Doná, 2015). Being ‘at home’ is, beyond an idea, a situated and mediated practice (Brun & Fábos, 2015) that enables daily life in Jordan but equally reconstitutes homes in Jordan as only temporary. I focus in this chapter upon the everyday use of different digital technologies and how they make different ways of coping and feeling at home possible. This chapter shows how habitual mundane experiences and feelings in the present and in a

particular place are always mediated and tightly linked to memories, national imaginaries and political developments.

6.1 Locating Iraqi refugees in Jordan: *Gardens* and *Hashmi Schmali*

Meanings of space are constructed through mediated and situated perceptions of life in Jordan. Space is real and mediated, virtual and imagined. It is produced, represented and lived (LeFebvre, 2003). Space carries a plurality of social meanings. The home, the city, the national and the transnational all form different layers of the diasporic space where social interactions take place that all feed into the meanings of community and identity (Georgiou, 2006). In this section I will zoom into two parts of the city: *Gardens* and *Hashmi Schmali*. The different material situated circumstances in *Gardens* and *Hashmi Schmali*, two areas where many of the Iraqi refugees I met during fieldwork were living, contributes to different feelings of insecurity and alters one's experience of place. Comparing the everyday experiences in these two different places enables me to show how localities shape one's experience of being 'out of place' and reveal how life is experienced through intersectional identity markers, including but not limited to gender, religion, race³² and class.

Gardens is a relatively affluent, quiet area, located in west-Amman. Like in the rest of Amman, most buildings are 3 or 4 storey apartment blocks. Their flat roofs are covered by a high number of satellite dishes as in Amman practically every household is connected to the transnational media landscape (see Chapter 2.3). The apartments in *Gardens* are large, well-kept, well-insulated and expensive. Amman's typical landmarks are roundabouts and on the central roundabout of *Gardens* you can find an Iraqi bakery and a supermarket selling Iraqi luxury food products. Close to this roundabout we find an Iraqi fish restaurant Fallujah, named after the infamous city, and restaurant Baghdad serving Iraqi meat dishes. Two streets in between *Gardens* and a somewhat similar area called *Rabia* are full of male-dominated cafes where men smoke hookah, converse and play card games while

³² It seems that within the narratives and personal experiences of the Iraqi refugees, race seems to play a less prominent role as differentiating identity marker. They are considered as 'fellow Arabs' like the Jordanian host population (see Chapter 5 on the discrimination towards Sudanese refugees showing how racism is prominent in Jordan's society).

simultaneously browsing on their smartphones. Omar (#42), the 37-year old engineer whose experiences played a prominent role in the previous chapter, took me to one of these cafes.

“Omar showed me that the indoor interior of the cafe we visited is decorated with old pictures of the late Iraqi king, Faisal 2, and of Iraq as it used to be. We take a seat outside. The accents I hear suggest that most visitors are Iraqi men, and this is confirmed by Omar. I realise I am the only woman there. Being a woman, I feel intrigued and out of place at the same time, and even more so when I come to realisation there is only a male toilet. This area gives me the idea that there is vibrant Iraqi community here, but if so, it is transient: while playing backgammon, Omar translates segments of the conversations he overhears. Omar explains that there are three groups of Iraqis in this cafe: recent arrivals like him, those who came just after the war and those in between. But, he states, all are talking about getting out of Jordan.”

Field notes, 15th of August 2015

At the time of fieldwork, Omar lived close to *Gardens* and had the financial means to pay the taxi fare to go there. For Omar, being able to physically meet fellow Iraqi nationals was crucial to obtain information for planning his onwards journey, as I explained in Chapter 5. Perhaps equally important, it provided him the opportunity to be surrounded by familiar sounds and a material space that points to Iraq’s past. This provides him a sense of home away from Iraq, but equally so, away from his current domestic setting. The Iraqi cafes are deeply masculine spaces. They seemed to provide a sense of support that is only available to men. Omar felt comfortable taking me there since I was an *ajnabia* and therefore an outsider. In this area I could transgress particular gendered norms, but he would not take his wife Zeineb there. The lives of women living in *Gardens* such as Nabila (#7) – a 41 year-old widow and mother of 4 - and Nadia (#25) – a 28-year old single woman living with her parents – was largely taking place indoors, yet they seemed relatively comfortable in the area where they were living.

Hashmi Schmali (from now on abbreviated as *Hashmi*) is an area in East-Amman, and is generally considered as conservative and poor. It is home to a large number of poor Palestinian Jordanians, as well as Iraqi and Syrian refugees. This has the potential to create unrest and brings about feelings of insecurity as becomes clear throughout this chapter. The rent of an apartment in *Hashmi* is generally much cheaper than it is in *Gardens*, but the homes in *Hashmi* are often small, badly kept and barely insulated. In the cold winters and hot summers this is especially a problem. Many families are sharing their already small apartments with relatives and their families. The central node of *Hashmi* is its busy

shopping street. The streets contain more than 20 telephone shops, clothing stores, pharmacies and falafel bars. In the new shopping centre called Izmir Mall a French corporate supermarket, clothing stores and a Dunkin' Donuts are located. Globalized consumer culture has entered *Hashmi*, whereas much of its population does not have enough money for proper healthcare or for the education of their children. They do however have time at their disposal. Families would sometimes spend their time in the mall, but daily life mostly occurred behind the always locked doors of their households.

Several coffee shops are located above the shops. Many of my Iraqi male informants would go there but I never accompanied them and equally so, was never invited to join. An area like *Hashmi* is considered to be more conservative and gender-segregated and is seldom visited by western foreigners. My foreignness in *Hashmi* made me stand out as this place as I often heard people whisper *ajnabia* if I would pass along. An additional reason was that at that time I was living in *Hashmi* with an Iraqi family and I felt more inclined to fulfill gendered roles and not to be the cause of more rumors. If the women did go out (either with male relatives or by themselves) this was to do shopping, to visit friends, to go to church or visit one of the community-based organisations located in that area, that for some of the women was a place to meet fellow Iraqi refugee women. I often joined them on their trips but equally spent much time indoors with them.

In the two described areas I encountered a deeply gendered sense of space: public, outside spaces were generally considered as masculine places, whereas domestic spaces were the locations where women would meet and socialise. I do not suggest that women did not go out, but socializing largely occurred in their homes. Men would meet up at coffee shops, but only if they had money to spend outdoors.

6.2 Experiencing insecurity

Diasporic space are configured by migrants themselves but equally occurs through interactions with and perceptions of those persons who 'stayed put' (Brah, 1996, p. 16): Jordan's host population. "In space, co-presence and absences, participation and exclusion, as well as access, control and restrictions to economic and cultural resources – including communication technologies, media and network infrastructure – become both tools and contexts for constructing identities and for imagining communities" (Georgiou, 2006, p. 5).

It is through mediated and situated encounters with the place where they live (their neighbourhood, the city, Jordan), their legal and material uncertainty and their perception of Jordan's society and their position outside of it, that the Iraqi refugees come to understand themselves as 'out of place' in Jordan.

In Chapter 3 I discussed how digital connectivity has engendered the ability of 'being there' without being physical present (Baldassar et al., 2016). This resulted in different notions of virtual presence, such as 'absent co-presence' (Georgiou, 2006), 'connected presence' (Licoppe, 2004) and 'imaginary co-presence' (Robertson et al., 2016). However, these notions can be also reversed. A multi-layered experience of insecurity in Jordan contributes to the need the Iraqi refugees seem to feel to maintain an 'absent presence'. Physically located in Jordan, the Iraqi refugees - some more than others - try to interact as little as possible with Jordan as a state and its host population. In the upcoming section I will further unpack how feeling (in)secure is a situated and mediated experience. I tease out three different domains - physical (in)security, financial (in)security and ontological (in)security – that serve to explain why Iraqi refugees largely refrain from interacting with Jordan's host population and hold on to an 'absent presence in Jordan as they spend most time indoors, in a place they feel (more) safe.

Physical insecurity

In Chapter 5 I showed how UNHCR's resettlement officer as well as UNHCR's senior information coordinator emphasized the agency's mandate to provide protection. In my encounters with Iraqi refugees I however got the impression that UNHCR's capacities to safeguard the physical safety of Iraqi refugees were limited. Ismail (#33), a single man from Baghdad, was tracked down by family members who had earlier threatened him in Iraq. Jordan's main phone provider had given them his phone number, showing that digital technologies can increase visibility and risk. As UNHCR recognised the risks Ismail was facing, they gave him priority for resettlement to a third western country.³³ More than two years after our interview (Facebook-contact, 15th of August, 2017) he is still waiting. Proselytising Muslims visited Aram (#14), a Christian Iraqi father of two, in his home. These visits terrified Aram as his village got raided by ISIS. UNHCR never responded on

³³See appendix 5 for the procedures around resettlement via UNHCR and via IOM.

his call for help. Instead, a local Jordanian pastor helped him out and called the police.³⁴ Haydar, the 22-year old son of Um Haydar (#28), was beaten up by a group of unidentified men. Haydar and his mother did not call the police and did not tell UNHCR as they feared that this could harm their progress towards resettlement.

These three examples show that feelings of physical insecurity are deeply related to one's legal status as a refugee. UNHCR has limited capabilities to help persons like Ismail and was unresponsive to Aram's phone call. Haydar's experience suggests uncertainty about what protection means, and that the power differentials in place create a sense of dependency and fright. These three examples also show that UNHCR's protection falls short. UNHCR as a surrogate state (Kagan, 2011) lacks police forces. There is reluctance of Iraqi refugees to ask help of the Jordanian police forces, as the Jordanian state and its police force would be only there to police them. For some, this is the result of personal negative experiences with the Jordanian police.

These stories contrast with the statement of many Iraqi refugees, especially those living in *Gardens* and the other more affluent and calmer areas in Amman that they felt safe and even comfortable in Jordan. These words were always accompanied with the caveat that their current situation was temporary, implying that it will do for now. These feelings should be considered in comparison to the situation they left behind. Nour (#35), a young Iraqi Christian woman who grew up in Basra, told me that in Jordan it was the first time in years that she could sleep without being scared. Michael (#19), the brother-in-law of my housemates Simon and Linda who like them had to flee from ISIS stated the following regarding living in Jordan: *"At least I can sleep in the night, knowing that nothing bad will happen. Cause after what we saw from ISIS, if our land will turn out to be golden land, made from gold, we won't go back because... uhm, we gave up on Iraq and now safety is more important than anything else..."* Feeling secure goes beyond physical safety as becomes evident in the next sections, but as Michael's words suggest physical safety might be the most important.

Feeling insecure or only temporarily secure is deeply affected by Jordan's geographical location and by doubts as to whether Jordan will remain unaffected by the conflicts that

³⁴Trying to convert people to any other religious belief than the one you are born with (through your father) is forbidden in Jordan.

are occurring in Jordan's neighbouring countries. These worries also push the Iraqi elite, who have found means to secure their situation in Jordan, to searching for ways out of the Middle East if the security situation changes (Chatelard, 2016). Feeling insecure is affective, mediated and closely linked to experiences of the past and the present. This became clear and palpable when Jordan's imagined community (Anderson, 1991) was more directly affected by the war on ISIS.

On the 3d of February 2015, a 22-minute film showing how ISIS-militants burned Jordanian air force pilot Muath al-Kasaesbeh alive went viral. The video was released via a Twitter-account known for its ISIS-propaganda. Jordanian news channels only showed a 30-second segment on repeat, showing ISIS-soldiers lined up, the pilot breathing, a rope that is set afire, and a close-up of the pilot's eyes (BBC, 2015). In response to this gruesome act Jordan TV, the government-owned state broadcaster, immediately aired a public statement by Jordan's king Abdullah II. His message and that of other spokespersons of the Army and the Government urged for the importance of national unity, questioned the Islamic convictions of ISIS and included a vow for "earth-shaking" avenge (Malkawi, 2015). In the days that followed fighter jets were flying over Amman, to the pilots' hometown as a homage that equally seemed a public display of force and the military actions that were taking place in Syria. The hashtag [#Jordan's Response Is Coming](#) went viral (JT, 2015). Televised images of the king in army uniform were alternating with pictures of him hugging the father of the pilot, showing a balance between strength and compassion. The programming of Jordan TV and Ro'ya, the only other Jordanian (privatised) TV-channel, was oriented around this event continuously showing footage of the king visiting the pilot's family, public protests against the ISIS, photos of the pilot with his family and on *haj*, and on-screen graphics that were showing F-16s. Jordan had been actively part of an international coalition against ISIS since September 2014, but with little support of the Jordanian people. This vehemently changed after this Jordanian soldier died in action (Su, 2015)..

It was during this intense time in Jordan that I noticed that Iraqi refugees were watching Jordanian TV, an act they had previously only engaged in during a snowstorm in January. Many of the Iraqi refugees I later spoke to recalled these days as deeply unsettling and felt the need to know what was going on in Jordan. It made visible that the safety in Jordan was precarious: Jordan is not only bordering Iraq and Syria, but heated reactions of

Jordanians could also potentially have ignited violence towards the displaced population in Jordan. Adam (#34) who at that time was volunteering for an NGO was advised by the staff not to discuss any related matters over the telephone. Many other Iraqi refugees told me that the first days after the release of the video they didn't dare to go out of their house or that they had trouble sleeping. In the weeks and months that followed, there seemed an increased emphasis on national sentiment in Jordan. A segment of a broadcasted speech by King Abdullah II appeared on banners spread across the city: "Be proud³⁵, because you are Jordanian"³⁶ and the hashtag #Beproud went viral (Joucka, 2015). The Iraqi refugees however did not seem to feel affected by this emphasis on national identity than they had before. It seemed that they had felt excluded ever since they had arrived in Jordan, but also that they held on to their status of 'not-belonging' in Jordan and the hope that the future will take place elsewhere (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 7).

When things settled down, many Iraqi refugees started to compare the gruesome killing of the Jordanian pilot with their own memories of war. Abu Adam told me about the violence he had seen in real-life and not, as he was at pains to emphasise, on YouTube or on the smartphone. He implied that first-hand experiences have greater impact than mediated witnessing. Khalil (#21), a 35-year man from Baghdad was living in *Gardens*. He stated contrasted to what occurs in Iraq to what happened in Jordan: "*And then, when 1 person is killed, they say: wow! Everyone was talking about it, saying how they would never forget it. But two weeks later everyone forgot about it. You have to, you need to go forward, to the future. But here, nothing ever happens, so when they lose one person... Look at the Iraqis: 100 persons are dying every day.*" In Iraq brutality and violence had become part of the everyday and to certain extent part of normality. Whereas the Iraqi refugees would stress how gruesome this violent attack was, it was by no means comparable to the amount of violence Khalil, Abu Adam and many others had observed and personally experienced in Iraq. As such the distress and grief witnessed on TV and through conversations with Jordanian nationals felt to them like an exaggeration. This equally enabled them to further distinguish themselves from Jordan's local population as people who have been through tremendous suffering and therefore entitled to a better future.

³⁵ The direct Arabic translation would be "Raise your head" and is an Arabic expression for: "Be proud."

³⁶ Considering the official banner had the silhouette of a man on it and the Arabic imperative used refers to a single man, you could argue it equally excluded Jordanian women who do not have the same civic rights as male Jordanian citizen subjects.

In this section I have considered how experiences of physical insecurity relate to a lack of (trust in) authorities to safeguard the bodily integrity and physical safety of Iraqi refugees in Jordan in Jordan. UNHCR's protection in Jordan falls short. I then showed how doubts about security in Jordan equally relate to its geographical location. The brutal killing of a Jordanian air force pilot not only reinforced these doubts, but equally served for the Iraqi refugees to mark them out as different from their host population.

Financial and Material insecurity

Experiences of insecurity are deeply related to financial insecurity. The formal restrictions to work didn't keep everyone from working. In 11 of the 35 households I interviewed people in there was at least 1 person who was in some way informally employed at the time of the interview. Some young men and women were fluent in English and were working as translators for *adjan'eb* like me. Other Iraqi refugees were working as 'volunteers' at NGOs. This form of employment is tolerated due to its link with the international community. It enabled them to improving one's English skills and provided a routine and sense of purpose, but its remuneration was often barely enough to cover travel costs. The lack of legal labour rights can make Iraqi refugees however subject to exploitation. Whereas some would work informally, for other Iraqi refugees the thought of working in Jordan evoked a "palpable sense of deportability" (De Genova, 2002, p. 439).

Ahmed, my translator, told me how he met an UNHCR-employee through mutual friends who had asked him why it was that many of the Iraqi refugees were not working informally like many of the Syrian refugees were. One of the explanations is that many of the Iraqi refugees are highly educated and these skills are not easily transferable to lower skilled employment that is more tolerated by the Jordanian Government. However, by posing this question the UNHCR-employee also ignored that formal message of the UN Refugee agency is to not work, a message that many of the Iraqi refugees seem to comply with.³⁷ Hossan (#20) described his work as "*in hiding*" as he believed that if people working for UNHCR would find out, they would delay his opportunity for resettlement. Like Khaled

³⁷ See also Chapter 5 on how particular messages by UNHCR are read and interpreted through the power differentials.

(#18) he publicly exposed his employment on his Facebook profile: *“I am not afraid, because there are 6 million with the UN: they will not check everyone on Facebook. The same with the Jordanian government.”* Hossan did not seem to be afraid of the Jordanian State or for the risk of deportation.

Those who are not working try to get by with the limited UNHCR support that Iraqi refugees aptly refer to as ‘salary’, by depleting their savings and by depending on relatives abroad. All these means of getting by have expiry dates and reinforce concerns about whether they will continue to get by and are able to ‘stick it out’ (Hage, 2015, p. 4) until they are resettled (see Chapter 5 on waiting for resettlement). There is a perpetual uncertainty about their financial situation for the future. In comparison to life in Iraq, life in Jordan is expensive and not knowing when or if it will end makes it extremely difficult to plan. This was even more a concern for those who had to leave instantly, as they – unlike several others – had not been able to carefully plan their future lives in transit and sell their property. Financial insecurity influences one’s movement in Jordan as life outdoors costs money and there is little money to spare. Moreover, restriction to work also limit the opportunities in Jordan for upward social mobility, and therefore further reinforced the stuckedness Iraqi refugees were experiencing.

Insecurity related to being an “outsider”

Feeling insecure in Jordan also relates to particular identity markers that potentially mark the Iraqi refugees in Jordan out as ‘different’ but that they equally deploy to differentiate themselves. Especially those Iraqi refugees living in *Hashmi* had hard times adjusting to their everyday life in Jordan. They often framed their difficulties around religious differences and national identity markers, but the difficulties they experience might equally relate to experiences of downward social mobility and class. Because of economic hardship many Iraqi refugees who used to belong to middle class moved into an area that is predominantly lower class with high levels of unemployment.

Like many of the Christian Iraqi nationals living in *Hashmi*, the Christian Iraqi family I was living with came from a large Christian town that was raided by ISIS. Although the majority of the people living in Iraq are Shi’a and Sunni Muslims, many Iraqi Christians had been living a relatively sheltered and secluded life in Christian-dominated towns. The

everyday Islamic practices such *adhan*, the call for prayer, and the practices around Ramadan had previously been more distant and were now closer to home. It seemed for many Christian Iraqis that the traumatic experiences with ISIS resulted in and of itself an increased anxiety towards living in *Hashmi*. Aram (#14), the Iraqi Christian father I mentioned earlier, narrated his struggles: “*AAAHHH DONT SLEEP COME TO PRAY! (Imitating the call for prayer). This every day! So, if if somebody want to pray he will come without all this. You are free by this one, but... I don't know in Arab... This, this is difficult.*” Aram’s reaction towards the sounds and practices in *Hashmi* were deeply related to his own experiences with Islamist terrorists. This has resulted in deep distrust towards Muslims. Aram was deeply concerned whether Jordan will continue to be a safe country and these feelings are only aggravated by experiences of sounds and practices that are unfamiliar to him and that he relates to the violence inflicted upon him.

Michael (#19), Simon and Linda’s brother-in-law, explained that life in *Hashmi* is hard for Iraqi Christians: “*Because of the society here. But maybe in West-Amman it is a bit better than this.*” His experience of hardship relates to the harassment the Iraqi Christian women were experiencing since they were not wearing a veil: “*A point that bothers me is the local, verbal harassment against the women... It is a lot here, it is so much, it is annoying. Even we spend some times, an hour with my wife, telling her: you should wear this, you should not wear this...*” Michael’s wife Sara adds: “*We were forced to buy wide covering clothes.*” Michael however stated that wearing wide clothes does not matter: “*But here, people see a woman with a naked hair, without scarf, and they imagine it as a naked woman... So, in their psychology... In their brain... Even if she is wearing an abaya (a robe-like dress, often black, MT). It is still the same. If she does not cover her hair she will have this harassment all the time.*” Some Christian men did not like their wives to go out by themselves, but this was not the case for Sara and Michael. Since I do not wear a veil and was equally living and moving around in *Hashmi* the harassment they addressed is not strange to me. Moreover, the distress these and other Iraqi refugees experience builds upon previously established wounds that might reinforce sensitivities towards Muslim men.

It was not only the Iraqi Christians who had a hard time adjusting to life in Jordan. Many Muslim as well as non-Muslim Iraqi refugees living in *Hashmi* would describe their Palestinian neighbours, as they would emphasise that particular element of their national identity³⁸ as backwards or dirty. They would equally emphasise they did not have issues

³⁸ Jordan has provided many but not all Palestinian refugees with Jordanian citizenship. There are also many

with Jordanian people from Jordanian origin and/or Jordanian people living in the more affluent areas of Amman. These are arguably forms of boundary drawing: by saying who you are and equally important who you are not, a process of ‘distinction’ is performed. Pierre Bourdieu (1991) defines ‘distinction’ as the relational property of differences. Social spaces are constructed around distinct, coexisting positions which are defined in relation to each other, in regards to distance or closeness and hierarchical order. Bourdieu defines economic and cultural capital as the two main differentiating principles. Through one’s particular “distinct and distinctive practices” (p. 634) – for instance what a person eats but equally so how she / he eats, how a person dresses, what she/he watches on TV, etc. – one places oneself in the space of social positions and distinguishes oneself from the ‘other’ who has different practices. However, only by viewing and putting the emphasis on the differences they become differentiating.

Kholoud (#36) is a practicing Sunni Muslim and wears the hijab. She would often equate the dirt of the streets in *Hashmi* with the people living there. I have known her for years, but I only came to a more in-depth understanding of her discomfort during a recorded interview. Ever since her daughter and granddaughter travelled to the US she developed an even stronger yearning for being able to travel to the US. In our interview, she emphasised how upon arrival she would immediately change her clothes into what she used to wear in pre-2003 Iraq and as refugee in Syria. She explained how she keeps her jeans packed in a bag in her cupboard: “*So, I am not forced to wear something by society. These things are engraved in my mind*”. She explained how it was only in *Hashmi* that she had started to wear an *abaya*: “*They said: Haram. You are a woman you don't have to put on lipsticks and ubm... wearing trousers and ubm...*” Kholoud adjusted her outside-behaviour to what she believed was expected from her.

Many Muslim and non-Muslim Iraqi were equally conforming their outside behaviour to what they perceived as necessary to fit into Jordan’s society. Sabeen Iraqis would often say to Jordanian strangers that they were Christian as their specific religious beliefs were not known to many people in Jordan. Equally so, the Shi’a Muslims I interviewed did not feel comfortable with exposing their religious identity: In Jordan they would be considered *kafir*

cases known of Jordanian citizenship being revoked. The Middle Eastern Monitor states that Jordan “forces its citizens of Palestinian origins to keep their theoretical Palestinian citizenship” (Ramahi, 2015, p. 10) suggesting that many Jordanians of Palestinian origins have some form of dual citizenship.

(heathen), a reaction they preferred to avoid. Portraying themselves like more familiar others made it easier for them to move around, yet also reinforced the personal feelings of discomfort, insecurity and of not being ‘at home’ in Jordan. People who were living in *Gardens* or more affluent areas in Amman, like Nabila (#7), were generally more nuanced in their descriptions of Jordan’s host population, suggesting that they felt more at ease in their middle-class neighbourhood and/or had less negative encounters. But equally so, Nabila described Jordan as an open prison and felt very uncomfortable about taking a taxi. She also would not expose she is Shi’a. Among most Iraqi refugees there was a general feeling of unease and caution. Their discomfort made them reluctant of moving around in Jordan and many would refrain as much as possible from interacting with Jordan’s host population. This resulted in a preference of staying in the relative secure setting of the home.

In this section I have shown how experiences of insecurity are multi-layered. The many faces of insecurity include the lack of legal protection, physical safety, bodily integrity, financial and material certainty and finally the security to be how oneself wants to be. I have also shown how these securities map onto experiences of the past, such as negative experiences with Islamist extremists or having belonged to the middle class. I argue that these different layers of insecurity all contribute to the need the Iraqi refugees feel for maintaining an ‘absent presence’ in Jordan. However, the Iraqi refugees cannot totally abstain from interacting with Jordan and its host population. In the next section I will further consider how, in this congruent context of insecurity Iraqi refugees did move in Jordan but equally how this movement can reinforce feeling insecure. Mobile phones played an important role in securing movement.

6.3 Restricted physical movement in Jordan

Bad experiences, the feeling of being different, legal and material insecurity all interact: they restrict some movements, but equally reinforce some types of movements that might contribute to more security. Abu Maisoun (#3) made this clear when I asked him whether there are other areas in Amman he visits: “*No, we stay in Hashmi, everything is in Hashmi, we stay in Hashmi. Hashmi is like prison. Sometimes we go out, in the morning for a walk. But we stay here*”. Even though he is clear about his discomfort in *Hashmi* it is a discomfort he knows and that is therefore controllable.

Moving house is another way to obtain a sense of security and control. In the four years that I have come to know the family of Kholoud (#36) and Abu Adam they have moved four times within *Hashmi*. They related their penultimate decision move to the behaviour of their neighbours. Abu Adam explained that he believed the neighbour's husband had started to use drugs and he wanted to make sure that his sons would not get involved. As I explained earlier, Iraqi refugees feel their actual protection by the Jordanian police or UNHCR is limited. Moving house can therefore be a strategy for obtaining more security if one feels threatened or anxious in one's specific physical location. In their new house, Kholoud refrains from building up relationships with her neighbours. When I asked her about her interactions with Jordanian people in *Hashmi*, she told me that they are okay but that she doesn't make conversation with them:

"I don't really want to mix up with them. I am afraid. [...] I am afraid that because I am Iraqi I don't have any strength in the Jordanian society. So, if something happened I wouldn't be able to do anything. So I simply AVOID all that by not making any conversations. And I don't make any comments. If someone says something I just ignore it, and if someone asks any questions like: Are you Iraqi I answer yes and that's it."

Kholoud moved around in Hashmi. She visited her Iraqi friends and organizations and, if there is money to pay for a membership, she would go to the gym. But she only left Hashmi in the company of her husband or her sons.

Lack of mobility is very much gendered. The restricted movement of Kholoud is quite similar to what other Iraqi women, living in *Hashmi* but also in *Gardens*, described. When Nour (#35), a young Christian student from Basra, started to translate interviews for me I always had to accompany her back home. For Amal (#38), the visit of her husband was the first occasion for her to go to Rainbow Street, a lively touristic street full of coffee shops and restaurants, only a 10-minute walk from her house. She had been living in Jordan for more than a year. Her brother Osman (#37) would however go frequently to Rainbow Street to smoke hookah. This doesn't mean the movement of Iraqi men is not restricted. Going out, even if you don't need a taxi to get out of your neighbourhood, costs money and this further reinforced a homebound life for the Iraqi men as well. Like the Iraqi women, many male refugees told me they prefer to keep to themselves and try to interact as little as possible with their host population.

It is however impossible to not be touched by situated and mediated local and regional circumstances, national policies and interactions with people in their surroundings. This is even more the case if financial precariousness necessitates working informally. For those Iraqi refugees (men and women) who did not work informally, interactions with Jordanian people were limited to conversing with shopkeepers and taxi drivers. Taxis are crucial to go and visit UNHCR's office which is located at the outskirts of west-Amman, the hospital, NGOs, to go to the market in downtown Amman or to visits friends and relatives who are living in other neighbourhoods. Public transport options in Jordan are limited, making the taxi a main and relatively affordable means of transportation. Moreover, for Iraqi refugees the option to obtain a license to drive in Jordan is restricted, further restricting possibilities for movement.

Being in a taxi means spending time in a confined space with a stranger. Jordanian taxi drivers tend to make conversation with men, whereas they often refrain from conversing with Arabic-looking women. The Iraqi men who were able to mimic the Jordanian Arabic dialect would often pretend they are Jordanian. This is partly because conversations with taxi drivers are sometimes amusing, helpful or informative, but at other times hurtful and racist. Abu Raheem (#13), a young Iraqi Christian father of two, recalled one particular conversation. A taxi driver was judging him for having left Iraq: *"You can bury your gold and your money and just go back in 10 years. What is the sense of that? And I told him: "Listen, I don't feel safe in my own country." And he said: Join Da'esh (the Arabic acronym for ISIS, MT)! I said: "I can't kill no one." And he said: "But you can kill them! They are infidels. Only the children can't be killed."* The taxi driver, whom I presume did not realise he was talking to a persecuted Christian Iraqi, defended the violence that made Abu Raheem flee to Jordan. Obviously, this reinforced the insecurity Abu Raheem was already experiencing. The taxi-driver's reference to gold and money, relates to the distinguishing misconception that all Iraqi refugees are affluent, a public belief that contrasts to the popular and mediated perception of the Syrian refugee population as poor (Chatty, 2015, p. 3). This backfires, as many Iraqi refugees told me they were frequently overcharged and ripped off. As I explained in the last section, financial security is lacking for many Iraqi refugees.

Mobile phones played a key role in securing the limited mobility in Jordan. Calling a friend who knows where things are and who can give directions to taxi drivers is crucial to navigate through a 'foreign' city. Mobile phones therefore make it possible to meet up

physically. Mobile phones also enable to mitigate uncertainty, as *en route* worried family members can be updated. This bears resemblance to the gendered use of cell phones in post-2003 Iraq when for Iraqi men and boys the general insecurity was ‘solved’ by the frequent use of mobile phones (see Chapter 2.3). Social media platforms such as Facebook, unlike mobile phone numbers, are less tied to a country code. The connecting affordances of the smartphones are therefore equally important to know who is (still) in Jordan and how to reconnect to them. Whereas a smartphone carries overlapping and more functions of a mobile phone not everyone felt comfortable with using these devices outside of the home. This relates to the financial value of these devices, but as I will show in the next section, it also relates to the boredom of living a largely homebound life. This became clearer to me when my phone got stolen. The mother of my Iraqi friend Farah told me that she always advised her daughter to only use their mobile phones at home. I was confused as I associated mobile phones with being *en route*. Unlike the journeying refugees in the study of Gillespie et al. (2016) the Iraqi refugees in this study did not seem to consider smartphones as forms of currency, but expensive yet crucial devices that that needed to be handled with care. As I will show in the next section smartphones are crucial to carve out personal spaces in the confines of the home and to overcome the boredom of waiting.

In this section I have shown that the physical movement of Iraqi refugees is quite restricted, given the multi-layered experience of insecurity. The restrictions to movement are gendered, but since the most men are struggling financially their lives are now also largely domestic spaces. Racist and other uncomfortable remarks by Jordanian taxi drivers reinforced the importance to maintain an ‘absent presence’ in Jordan and refraining as much as possible from interactions with Jordan’s host population. TV and Internet-connecting devices such as the smartphone enable ‘virtual home making practices’ and as such enable the Iraqi refugees to make an ‘absent presence’ bearable. In the next section I will focus on these ‘virtual home making practices’: I consider how in the home every day digital practices enable the Iraqi refugees to create a temporary home and to sustain ontological security even if they feel ‘out of place’.

6.4 Absent presence and virtual homemaking practices

Entering the Iraqi refugee home

Upon entering an Iraqi home, you first have to take off your shoes. This is both a religious and cultural practice, as the bottom of shoes are associated with the dirt of the streets. You often enter into a hallway or you come directly in what is called the salon, the living room where guests are received and most time is spent. It seemed that the houses of Iraqi refugees who have been longer in Jordan had become a bit more home-like as over time people gather more material objects that made the house more 'homely' and added a personal touch. However the households of Iraqis who had come more recently to Jordan were quite empty and devoid of symbols, giving an impression that the people living there were only planning to stay for a short time. Often, the furniture was owned by the landlord and there were relatively little personalising attributes. In most Christian Iraqi households you could find a cross on the wall, an occasional picture of a Saint or a remnant of Christmas. In Muslim households you would often find a Qu'ran and prayer beads on a side table, next to the ash tray. In the house of Kholoud (#36) and Abu Adam, who are Sunni Muslims, an embroidered wall hanging saying (in English) 'God bless our home' and a Bible verse on love written in Arabic calligraphy serve as reminders of their former Dutch Christian neighbours. Some people kept pictures of their older children who travelled on a dresser. But most of the time pictures are kept in a box or a photo book which are kept in a suitcase. The picture book I bought for the birthday of the little daughter of Linda (#40) and Simon was immediately tucked away in the suitcase they would take if they were travelling. Morley (2000, pp. 44–45) points to the significance of the suitcase for many migrants as a symbol of the journey made and the unstable potentiality for onward movement. This also seems to be the case for Iraqi refugees in this study, who feel an ongoing sense of unease as they were once forced to leave immediately yet who equally are hoping to travel further. As stated earlier, Kholoud kept a suitcase full of clothes she was planning to wear in the US.

In the salon, the television set has a prominent role. Even the poorest family owned a TV-set that was connected to a satellite dish. The TV-set was often given to them by their landlord or was left behind by former tenants, and the costs for the satellite provider were the equivalent of £1 a month, with the exception of a more sports-oriented provider. The Iraqi refugees would often spend their time in front of the TV, as they would emphasise

they did not have anything else to do. Kholoud (#36) and Abu Adam owned a flat screen TV that Abu Adam's brother could not take with him on his journey to the US. In regards to outward mobility this points us to material characteristics of the TV as a double articulating object (Silverstone, 1994) that has its own meaning and biography of being left behind. The television's material symbolic meaning here suggest another function which might signal a lack of vulnerability to UNHCR-personnel. Abu Adam and Kholoud were warned in advance by fellow Iraqi refugees when UNHCR-officers made home visits to double check on the needs of Iraqi refugees. They were wary that owning a flat screen TV would have been misread as a sign of affluence, and whereas I don't have direct evidence of this, humanitarian needs assessments do tend to focus on immediate signs of vulnerability (Fassin, 2012; Hyndman & Giles, 2011). Abu Adam's brother also gave a smartphone to his nephews Adam (#34) and Solomon. Later in this chapter I will come back to why these devices are particularly for the teenage and adult children living within the refugee households of significance.

In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, I introduced Abu Mahmoud (#5). We often drank coffee as we watched TV together. His 21-year old son Osman (#37) was often quietly browsing on his tablet during these conversations. I therefore asked him to take pictures for me that could help to further comprehend his everyday life. Osman only took one picture showing his bed with his laptop and tablet placed on it. He emphasised how in especially in Jordan – and not in the US or in Iraq - living without Internet or digital devices would be a “tragedy”. Sadly, I lost Osman's picture as my phone got stolen before I made any back-ups and Osman had already deleted the picture. Adam (#34), who at the time of fieldwork was also 21 years old, also made a picture of his bed (figure 6.1.), as he states it is one of the “most epic things in my life.” The bed is yet another important object within the refugee household, suggesting that much of waiting life is spend in waiting for time to pass. The TV and the bed are both spaces to ‘waste’ time.

Contrary to Osman, Adam did not make pictures of digital devices: Adam was given a laptop in the summer of 2015 by his grandfather, but he explained: “*I am not going to make a picture of the laptop.*” He was conscious and cautious that would not fit with the stereotypical representation of refugees and what suffering is supposed to look like (Chouliaraki, 2008): “*Some people will say: he is not a refugee.*” Yet, Adam emphasised that especially since he is a refugee, owning a laptop has changed his life: “*If you notice, my life is like a waiting stop. You got*

no work, you got nothing, but waiting. So what are you going to do while waiting... You are bored from the TV, from the shisha, from the bed itself [...] The laptop has changed my life. I have net. You can always use the YouTube channels. And you can play games. And you write about what is going on. The laptop is awesome! Awesome!" In the rest of this chapter section I consider the different, often intersecting, roles that digital devices (TV, smartphones, and laptop) play in structuring the everyday lives of Iraqi refugees and for holding on to a sense of continuity and familiarity.



Figure 6.1. Adam's bed, picture by Adam

In Chapter 3 I considered that the making of place is the production of a kind of homeliness and belonging. It relates to feelings of safety, familiarity and intimacy. In the perpetual unsettledness of prolonged displacement homemaking practices are a dynamic process (Brun & Fábos, 2015). I argue that the virtual home-making practices (Doná, 2015) Iraqi refugees deploy within the domestic spaces play a crucial role in maintaining an 'absent presence' in Jordan. Since the Iraqi refugees experience prolonged uncertainty about one's place in the world and the future, home making practices are largely replaced to the virtual spaces. Different media and digital technologies enable the Iraqi refugees to hold on to a sense of security, to structure waiting, to negotiate the spatial limits of the home and to reach out beyond one's physical and restricted place. Virtual home-making practices are very much gendered, and differed across generations.

Satellite TV plays an important role in the everyday routine and in sustaining a sense of familiarity within the Iraqi refugee households. It enabled Iraqi refugees to hold on to similar or increased mediated practices as they have access to the same Iraqi-oriented and transnational TV-channels as they had back 'home'. In a similar fashion as in Myria Georgiou's (2006) work on members of the Cypriot Greek diaspora, the TV in Iraqi refugee households is almost always on. The TV is not turned off when guests are received or when conducting an interview. Several times, the TV was even switched on the moment we started the interview. In families with young children the TV seemed to serve as distraction and entertainment for the children so their parent(s) could focus on the interview. If there were no young children around, it seemed that the TV served as background music and provided information and input for conversations. This seems to resonate with the research conducted on American TV-watching practices by James Lull and cited by David Morley in his work on family TV: "To turn on the set when guests arrive is to introduce instant common ground. Strangers in the home may then indulge in television talk (Lull, 1980, p. 203, cited by Morley, 1986, p. 21)." The following segment shows how in Iraqi refugee households social and mediated encounters come to intersect:

Aram introduced me to Simon and Linda who will become my new housemates. The TV was on in the background showing how the Iraqi army is mobilizing against ISIS. I am not sure what channel it was. When I asked them about the channel, they look up and realize that my attention was drawn to the images and sounds of the TV. They apologized and told me they mostly watch it for the what they call the 'underlines', the news ticker, as it provides the latest updates on news in Iraq. Aram then became aware of the media content and asks in a rather rhetorical manner: "What kind of country is this? That states it is okay to kill?" Subsequently, when I saw broadcasted footage of the bodies of dead soldiers, my facial expressions makes Aram and Simon laugh. I am told that mediated violence like that is normal to them. Simon and Aram now start to discuss Islam, and whether Christians would be able to commit similar atrocities. Aram emphasises that not all Muslims are bad.

(Field notes, 10th of June 2015)

Interestingly the word 'sitting' in Arabic refers to hanging out, but is also the verb used to describe watching TV; often these two acts go together. 'Sitting' is a social act, as became clear to me when Simon at a later moment was reminiscing on his life in the village and how he and his friends were used to 'sit' together every night. He explained how he and

the other men would prepare salads so their wives could also 'sit' with each other. Sitting' or socialising takes place around the presence of the television, pointing us to the interplay between the symbolic and the material. It does not necessarily involve the consuming or interpreting the content as became evident in the described interaction between Simon, Linda, Aram and me. Sometimes mediated content is attentively watched and discussed, but it is just as often ignored. Much of it is about the atmosphere and the comfort of the sounds and movement in the background. They are only actively noticed when they go out of 'tune'. This became evident when the Iraqi news was followed by Quran recitals. Only after a few minutes Linda noticed the sound of the *adhan* coming from her TV speakers. She quickly reached for the remote control and changed the channel. Haphazardly coming across channels that are not in line with one's personal taste or convictions are deeply related to the satellite infrastructure that provide access to a wide array of possibilities (See Chapter 2).

Simon's mother, Mama Heba (# 41) used to have an outside job and a garden to keep in Iraq. She explained that coming to Jordan has drastically increased her TV-consumption. It was my observation that as soon as she would wake up, she would turn on the TV seemingly without giving attention to what is screened. Only during the cooking sessions of morning shows, her glance turned into the more concentrated gaze and she would turn up the sound. The distinction between watching TV with a 'glance', a 'gaze' and/or a wide variety of in-betweens comes from John Ellis' (1982, see also critique by Caldwell, 1995, p. 25-26) dualistic differentiation between the cinematic gaze and the televised glance. Ellis' (1982) understanding that TV watching is fundamentally different from viewing cinema builds upon the presumption that TV-viewing practices are by definition "inattentive". Not only can TV-viewing be (but are not necessarily) an intense attentive experience, but such an understanding also negates the social functions that mundane, inattentive TV-viewing practices have in and of itself. These are not necessarily less valuable than more attentive ways of observing screen content. The dualistic understanding of gaze/glance also negates that the functions of different media outputs have increasingly started to overlap as people are increasingly watching videos on Internet-connected devices while the TV is on in the background. Glancing can have particular social functions that might go beyond information-take or being entertained. Mama Heba's glance for instance serves a purpose, as her daughter-in-law Linda explains (#40): "*When she sees the television she feels rest*". Her mediated practices serve an affective purpose: of maintaining a sense of security and of

belonging. Um Haydar (#28) who is a widowed older woman and mother of three explains that her TV-practices are fairly similar to how they were in Iraq. She explains how TV makes her feel like someone is with her through the movement and sounds. Again the work of James Lull proves useful here as he describes how TV can be a companion during household chores and can give a more busy, perhaps cosy, atmosphere (Lull, 1980, p. 302 cited in Morley, 1986, p. 21). It also resonates with Myria Georgiou's (2012a, 2012b) finding that for migrant populations whose anxieties are deeply connected to experiences of insecurity and disrupted geographies satellite TV can provide ways for sustaining homeliness and a sense of familiarity and can provide a sense of structure in the everyday.

The TV is an important material and symbolic object: it provides the people with a sense of familiarity especially since they can access the same TV-channels as in their old homes. It provides them with the symbolic and physical presence of the homeland and has the potential of creating shared experiences despite physical distance and keeps them up to date of local news in areas where loved ones are still living. It creates a sense of company and serves as a daily reassurance that despite all the disruptions there is some continuity (Silverstone, 1993). What did change by coming to Jordan was the consistent and continuous provision of electricity in Jordan. Having access to electricity reminds Omar (#42) in fact that he was not at home: *"And the first month we found it weird because we were not familiar with it. And then we get used to it. And believe it or not, there was one time that the power shut down for an hour because of mechanical something happened. We felt relief. Because it felt like, coming back home"*. This further suggests that disruptions came become normalised and associated with a sense of being home.

Satellite TV can connect the Iraqi refugees with places they left behind and with a continuation of similar mediated practices, making what is now absent remotely present in the lives of the Iraqi refugees. These mediated connections to a certain extent enable the Iraqi refugees to bridge their time while maintain an 'absent presence' in Jordan. The atmospheric atmosphere of the TV fulfils the house with familiar sounds and images and provides a sense of belonging and continuity that tentatively but only temporarily can drive out the despair and uncertainty associated with their current lives in Jordan.

Ongoing uncertainty tends to provoke anxiety and stress, yet is simultaneously associated with boredom and monotony (Rotter, 2010). This also became clear in the earlier mentioned remark of Adam (#34) as he described his life as a waiting stop and mentioned the importance of his laptop. Like Adam, most of Iraqi men and women would emphasise their experiences of perpetual boredom and lack of prospects for the future. How waiting is experienced and mediated is however gendered and is deeply related to how life was prior to flight. For Iraqi women, life in Jordan is quite similar to how it was in Iraq: Ibtisam (#39), a young Iraqi mother, states: “*It is the same. Staying at home. And cleaning. And cooking. We are caught raising kids. This is the normal work for girls.*” Ibtisam (#39) is trained as a teacher, but couldn’t find a job in Iraq. Her sister Amal (#38) also states how her social relations were already deeply mediated. In Baghdad, she would only speak to her friends online, as meeting up physically had been too dangerous. Given the security situation, especially for Iraqi women who came from Baghdad an uncertain life in Jordan bears many resemblances to how life was in Iraq. For all women in this study the domestic and emotional labour continued to be as it was.

Iraqi men seemed to feel more ‘out of place’ within the confines of the homes than the Iraqi women did. The multi-layered experience of insecurity evoked the need for maintaining an ‘absent presence’ in Jordan and reinforced the need for staying at home, but for Iraqi men this went together with a deep discomfort. Omar and other Iraqi men recall life in Iraq as being outdoors: working and socializing. The general insecurity in Iraq as I explained in Chapter 2 was ‘solved’ by the use of mobile phones. Coming to Jordan often went hand in hand with being unemployed and being ‘stuck’ in the domestic space that is associated with femininity. Both components together reinforce the experience of perpetual boredom and feeling lost. This perception is deeply related to ideologies of masculinity. In Iraqi slang, jobless men are typically referred to as ‘pillow drivers’ or ‘gardens’, both implying a sense of laziness. The experience of not-working implied to them as a failure to provide for their family and undermined their sense of masculinity. This is not an uncommon experience among forced migrants. Different studies have shown that women tend to adapt themselves more flexibly to their situation and potentially empower themselves, men tend to react in a more defeatist manner (Indra, 1999; Kibreab, 2004; Matsuoka & Sorenson, 1999; McSpadden, 1999; Rajasignham-Senanayake, 2004). In

one of our frequent conversations, Abu Adam told me how he was worried for the future of his sons. Adam would have told him: we are not women, we need to work. This resonates with what Jennifer Hyndman and Wenona Giles' (2011) understanding of the "feminization of waiting", discussed in Chapter 3. In conditions of prolonged displacement, material limitations and legal uncertainty produces and reproduces refugee men and refugee women as passive, weak 'others'.

Mediated practices can play an important means to structure life, to obtain a sense of control, to structure one's life in waiting or just to overcome boredom. Waiting time can easily become void of meaning and there is no reason to wake up early in the morning. When I asked Enhar (#30), a 45 year old Sabean man, about his mediated practices he uttered his surprise that many other Iraqi refugees he knows "*keep browsing on Facebook for hours. Until 4 am, 5 am in the night [...]. I am surprised by what these people are doing. There is something more important to do*". Yet Enhar describes his life as "*Tea, cigarettes and sleep*." Enhar's headspace is occupied with ghosts. Many others are deeply involved in mediated practices. Like Enhar suggested I spent countless nights with Simon and Linda and with Kholoud and Abu Adam as they were all busy with browsing on Facebook, playing videogames, watching American films screened on MBC and talking to relatives and friends abroad. Omar (#42) altered his day-night rhythm, but for another reason: "*The problem is... when you wake up you see all the people going to somewhere, to some work. They have their lives and you just sit there, in the morning doing nothing. It makes your moral worse (...)*" He did not want to be reminded of not-working, again pointing us to the gendered experience of waiting. For most Iraqi men, their feelings of emasculation and boredom and the amount of time to spare has increased their media-use. The younger men emphasised that they have started to spend more time online since they came to Jordan. This includes Facebook-use, playing videogames and watching YouTube. The older Iraqi men would emphasise an increase in their TV-viewing practices. Abu Mahmoud (#5) aptly explained that upon arriving in Jordan, he had become the 'dictator', an Iraqi expression to describe the one in control of the remote control that aptly refers to Iraq's past: "*Believe me, in Baghdad before we were usually sharing between the family member so if anyone wanted to see something we watched it together, or we let them watch it. But since we came here in Amman, my main interest became to watch the news. What is going on...*"? Abu Mahmoud refers to news covering the situation in Iraq and international news that provides him with potential cues for his future. Abu Mahmoud would often spend the entire day comparing news-reporting. He would watch and compare the

reporting of *BBC Arabic* with that of *Al Arabiya*, *Al Hadath* and *Al Jazeera*. Other often mentioned news-channels or channels that provide news are *Al Baghdadia*, *Al-Sharqia*, *Al-Hurra* and *Al Iraqia*. In the next chapter I will further discuss the differences between these channels and what they signify. Like most other Iraqi refugees, Abu Mahmoud largely refrained from watching Jordanian news, further suggesting that maintaining an ‘absent presence’ in Jordan also is played out in their mediated practices.

The mediated behaviour of Abu Mahoud (#5) and that of other older men like the father of Nour (#35), Abu Maryam (#6) and Abu Ali (#17) are very much in line with the observation of David Morley (1986) that masculine and generational power can play a determining factor in what is viewed in the home. Many older men would spend at least a few hours a day watching Iraqi news, comparing what the different channels say. The news-binging practices of Iraqi men are often critiqued by the wives and adult and teenage children who are equally spending much of their time in the salon and who are tired of seeing warfare. Um Maryam (#6) told: “*Yesterday, I saw a beheading of this Iraqi unit and I felt like throwing up. Yes, the TV is always on the news.*” This contrasted with Abu Maryam’s account of the news-watching practices in their household: “*We watch the news, but not always, because it makes us sad or angry. We need some distraction. So watch classic movies, documentaries about nature... And we watch music clips.*” Both Um and Abu Maryam address about the affective responses the news evokes. Yet Um Maryam account speaks of a visceral reaction, but also of her experience of the news being always on. It seems that for her there is too much news in the home, whereas her husband feels that it is balanced by more entertaining media consumption.

The experiences of the Iraqi women and adult children are certainly not devoid of TV-viewing practices but the constant presence and position of the husband/father in the household – who would previously go out working – suggests that watching TV has become more of a negotiated process. However, just because there is time to spare, there is also space to negotiate who is watching what. Sports and satirical comedies were often viewed together. The women generally preferred to watch *moesalsalaat*. TV-programming follows a similar structuring like these drama series, meaning that shows are often screened every single day at a set time. If a person in the household started to follow a particular series it seemed that other members in the household tried to accommodate to this particular preference.

Um Mohammed, Abu Mohammed (#11) and Nadia (#27) would negotiate time and space around their TV-viewing practices, and as such also maintained an everyday structure. Um Mohammed explained their routine: “*In the morning he needs to see the news and then he watches National Geographic. But he should see the news in the morning.*” Her husband added: “*Only Iraqi news channels.*” In the evening when their daughter Nadia who worked informally would come home, roles are reversed as Abu Mohammed put it: “*The women choose. Because it is 2 to 1. We watch Arabic drama series. On CBC.*” David Morley (1986) showed that if women in the UK take over the money-earning activities in the household, there seems to be more flexibility towards their particular viewing preferences. This also seems to be the case in the household of Nadia and Abu Mohammed, especially since Abu Mohammed has time to spare. However, Nadia also used to have nightmares of the news potentially equally suggesting why her father keeps his news-watching practices for the morning.

Many young Iraqi men and women would prefer to watch American but also Arabic films and would often stay up till late at night, so they could watch without being disturbed by their parents or siblings. In line with Morley’s (1986) findings, however the women in the household were continuously active in emotional and domestic activities and therefore they had less time or focus at hand than the men in the household. Linda (#40), the 23-year old mother who I was sharing the house with, barely found the time to watch the drama series she liked as she was busy caring for her daughter and cleaning the house. Sometimes she would retreat into her bedroom and listen to church music on her smartphone.

For some people, TV-shows played an important role in structuring the everyday. Abu Miryam (#6) told me how he and his wife would actively maintain a routine, as he contrasted his family’s behaviour to the nightly mediated behaviour of other Iraqi refugees. Um and Abu Miryam structured their family’s routing around their TV-viewing practices: they would watch a morning show at 9 am and every night they would watch the news on the Iraqi channel *Al Sharqia*. Several other men told me that they make sure they are always watching *The 9th Studio* at 9 pm, a talk show that often discussed issues around corruption and sectarianism in Iraq. Like the British housewives in Dorothy Hobson’s (1980) study these TV shows would serve to structure what otherwise would seem to be a structure-less day.

Khaled (#18), like Abu Maryam, contrasted his own behaviour to that what he saw of other Iraqi refugees who in his opinion were wasting their time: *"If you spend your time learning something you are not losing your time"*. Khaled (#18) is an ambitious young Iraqi man: *"I always spend time on the Internet to learn something."* He and his friend Ahmed (#30) signed up for numerous e-courses, from car mechanics to speaking French. Online activities that could enable personal development were closely related with not being able to work and the limited options for social mobility in Jordan. The progress he and many other Iraqi refugees aspire for relate to imagined futures elsewhere. Many of the Iraqi refugees tried to learn English so fitting in to what they hoped to be their future country would become easier. They attended courses provided by NGOs, watched English-spoken television such as *The Simpsons* and used applications on their smartphones to learn language such as an application called *Mesmerize*. Samir (#26) practiced 4 hours a day, as he seemed to think that this would improve his chance for resettlement. One of the main issues however regarding learning in prolonged uncertainty is that you don't know what to prepare for. This uncertainty about how and where the future will be can result in not knowing what to learn in the present. Several young Iraqi men and women based their present actions upon the certainty that their future would not take place in Jordan and dropped out of school while being in Jordan. They believed that in the US or another western country a Jordanian certificate would not have any additional value.

Waiting time is a time that easily becomes void of meaning and structure. Especially Iraqi men report that their media-use has increased ever since they came to Jordan, as they are struggling with feelings of emasculation, perpetual boredom, uncertainty about the future and the amount of time to spare. For Iraqi women however life in Jordan is very similar to that in Iraq, as their domestic and emotional work continues and their lives in Iraq were already largely homebound. Mediated practices seemed to provide a sense of purpose. Older men reported an increased in news-viewing, whereas younger men mostly reported an increase in online mediated practices. Mediated practices also play an important role in trying to structure time and trying to obtain a sense of progress through learning particular skills the Iraqi refugees hope to be useful in the future. As such, these mediated practices play an important role in structuring and finding purpose while maintaining an 'absent presence' in Jordan.

Generational multiplication of space

Nadia (#25), the 28-year old researcher and daughter of Abu Mohammed, had great difficulties with her father's news viewing practices since the mediated portrayal of violence gives her nightmares and her father would accommodate his news-viewing practices around her time-schedule. Osman (#37) found his father's news viewing practices 'depressing' but he has the ability to go to his own private room. However, especially the homes in *Hashmi* are small and those who are not working informally spend most of their times indoors without the possibility to physically retreat. In the multi-layered experience of uncertainty and the need Iraqi refugees feel to maintain 'absent present' in Jordan, smartphones are especially for young adults crucial devices to opt out from their parents' TV-viewing practices and to carve out their time and their own personal spaces. Families would often 'sit' together while each individual was engaged in their own mediated practices. Smartphones and other devices that link up to the Internet enabled especially the younger Iraqi to separate oneself from the family.

Research has shown that among Syrian camp refugees in Turkey smartphones were part of a more collective-oriented media-ecology and were often shared because of the lack of financial means (Smets, 2017). Within Iraqi refugee households in Amman however smartphones are deeply personalised as most teenagers and adults had their own device. It seemed that just because of the perpetual boredom of living in Jordan that this device was important to make do with life in Jordan. They provide the ability to carve out individualised yet virtual private space within the domestic, restrictive confines of the home, and therefore to manage and maintain an 'absent presence' in Jordan. Smartphones become even more personalised through cases, stickers and the choices for downloading particular applications. Linda's (#40) favourite applications were Photoshop-applications that enabled her to make the most beautiful selfies. Zakaria (#30), a 21 year old Iraqi man, mentioned the following: "*I play Clash of Clans and BomBeach. And if you are on Clash of Clans, come to our group! We need some people.*" Playing online games such as the one's he mentioned gave him, Adam and several other young men that opportunity to meet and interact with people all over the world. Zakaria also used chat-applications to talk especially to young women but he mentioned: "*But most of all it is not about girls, because I am trying to get over time. By escaping. This is my escape path.*" Nour (#34), the 22-year old Christian woman from Basra, listened to music, reads poetry and talks via Facebook and WhatsApp with her friends who

are now dispersed over Jordan, Lebanon and Australia. As her dispersed friends have access to the same TV-channels through satellite technologies they often discuss recent developments in drama series such as *Toq el Banaat* and *Bab el Hara*.³⁹ Nour compared what she hears of her friends' and relatives' new life in Australia and what they post on Facebook to what she sees on TV. The interplay between different media technologies and their characteristics enabled her to maintain contact with dispersed friends. Maintaining contact with dispersed friends, and in the case of Zakaria establishing potential new friendships, is part of their multiple experience of space. The ability to reaching out beyond the physical confines of their home and beyond Jordan enabled them therefore to make do and hold on to Jordan as 'absent presence'.

Mediated behaviour is not only influenced by the amount of time people have to spare, available space and technologies and personal preferences. Social and cultural gendered, situated norms and experiences of insecurity also work out in online spaces. Kholoud's (#36) for instance relates her online behaviour to being in Jordan. Kholoud did not put a picture of herself on any of her online profiles. For her Facebook-profile she used a photograph of Abu Adam, her WhatsApp-profile showed a picture of an Arabic saying and her Viber-profile showed the picture of a flower. When I asked her the reason, she started talking about travelling to the US:

U: "If I travel, the first thing I will do when I get to the airport, I want to take the picture of the whole family and put it on the Facebook right now. And when I get to America I can take a picture of myself and put it on the Viber and the WhatsApp."

I: But why not here?

U: No. When I take a picture of myself and put it on the telephone it will make me more happy if it is a picture outside. Not here in Jordan.

Like many other Iraqi women who didn't put their pictures online, she was unclear about the reasons why. Yet it was clear that Kholoud considered that putting her pictures online as part of her imagined US-life and not of what she associated as restricted, unhappy life in Jordan. Nabila, (#7) the widow living in *Gardens* is a practicing Muslim, asked her friends and sister why they didn't put their pictures online as she herself didn't see any harm in doing so. She was told that some Iraqi men did not allow their wives, mothers or daughters to put their pictures online. Another interrelated reason was, according to Nabila, that "they

³⁹ See Chapter 2.3 and Chapter 7.1 on this particular TV-series.

are afraid from hackers, to take this picture". Nour's (#36) explanation is much in line with Nabila's findings: "I don't put my picture on Facebook. Someone might take my picture and use it. My brother warned me for this. So, I have a picture of Tuba (Büyükküstün, MT) this Turkish actress. With Viber I am not worried about this." Nour considers Viber as a more private communication tool with people she knows, whereas Facebook is public and therefore can easily be misused. Instead, she differentiates her Facebook-profile by selecting a picture of her favourite actress.

There was gendered and generational control involved in mediated practices (Costa, 2016). However, the main concern was not, as in UK homes, that family's boundaries would be transgressed and bring in violent or pornographic matter into the private spaces of children (Morley, 1999, p. 155) but more on controlling what other people could see, do (with pictures, data, etc) or say, rather than to the mediated practices youth would engage in. For instance, there did not seem to be parental control towards the young Iraqi men who would often admit they would browse for pornographic videos. Nour (#36) was also able to transgress particular cultural norms as to managing to maintain a romantic relationship with her neighbour. They would often message each other on WhatsApp while she was sitting in the salon next to her father who was watching the news. Media and communication technologies therefore make transgressions of social and cultural norms and the multiplication of space possible, but these practices also follow cultural- and context-specific lines.

Some of the older people were struggling with technological developments, but not because it would enable their children to cross particular social norms. This becomes clear in the following narrative of Abu Mahmoud (#5): "For me, FOR ME, it used to be better. Before, it was easier, simpler and happier. More fun. We were a family. We would sit together; my wife, Amal, Osman... I would tell some story, some talk... and my wife also, I am joking. You are joking. We are FAMILY. But now.... I am sorry... everybody (makes an inward downward looking gesture) this... Crazy! Everybody is crazy! When he is on his ubm phone." Abu Mahmoud's family is geographically dispersed. He has children living in the US, Romania and Iraq. However, Abu Mahmoud is talking about the lack of presence of his children Amal (#37) and Osman (#36) who were seated in the living room while this interview took place. Abu Mahmoud holds on to an idealised nostalgic sense of 'family' and ignores that in the pre-smartphone living room his family-members might have been equally bored, mentally

elsewhere or engaged with domestic and emotional labour. He considers being at home now less of an act of being together, as his children are more visibly than before engaged with people, places and ideas that are located somewhere else. They are present in the same physical place, yet they have created multiple spaces for themselves through the Internet and this might have effects on family relations (Madianou & Miller, 2011a). Being ‘always on’ (Madianou, 2016) and ‘connected’ might feel to others who are physically present as being disengaged. For others and on other occasions it might provide a necessary escape from the confined restrictions of the Iraqi refugee home.

In this section I have shown how gendered and generational differences play out in how experiences of prolonged displacement within the Iraqi refugee household. I have shown how especially the men are struggling with their lives being confined to domestic spaces, as they were used to work and spend life outdoors. In their temporary home in Jordan their mediated practices have significantly increased, also since virtual practices provide means to overcome their physical restrictions. The older men mostly report to have increased their news-watching practices as they continuously compare the different reporting of different channels. The patriarchal control of the remote control and ongoing images of televised warfare results in some tensions, but the availability of time to spare and of smartphones to carve out own virtual spaces provides some solution. Iraqi men, women and young adults are all deeply engaged in personalised digital practices, that enable escaping the constrictions of the home, Jordan and parental and gendered control. This multiplication of spaces and the ability to engage in transnational social relations are crucial for enduring the multi-layered experience of insecurity and an ‘absent presence’ in Jordan.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored how experiences of uncertainty among Iraqi refugees in Jordan are multi-layered. They are situated and mediated. Because of experiences of physical insecurity in Iraq and Jordan, but also material circumstances, legal uncertainty, (fear of) discriminatory practices by Jordanian people and worries for one's future in Jordan many Iraqi refugees hold on to what I have called a sense of 'absent presence' in Jordan. They largely refrain from interactions with its host population and stay within the confines of their temporary homes.

Satellite TV and Internet are integral parts of their everyday life. I considered how mediated messages and practices can further reinforce feeling 'out of place' but at the same time enable ways of circumventing and coping with uncertainty. Through their mediated practices the Iraqi refugees in Jordan might further separate and alienate themselves from the physical world they live in and maintain that as Iraqi refugees they are 'others', placing themselves almost outside of Jordan. Through their mediated practices Iraqi men and women are able them to hold on to homely and personalised feelings and to carve out a space of their own via their smartphones.

Virtual home-making practices also provide a sense of routine and familiarity through which they manage to overcome and cope with the boredom especially Iraqi men are struggling with. Through their mediated practices Iraqi men and women are able them to hold on to homely and personalised feelings and to carve out a space of their own via their smartphones. Digital technologies also play a central role for escaping from the restrictions of the family home and provide space to transgress. These spaces follow particular gendered and generational lines and are very much situated in the experience of waiting in Jordan.

Chapter 7 - Transnational media practices and their affective affordances

In the previous two chapters I considered how, among Iraqi refugees in Jordan, digital technologies have different functions for understanding and coping with one's experience of 'stuckness' (Hage, 2015) and (im)mobility. In this chapter I explore what *affects* these mediated practices bring about. The everyday experiences of uncertainty and waiting as deeply affective: it 'not yet' holds a promise as well as a threat whether or not it will materialize (Hage, 2009; Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). I understand affective affordances as the ability of media to bring across affects such as hope, but also of dread and despair. The Iraqi refugees in Jordan in this study are – at least temporarily and for an undefined time – restricted from travelling onwards, yet through the movement of sounds and images their bodies are in fact moved from one affective state to another as a result of transnational interactions (Wise & Velayutham, 2006). Generally, the affective atmospheres in Iraqi households are continuously balancing between hopefully looking forward and despairingly feeling stuck. This is the affective terrain that is deeply ambivalent.

Staying hopeful to some extent relates to remaining attached to Iraq and to a past in which life was better. The first section centres the attachments the Iraqi refugees in this study maintain to Iraq. This attachment is ambivalent, as connections to Iraq equally evoke emotions that relate to loss and grief. In the second section I consider the role of transnational intimate relationships, and how these leave behind impressions.

Transnational connections might be important to remaining actively involved in the lives of dispersed loved ones, but also equally have the ability to evoke negative emotions related to missing the presence of loved one and of a sense of stability. Among the Iraqi refugees in Jordan, seeing and hearing the lives of people elsewhere, free from waiting, equally reinforce one's sense of stuckness. In the third section I consider maintaining hopeful outlook in life relates to imagining futures elsewhere. Different media and digital technologies work as orientation devices, spurring the hope that in the future life will be different than the present. The last two segments in altered form are to be published as an

article in a Special Issue of Social Media + Society on Forced Migration and Digital Connectivity.

7.1 De/attachments to Iraq

In the previous chapter I considered how especially older men have increased their news-watching practices, but that to a certain extent these practices are a source of contestation in the Iraqi refugee household. This also relates to the emotions that seeing and hearing about violence in Iraq bring about. In this section I centre the attachments of Iraqi refugees to Iraq and the emotions these connections bring about.

Viewing Iraq from the outside

Abu Mahmoud (#5) is the older man who in Chapter 6 described how in Jordan he had become the *dictarori* over the remote control and was continuously comparing different news-accounts on Iraq. Abu Mahmoud had in fact a quite turbulent relationship with news-watching. *“I cry... I know it is so sad to watch it. Especially concerning my country. More than once I decided to stop. But then after one week, I have to watch again...”* Every time he turns away from televised images of Iraq, he is overwhelmed by loss yet every moment he turns towards Iraq he is overcome by sadness. Samir (#26) is a 28-year old man who used to work for the Iraqi government. Ever since he came to Jordan his Iraqi news-media consumption has increased. In Iraq, he only watched sport news. But in Jordan, he states: *“My eyes keep on following news. It’s like, every time. I can’t stop. Even with everything that happened to me. I want to be informed.”* Samir is convinced he will never return to Iraq because of the violence he has personally experienced but he is looking for explanations. *“I want to know what is going on in Iraq, in my city. And when I will have the chance to hear it is safe again. Even if it is not for me, but for the people I have been living with [...] I want to know who is behind it. How did this start. And how do the other countries, Arab countries and the US [...] react to what is going on in Iraq, are they interested or not?”* Samir generally looks at two news channels: Saudi state-owned *Al Arabiya* and Iraqi privately-owned *Al-Baghdadia*. He has also downloaded the applications of these channels on to his smartphones. These broadcasters he considered to that tell most of the truth in comparison to the other channels that he believed were more controlled by those who fund them. For many men and women in Samir’s age group televised Iraqi news plays a less important role in their lives. Instead they tend to use online applications and Facebook-pages of the news broadcasters and read what their friends and

relatives who are still in Iraq are posting. Popular broadcasters include the government-run *Al-Iraqia*, *Al-Baghdadia*, *Al-Sharqia* and to a somewhat lesser extent *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Hurre*, the broadcaster that was set up by the US army.

Attachments to Iraq serve multiple purposes and draw upon different emotional registers. Many Iraqi refugees still have loved ones in Iraq. If it is unsafe in the areas where these people are living, watching the news acquires an even deeper emotive layer. Muadh (#8), a Sunni 45-year old shopkeeper, was worried about the fate of his brother who has become internally displaced in Iraq. He feared that Baghdad's Shi'a population might take reprisals towards the Sunni internally displaced population in response to violence of ISIS. He follows Iraqi news channels like *Al-Baghdadia* and *Al-Sharqia*, but also obtains additional information via Facebook. He for instance talked of a video in which Shi'a people would have been *"cutting their necks. Family by family. I saw it on Facebook."* Facebook and its personal communication-tool Messenger is for Muadh and many others the most important way for checking up on the wellbeing of loved ones and friends, especially if they see on TV or online that something has happened in the region where they are living. Muadh explains: *"We send messages to our families when something happens close by... When an explosion happens close by. Like, in Baghdad, in Iraq in general, everyone is calling everyone. So if you call anyone they will tell you: this one is alright, your family is alright, brother is alright, our cousins are alright... Yah..."*

This also means that transnational news sometimes spreads faster than it does locally. When Warda (#10), a 54-year old single Sabeen woman, was still in Baghdad she received a phone call from her cousin in Sweden. He told her that her house had been destroyed: *"He told me: we heard that an explosion happened near the place where you live. And I told him: No, I haven't heard anything... When I came back I saw that my house was ruined."* Digital technologies as such are also potential messengers of destruction and death, and might therefore evoke negative feelings associated with violence and loss. Um Maryam (#6) found out via Viber that one of her relatives was killed in front of his shop on a midday. Enhar (#30) and older Iraqi man, doesn't like Facebook for this very reason: *"Every time I open Facebook I find myself in a tragedy. Of someone I know who has been killed"*. This 'tragedy' is reflected in his daily life: more than most other Iraqi refugees, he seems to spend his life in a sort of paralysis as he spends his time sleeping and smoking cigarettes and worrying about the future of his children.

Nabila (#7), the widow living in *Gardens*, expressed how she could no longer stand

watching the news. This not only relates to the mediated portrayal of ongoing violence. Her main reason is that different media channels push for different political and sectarian agendas and that she is tired of the political games that are played via broadcasting. She now solely relies on the information sent to her through WhatsApp- and Viber messages from her brothers and sisters in Baghdad. This points us to an important additional reason why Iraqi news is the source of contestation. As I already briefly addressed in chapter 2 the increased ethnic and sectarian conflict and segregation in Iraq is played out through Iraq's media-landscape as different channels hold different truth-claims.

Many of the Iraqi refugees hold the news-channels that emerged after the US-invasion in 2003 at least partly accountable for the sectarian violence that has erupted ever since. In this section I draw upon the interpretations of the Iraqi refugees themselves and what they have taken from the media as their narratives are ultimately mediated. I therefore start with a rather elaborate quote of Abu Mohammed (#11), a retired engineer from Baghdad and the father from Nadia (#25):

“When the Iraqi invasion or liberation or how you want to call it happened in 2003, we didn't have a government for a year and a half. But no one said that: you are Sunni, you are Shi'a, you are Christian. You are Kurdi. And you should be killed. You should leave. We were living in peace. But the channels, the TV channels they insisted on saying this thing that the Shi'a part of Iraq, the Sunni part of Iraq, the Kurdish part of Iraq... And they kept saying it for years, till the people believe it: this is not our area. Our area is a Sunni area. Or our area is a Shi'a area. Or a Kurdish area.”

Like Abu Mohammed, many of Iraqi refugees of all denominations (Sunni, Shi'a, Kurdish/Sunni, Christian and Sabeen) I spoke to actively blamed the national and transnational news-channels that mushroomed just after the 2003 invasion (see chapter 2.3) for the chaos and violence in their country. What has happened and what is happening in Iraq is often described, explained and interpreted by Iraqi refugees as a political game that is played out on Iraq's territory but equally so in Syria and Yemen. Usual suspects are generally Saudi Arabia (the dominant Sunni-country) and Iran (the dominant Shi'a force), the United States and Israel although Russia is an important outlier. Depending on where a channel comes from – and so what side it is supposed to be supporting – particular militias would be terrorists or freedom fighters and *vice versa*. In this section I purposely mention the sectarian background of the people on whose narratives I draw, to further explain that

regardless of one's background they were all deeply aware of the power of the media and their support for dominant ideologies.

There seemed to be unanimity among Iraqi refugees with all different backgrounds that *Al Jazeera*, a Qatari-based (and therefore considered to be a Sunni Muslim-oriented) TV-channel was untrustworthy. The channel would not only have broadcasted particularly violent videos but they would also have been the first channel that actively mentioned the sectarian background of the people perpetrating these violent acts. Ismail (#23) a young Sunni office worker from Baghdad, explained: “*So, Al Jazeera... for example, with this videos it is like lie: “I am someone called Omar. I am Sunni and I WILL KILL this one called Ali, because he is Shi’i. People in Iraq couldn’t imagine this [...] and after two hours, they put a similar video but the other ways around: “I am Heydar, I am Shi’a. I will kill Omar...”* Classifying people in Iraq based upon religion was only a recent phenomenon (Al-Ali, 2007) and according to Ismail and several other Iraqi refugees *Al Jazeera’s* reporting would have contributed to the panic and spread of violence. This is quite in line with what other academic literature has argued, although they leave out how this broadcasting feeds into everyday lives of people. Gunther and Dickinson (2013) suggested that in the Arab world *Al-Jazeera* was accused of sensationalism. Iskandar and Nawahy (2002) suggested that with its emphasis on showing different radical sides the broadcaster would have neglected more moderate voices that the people in this study could have associated themselves with.

The personal experiences of Omar, the Sunni engineer whose experiences and narrative played an important role in Chapter 5, are deeply entwined with *Al-Jazeera’s* broadcasting. In 2004, the news channel started to broadcast videos of Al Qaeda. One of these videos showed Omar and his colleagues being abducted. Subsequently he was released. Interestingly, Omar holds *Al-Jazeera* responsible for the spread of sectarian violence in Iraq as they gave Al Qaeda access to a platform and an audience to freely broadcast their videos and demands: “*They helped Al Qaeda to broadcast the fear inside anyone who is trying to cooperate with the Americans. Or others. Not just Americans.*” Although it goes beyond the scope of this project, dilemmas such as these are worth further exploration: what are indeed the moral and ethical implications and responsibilities of news agencies, especially in the heat of a violent conflict? Whereas Lillia Chouliaraki (2008, 2013) has discussed the media ethics regarding the portrayal of suffering towards western audiences, she does not consider how violent actors can use these portrayals to push for their own agendas. This also becomes

clear in ISIS' media strategy, earlier described in Chapter 2.3, as they purposely make their violent acts spectacular in order to evoke terror (Kraidy, 2017a; Kraidy, 2017b)

Another difficulty with *Al-Jazeera* was voiced by the Michael (#19), the (Christian) brother-in-law of Linda and Simon. He states that the channel “*puts fake news and they make everything so horrible.*” Khalil (#21) who is Shi'a, made a similar statement: “*Al Jazeera makes you think we are all going to hell. It exaggerates.*” These comments confused me as it seemed that the mediated portrayal I was was much in line with horrible experiences many of the Iraqi refugees has shared with me. Personally, I relied heavily on *Al-Jazeera English* for my news-intake and I started to wonder if I had been too naive. Khaled (#18) lived for large parts of his life in Syria and he only returned to Iraq in 2012 when the war in Syria broke out. He explained how what he saw contrasted to what he had seen on TV: “*Sometimes media shows that the people in Iraq hate each other. Do you know? But I didn't see that, in real life... [...] I think in Ramadan or in Eid there is... someone exploding himself. And the bridge. And the people there, from Sunni or Shi'a, they didn't say if he was Sunni or Shi'i. They just cleaned the area and... nothing else... But in the media they show like: they are hating themselves, they are always in a fight, they are always in a war, you know.*” Amidst the violence he saw people working and trying to obtain a sense of normality, something that is not newsworthy. As such it is not televised, and therefore the Iraqi refugees do not feel these stories are a ‘true(r)’ representation of life in Iraq.

The Iraqi refugees in this study are a very critical audience. They continuously double check how different competing and contesting TV-channels report on the same issue and never simply trust one particular representation. Being critical does not necessarily mean not being partisan, and religious beliefs or a sectarian background certainly play a role in which media channels are and are not trusted. Most often, I could tell what one's sectarian background was by hearing which Iraqi news-channels people were watching and this opened up interesting conversations without having to ask the question that most Iraqis dreaded: Are you Sunni or Shi'a? Sunni people would generally watch *Al Sharqia*, whereas Shi'a people would put more trust in government-owned *Al Iraqia*. Christian Iraqi would also often watch *Al Ishtar*. Sectartian backgrounds colour perspectives, yet most Iraqi refugees seem to at least try to look beyond simplified distinctions. Like the interviewed refugees in France in the study by Gillespie et al. (2016) the Iraqi refugees are astute Middle Eastern news consumers that read between the lines of the different news channels and make their own ‘jigsaw’ (Gillespie, 2006, p. 917) of truth. Hossan (#20) for instance stated

he just watched US-supported *Al-Hurre Iraq*. He explains: “*I have followed this channel for a period of time and I asked people in Baghdad and they told me the same news. Because of that I trust them.*” ‘Jigsawing’ what is going on in Iraq goes beyond televised news, partly in response to the distrust in televised news. In similar fashion to the information regarding resettlement and other means of travelling onwards (Chapter 5), news-consumption on Iraq occurred via ‘talking spaces’ (Gillespie, 2006). News is always double-checked, through newsfeeds on Facebook and via instant communication with friends and family-members who might personally experience what is happening or might have more informed sources.

As I have shown in this section maintaining attachments to Iraq is complicated as they tend to bring about negative emotions such as loss, anger and disbelief. Some people therefore try to let go of Iraq. As I earlier mentioned Abu Mahmoud had a turbulent relationship with watching Iraqi news. Just because it overwhelms him with sadness, he occasionally decides to stop watching Iraq’s warscape and tries to detach himself. The first months Omar was in Jordan, he was watching on repeat a particular show discussing local issues in Baghdad such as roadworks. But then he started slowly to detach himself: “*I feel that... I become not a part of that society. So, there is nothing going on there that will affect my life.*” As a result Omar stopped watching Iraqi news altogether. However, most Iraqi refugees in Jordan – the younger as well as the older – seem to have given up on a future for Iraq, yet actively try to balance an emotional closeness that is mediated and links to loss and memories to better times in Iraq. Whereas they seem to want to let go, the symbolic reputation of Iraq continues to be important and in fact provides some space for hope as becomes clear in the next section.

Holding on: Finding hope in parts of Iraq

Holding on to particular positive attachments to Iraq and the countries’ symbolic reputations seems to be related to having positive memories. Memories are embodied, sensorial and mediated (Keightley & Pickering, 2012). Ismail (#23) is a 33-year old program manager from Baghdad who got threatened by his own family. He recalled the smells of life in Baghdad: “*I miss the smell of Baghdad, I miss the... when we are cleaning the streets and it is so hot the water becomes like make ubm, you can smell something different. You can smell it in every place, especially in Baghdad as the weather is so hot and the street becomes so hot.*” These words of Ismail suggest a nostalgia, a deep longing and affection towards the past. What this makes a

more distant memory is that most of his friends are no longer in Iraq. His best friend was killed and many others have left. This makes present-day Iraq even more different than it is in his memories: *“Yes... for Iraqi people, it has become so hard to keep someone in your life. Because if you try to stay in Iraq, maybe he is killed, or maybe he is travelled”*. The unravelling of Iraq has made it impossible to maintain a sense of continuity. His biographical life (Brun, 2016)—a life that is grounded in a past and has an outlook to a logical continuation to the future - is ruptured. People who played a central role are no longer there and neither is he. Through mediated images and sounds Ismail was able to reground himself and obtain a sense of ontological security. Ismail’s favourite TV-channel is called *Al-Rasheed*. This Iraqi satellite channels shows old photographs and videos of Iraqi streets. *“I start watching. Ooh! It is this place! I remember. Wow.”* He explained how the songs are accompanied by old Arabic songs. *“Emotional songs about the country. Okay? About Baghdad, about Baghdad days in the past, okay? And it will become more beautiful. [...] It is with our soul, okay? It is so an emotional thing for some songs, and I am watching and sometimes I start crying and they are put these songs, not in this situation now. They are put this songs on pictures in the past. Baghdad from the past when Saddam Hussein was president.”* Even though he has given up on a future in Iraq and has broken with his family, he stated the following: *“I will still follow the news on Iraq. Whatever happened, whenever I was living, uhm, on the moon, okay? Or the sun. Haha. It is still my country.”*

We can find a similar hopeful nostalgia in the preference of several Iraqi women for pan-Arabic drama series. Nour (#35) preferred to watch series like *Bab el Hara*, a popular Syrian drama series situated in the mandate period of the French in the 1930s. She explains: *“You see a simple life, a sense of community, it is not like now”*. Amal (#38) who was also a fan: *“ALL people, they are together. For example: Muslims, Jews, Christian. All people, they don't care about religion. But they are caring. They are Syrian”*. Their own experience of sectarian divisions and violence towards religious minorities are refracted to the ability to hold on to an alternative, idealized representation of the past. Nour (#33), who as a Christian Iraqi was forced to leave her country, questioned how people are able to differentiate and be so violent. This broke something in her. She is well-read and stated: *“I read once: If you want to punish people, you have to smash their culture... We are not people of culture anymore.”* Through *Bab el Hara* she can retrieve parts of that culture that resonate with her. Loss also resonates in Um Yahya’s (#33) words: *“It is like a gift of Iraq life. There is something old and right and they stole it. We should hold on.”* These TV-viewing practices are not only past- or Iraq-oriented, as they enabled the women to make sense of what they miss in the present. Moreover, as her dispersed

friends watched the same TV-shows as Nour, it also actively shaped Nour's present and the possibility for maintaining a friendship in the future. Through drama series *Um Yahya* (#33) and Nour were able to recognize their loss, but also found ways to hold on to particular ideas that they also associate with Middle Eastern culture, such as community and care which might be significant in how they consider their future. In line with Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley's (2006) ideas, nostalgia can contain positive constructive engagements with the present and the future, as particular characteristics of the past can serve as background and basis for imagining potential futures.

Mediated images have the potential to bring back lost times and forgotten places. Mama Heba (#41), the older woman I was living with would often watch *Ishtar*, an Assyrian tv-channel named after an old Mesopotamian goddess. This channel often showed old footage of towns that resembles the town she has left behind and according to her son-in-law Michael (#19) has now turned into a ghost town. It also showed footage of Iraqi migrants abroad. Our different worlds came together as the TV-channel was showing how Sabean people in The Netherlands were free to uphold their religious practice. It was rooted in the past as it signified Iraq's rich cultural diversity: Sunni, Christian and Sabean Iraqis often emphasized how past-Iraq used to be a multi-religious welcoming society. This idea was also routed towards the future. It not only showed how people were able to maintaining beliefs and practices they wanted to take with them to the future. In their emphasis on this particular segment of their cultural background - the importance of religious freedoms - they seemed to argue that they would be a better 'fit' into present western societies as they imagined them to be than in current Middle-Eastern societies.

Abu Maisoun's (#4) feelings of loss were certainly less hopeful than the above mentioned narratives. His disillusion was directly rooted in the recent Middle Eastern history. What was a mediated dream of Arabic nationalism and unity has been shattered: *"I have seen speeches of kings, emphasizing that we in the Middle-East are one blood, one nation. But in reality, everyone hates each other. This speech of 'one blood' is a lie."* In his aim to try and find an explanation he draws upon Iraq's more distant history, while he also emphasizes the apathy he is feeling: *"For thousands of years, the country of Iraq was jinxed: all the kings of Babylon for the last 1000 years, have been killed. I don't care about anything. Sometimes I don't feel anything. I lost my country, I am a stranger."* Abu Maisoun attachments to Iraq seemed to be broken, and in the midst of Jordan's uncertainty he did not find something in return. He was 'betwixt and

between': physically not in Iraq, not belonging in Jordan and in fact hoping to belong in a western country.

Nostalgia is linked to experiences of loss, but is not just a sentimental, reactionary response from the present or the future. Its meanings are multiple, and can equally serve as imaginations for a better future (Pickering & Keightley, 2006). Especially among the younger Iraqi refugees the hope for futures elsewhere often went hand in hand with particular attachments to (segments of) Iraq and Iraqi-ness. The future might be imagined elsewhere as I will further explore later in this chapter. Yet they also held on to a sense of belonging that links them to Iraq. No longer bounded by an exclusive national Iraqi sense of belonging (and one can rightfully question whether they ever were) they attach themselves to some but not to other segments of 'Iraqi-ness'.

In this section I have closely explored how attachments to Iraq as a historical place and a place of personal histories are deeply mediated and bring about strong emotive responses. This further explains why some people feel they the need to actively detach themselves. Others look for means to balance the different emotional and affective needs they have, as they are no longer bound only by an exclusive national Iraqi sense of belonging. Some are more optimistic about the possibility of orienting themselves onwards and yet continue to attach themselves to Iraq as well. This sense of nostalgia is deeply mediated: TV-series and films can be important vehicles for imaginative travel, enabling people to go back in time when things were different to make the present bearable and to remain optimistic towards a future that might bear some resemblance to a perhaps idealized past. However, many of the Iraqi refugees have given up on a future in Iraq. In the upcoming sections I will further explore how and where these futures are imagined, how this is related to particular mediated imageries and to the impressions that transnational connections beyond Iraq bring about.

7.2 The impressions digital connections leave behind

Notions of where one belongs deeply relate to one's emotional attachments to a homeland but these go beyond Iraq as becomes clear in the upcoming two sections. In this section I consider how transnational communications with close family members and more distant friends bring about particular affects. I briefly considered dispersed connections in the last

chapter. In this chapter I further explore how virtual intimacy plays out in the Iraqi refugee household and how through digital technologies dispersed families can be together despite the physical distance. In addition, seeing and hearing about the lives of friends and relatives (who once were refugees like them) feeds back into the experience of ‘stuckedness’ in Jordan.

Digital Technologies and virtual intimacy

Kholoud’s daughter Samar was given priority by the US government for resettlement as Samar’s child was diagnosed with a severe illness and is now living in the US. Adam, Kholoud’s eldest son, emphasizes how Samar is still the “*happiness in his family*”. He bought his mother a new smartphone so she can maintain an active role in the lives of her daughter and granddaughter despite the physical distance. Their granddaughter is often hospitalised and especially during these occasions Kholoud and her husband reversed much of their day/night rhythm to accommodate the time differences between Jordan and the US. They would talk for hours with their daughter through Voice-over-IP-applications like Skype, Facebook or Viber. These applications are used interchangeably as the conversations’ quality depends on the Internet connection. The affordances of multimediality and simultaneity – the ability to see and talk to each other at the same time despite distance – enable Samar’s digital presence within the household.

The emotions associated with Samar’s mediated presence, in conjunction with her physical absence, resonate with other research on transnational relationships (Baldassar et al., 2016; Leurs, 2014; Madianou & Miller, 2011a) The concept of polymedia by Madianou and Miller (2011) enables me to further understand how different media (plat)forms are used and appropriated in relation to other available digital technologies. The decisions for particular media forms at different times and for different reason people can actively (re)shape their relationships despite geographical distance. Samar often sends video clips to her mother’s Viber account. These provide Kholoud with the means to build up a digital archive and to acquire a sense of a shared history and memories. Kholoud also often shares electronic postcards, jokes, recipes and dietary advice to more distant family members and friends, hence navigating different kinds of digital closeness. The layering of different technologies provide different potentials of use. The emergence of smartphones and laptops as devices that have integrated different functions and are ‘always on’ (Madianou,

2016). They provide different scales of maintaining digital intimacy. The mediation of hope and despair are not new, but what is new is the ubiquity of digital technologies and immediacy of potential contact with people living elsewhere. Their pervasiveness generates new intensities.

Transnational digital communications are obviously not limited to maintaining contact with loved ones back in Iraq or in western countries. As I stated in Chapter 5, upon leaving Iraq most Iraqi refugees had compared the experiences of relatives and friends in different countries in the Middle-Eastern region. There was always the doubts as to whether one of the other countries would have been a better option for transit, and they would continuously compared their situation via *Facebook*, *WhatsApp* and *Viber* to that of friends who had chosen different journeys. Many of the Iraqi Christians expressed their regrets about not having gone to Lebanon as it seemed that the friends who had gone there had better lives, also since there is a larger Christian population.

An important reason for having access to different applications with similar functions is that friends and family members have become dispersed across the globe and across different social media platforms are more popular in different geographical locations. Nadia (#25), a 28-year old researcher from Baghdad explains: *"It depends on what they have. [...] my auntie, in the Emirates, she doesn't have Viber or WhatsApp... in Baghdad Line, but here in Jordan: WhatsApp. And in America: WhatsApp...."* Some Iraqi refugees have elderly relatives who are not able to use the Internet. The friends of Abu Raheem (#13) who are still in Baghdad go and see his parents so they can talk over *Viber*. His wife's parents who are also still in Iraq call his parents via their landline after which they tell him how they are doing. As such most Iraqi refugees are creative in finding ways to connect and to uphold intensive contact with close family members, and modern digital technologies prove to be quite useful for that purpose.

It is important to situate digital connectivity in the precarious context many forced and other migrants find themselves. In the first section of this chapter I explored the worries of those Iraqi refugees who still have family members in Iraq. Internet connections are not always good in Iraq. Abu Mahmoud therefore tries different application to call his two eldest children who are still in Iraq: *"Depending on the connection... we use Viber, or Tango or Facebook messenger to call the people inside Iraq."* Particular messages might also put loved ones

in danger. Aram (#14), one of the three Iraqi Christian men in this study whose village was raided by ISIS, tells me he self-censors his messages, just because he is afraid about the potential consequences for his family in Iraqi Kurdistan: *"I know too much thing about Kurdish. And... What they want. But on Facebook I don't share everything. Because it is my family..."* Whereas Aram also has many good personal memories of living in Iraq, as he fondly told me about his past life in the village, it seemed that his own traumatic experiences are amplified by historical events in which he himself did not play an active part. The experiences of violence his great-grandfather endured and subsequently his warnings for 'Kurds' have been orally passed on from generation upon generations and have obtained a new meaning and resonance through his own personal experiences and feed into his fear for a future in the entire Middle Eastern region. The earlier mentioned nostalgia towards Iraq's historical multi-religiosity contrasted but went together with narrated memories of earlier persecutions – especially being retold by the Iraqi Christians. These play a central role in their idea that the future of the Iraqi Christians in Iraq will never be safe and that building up a new life in Iraq in particular and more generally, in the Middle Eastern region will be futile. Aram's anxieties about his future as a Christian in Jordan were actually reinforced by the worries of relatives who have travelled onwards and who seemed to base their understanding of what is happening in Jordan and the rest of the Middle Eastern region upon mediatized images of the region: *"They call us from like, USA or anywhere: "Take care!"* Aram explained that he knows that at the moment he is safe in Jordan, but is doubtful about what the future will bring.

Finally, like for many forced and other migrants, virtual intimacy is for the Iraqi refugees in Jordan often the only means to uphold relationships as their abilities to physically travel are heavily restricted. Social interactions can only take place digitally (Opas & McMurray, 2015) Transnational communication might bring about positive feelings and can be considered as coping mechanisms for offline material hardships, but what are the more lasting impressions of these digital connections? The feelings brought about by transnational connections are far from always pleasant. Technological co-presence has the potential to increase the sense of longing to be physically together (Baldassar, 2016) and during hardships, physical distance can become all too real. This became evident in the experience of Kholoud. I often caught her watching videos of her granddaughter while she was beating herself on her chest: a gesture suggesting the pain she feels for being physically separated, her worries and the frustration for not being there to support her daughter with

the care of her sick child. For Kholoud, virtual intimacy did not and cannot replace the longing for physical intimacy or her dream to live close to her daughter again. The digital ever-presence of loved ones leaves behind impressions, altering one's everyday experiences in displacement. Distance hurts as becomes clear in Adam's comment on a televised commercial, depicting a heteronormative romanticized Arabic family: *"We used to be like that... all together. Now, all we have is Viber"*. Contact over the smartphone is only a pale substitute for how life used to be, while romanticised representations on TV reminded Adam of what has been lost.

Aside from watching news on Iraq, Abu Mahmoud (#5) also followed the news on refugee-issues worldwide, since he is looking for *"...a new home. I lost my country and that is why I started to look for another one"*. He feels he has lost Iraq and is continuously reminded of this through his news-watching, yet also feels lost in Jordan and as such there is the need to move onwards. In his state of in-between-ness Abu Mahmoud reaches out to the possibility of finding a new place he can call home. In the summer of 2015, he was hopeful about the news that Germany would be welcoming refugees, but being re-united with his son Mahmoud in the US had his preference. Most other Iraqi refugees locate their imaginings of their future homes close to where relatives are. This preference goes beyond convenience. Conceptions of home are always imagined as idealised sites of continuity and familiarity. Being able to map out a future in a safe place together with one's loved ones would to a certain extent restore this home. Jordan however is a place of discontinuity and uncertainty and this experience seems to amplify how homes are re-imagined elsewhere. The home-making practices – largely taking place through the virtual – in Jordan are temporarily providing a sense of comfort and 'home' that reinforce the need for hopefully looking forward.

Refractions through the lives of mediated others

Transnational connections are important to remain actively involved in the lives of family members and friends and to establish a sense of 'being there'. These interactions also bring about other social effects. Seeing and hearing about lives lived elsewhere of 'similar others' – who were refugees like them - plays a crucial role in how living in Jordan is experienced as 'being stuck'. This experience is two-fold: first, it is reinforced by lack of connection because of the busy-ness of people elsewhere and second, by seeing and hearing about

these busy lives lived elsewhere. The busy-ness of distant friends and family members has the potential to reinforce the notion that time is wasted by waiting. Whereas most people tend to maintain regular affectionate contact with close relatives, many people mention it is more difficult to connect to friends as becomes clear in the experiences of Abu Raheem (#13) a young father of two. Abu Raheem is exhausted by waiting and searching for ways to get out of Jordan and frustrated by waiting for his friends to pick up the phone. *“They tell me: we were busy, we were working, and we couldn’t pick up the phone. So I told them: whenever you call me, I won’t call anymore. Because you know I am not working. I always have time. And it is tiring”*. Maintaining a hopeful attitude whilst ‘waiting’ – and not being allowed to work – is hard work. His own experiences of uncertainty are contrasted to those of friends and relatives who have made it elsewhere and who are busy with rebuilding their homes. Their opportunities reinforce his despair.

Adam (#34), Kholoud’s son, also underscores his own lack of mobility through seeing and hearing the actual material mobility of distanced friends and family members: first by airplane, now by cars and bicycles. He often showed me pictures of the cars his US-based friends would have bought, sent to him via Viber. But it became even more evident when he reflected upon these pictures:

“of a lot of good things that I just want to do. [...] that he is uhm riding a bicycle, he is climbing a mountain, going to a pool [...]. But here, you can't move an inch without money... It is making me sad but I don't appear it, because he was like me but he got the chance to travel, so...”

Adam compares the western active lives his friends are living with his own lack of opportunities in Jordan, and it hurts even more since his friends were once in a similar situation to him. His words and experiences are however not only linked to his legal situation, but also to the lack of financial capital: if he had money, he could ‘move’ either physically away from or socially within Jordan.

The experience of immobility not only relates to the lack of physical mobility, but also refers to lacking opportunities for social mobility within Jordan. As these two examples show the hope for outwards and upward movement are deeply related. To some extent their narratives can be considered as examples of mobility-envy (Hage, 2015, p. 5). In his work on white racism, Hage defines mobility-envy as the feelings of resentment towards other people (in his case immigrants) who would be moving faster in life bring about envious feelings. As the Iraqis refugees in Jordan feel that they are ‘stuck’ and not moving,

seeing and hearing the stories of people who have migrated and are now moving ahead in life. However, it seemed to me that the feelings of for instance Adam were not so much signs of resentment oriented to his friends who at the time of research have had better chances in life than him. Instead it seemed to reinforce how bad he felt about himself. Within the broader contexts of advanced global capitalism bodies are oriented in particular individualising ways: towards the possibility for upwards social mobility, but also emphasizing one's own lack of mobility as personal failure. Meanwhile those who have migrated onwards might feel the social pressure to prove that their new life is indeed successful (Tuckett, 2016) and this might be played out and perhaps exacerbated via social media platforms. Whereas I do not have any proof whether this is exaggerated or not, Adam often showed me pictures of cars his friends would have bought.

Experiences of (im)mobility and – as I will show in the next section – imaginations of the future are interpreted and negotiated through one's situational, gendered as well as generational context. Like migration, adolescence connotes a journey (Grabska, 2016). It is a temporal context-specific stage of becoming. Many of the younger unmarried male and female Iraqi refugees felt their opportunities for coming-of-age-mobility (such as getting married) in Jordan were also restricted, because of uncertainty about where the future would be. Adam for instance stated that he would *“love to have a relationship with a girl [...] but as a refugee, I can't.”* For Adam this seems much related to his lack of financial security (see Chapter 6.2) as he explained how he in a previous romantic relationship he did not have the financial means of taking care of his ex-girlfriend, something that in Iraqi socio-cultural norms is expected from men. Many parents equally voiced their concerns about the future of their children. Naima (#27) and her family have been waiting for US resettlement for more than 6 years. One of the most difficult things for her was that she felt her grown-up daughters were putting their life on hold until they would travel to the United States: *“They were all thinking all the time of America, they know the culture, the system, the society, the system of employment, the history. They also prefer to watch American TV. They especially were crazy about Friends.”* As a result Naima's daughters were reluctant of getting married while still in Jordan, much to the concern of their mother.

Not knowing where one belongs and if one will ever belong again is overwhelming and can wear people out. This is especially, but not only, the case for those Iraqi refugees who have personal experiences of violence in Iraq, who are poor or have become impoverished in

‘waiting’ for years and/or don’t have supportive transnational networks. Abeer and Muadh (#8), an Iraqi couple in their late forties, asked a relative for help as they are struggling financially: *“My cousin in the UK said: you have to suffer so, when you come here, you know how much you suffered and you start working...”* The precariousness they endure seems to be portrayed as a rite de passage, a liminal state one needs to endure before being allowed to enter a western country, but in contrast to anthropological studies on liminality, there is no guarantee for an exit out of waiting.

Seeing and hearing about the mobility of others brought about ambivalent affects: the idea that mobility is possible fulfilled the Iraqi refugees with hope as it shows that hoping for future elsewhere is not necessarily unrealistic. How this imagined future looks like will be further explored in the next section. The mobility of the few - Iraqi refugees like them who have found legally or illegalised ways out, sometimes after years of waiting - reinforced the need to hold on to the idea that life in Jordan is transitory. Seeing and hearing lives elsewhere however equally reinforced the experience that it has not happened yet to the Iraqi refugees in Jordan and the fear that it might never happen. It is a double-edged mediated experience.

7.3 Digital technologies as orientation devices: imagining futures elsewhere

In the Iraqi households in Jordan the atmospheric atmospheres are balancing between ‘stuckedness’ and the need for hopefully looking forward. Being considered ‘out of place’ further pushes the Iraqi refugees to orient themselves, beyond the virtual, towards other physical places where futures are deemed possible. The virtual can be used to conceive of these other physical places. Appadurai (1996) presumed that through the digital interconnectness and the imagination, would result in a world less bounded by borders as through global cultural circulation would enable people to contest inequalities. Digital interconnectedness might increase one’s awareness of the world’s inequalities, but it does not give the people power to change them. The imagination does however enable Iraqi refugees in Jordan to hold on to their optimism. Optimism, Berlant argues, is “a social relation involving attachments that organize the present” (2011, p. 14). It is the complexity of being bound to life. This optimism is mediated. Riem (#2), a 26-year old economist, emphasized how she was looking forward to starting her life anew and told me: *“I still have the American dream. I have to. I want to be a nurse because I love Grey’s Anatomy”*. Riem was aware

of the difficulties her sister was experiencing in the US, yet these only seemed to register partially against her hopes and imagination. Regular digital connections with relatives and friends in western countries might have increased the awareness that life in the US societies is nothing like what is seen on TV or on the Internet, but this does not necessarily stop the dream of imagining better futures elsewhere. Instead, as was the case among would-be migrants in Guinea (Vigh, 2009) it seems that the intimate digital presence of faraway relatives and friends makes imagining living elsewhere a more realistic option instead of a faraway dream and strengthens the dream of being together again.

In Jordan, this also results in the continuous comparisons of different experiences of friends and family members in different western countries to find out what is potentially the best country is to start anew and discuss this with the other Iraqis in Jordan. Many, but certainly not all, expressed their preference for going to the United States. Samir (#26) states: *“Every day I ask one of my friends, about the best one... They all say America.”* Comparisons are informed by what is seen on TV, but also by the personal experiences of friends and relatives who are already living there, by personal preferences, personal circumstances and hopes for the future. Michael (#19), the brother-in-law of Linda and Simon, had Iraqi friends who are now living in the US and Canada. He came to the conclusion that for him *“Canada is the country of opportunities.”* Through the experiences of his friends he believes that the Canadian government will provide him with funding to learn English and to study. Michael has a degree in psychology and states that *“in America, your only chance is to go to the market and sell vegetables.”* Adam’s (#34) preference was to go to an English speaking country and to the US in particular. He was already fluent in English and learning a new language would take years. *“I am 21 years old! I have done nothing in my life! I didn’t even go to college.”* To me Adam was *only* 21 years old, but Adam himself felt he had lost 9 years of his life waiting and believed he had no more time to waste.

My initial response to the hope many Iraqi refugees expressed to travel to the US was one of surprise because of the destructive role that the country has played in Iraq’s upheaval. Abu Mahmoud (#5) explained: *“We have a saying in Iraq. It means: treat the disease with the cause. So the cause is the States and the cure is the States.”* The American neo-colonial entanglements make it more likely for the Iraqi refugees to turn and orient themselves towards the US, because it is held accountable for the situation they find themselves in. The plight of Iraqi refugees relates not only to the postcolonial remnants of the British empire and US-led

neo-colonial destruction (Dewachi, 2017) but also to the containment strategies of western countries (Berman, 2011) that make them fully aware of the limited opportunities for travelling onwards. Adam had his preferences but equally stated that he knew the ultimate choice was not up to him: *“As an experienced refugee... I would just go anywhere because I am looking for my rights.”*

Meanwhile, the Iraqi refugees in Jordan are affected by the logic of capitalism or by the American-dominated media-landscape. Riem’s (#2) American dream was for instance directly inspired by *Grey’s anatomy*, whereas Ismail (#23) found hope in the blockbuster *Titanic*: *“In the US, life is not easy. But when you have a dream as lot of society will support you to make your dreams come true”*. Adam (#34) preferred the US over any other English-speaking country and this equally relates to the time-pressure he seemed to feel: *“In Australia, if you want to work, you can’t study and if you study, you can’t work. But in America you can do both. And that is good for me, because if I go there, being 21 years old, I want to buy a car!”* The ability to buy property (houses and cars) is an important marker for knowing whether a fellow Iraqi is truly successful abroad. It is a sign of progress or perhaps a return to a sense of normality as most Iraqi refugees used to own their own house and a car. Owning a car is also a signifier of freedom and mobility. Many of the Iraqi women were also dreaming of driving a car, and Riem (#2) showed me a recorded video of her sister in the US driving a car while listening to Arabic music.

This was not an uncritical endorsement of what life in the west would be like. Several people I spoke to expressed concerns, about different sexual morals, alcohol consumption and maintaining their religious practices while emphasizing the wish for a freedom they associated with western countries and one they missed in Iraq and Jordan. The idea that western women would have loser sexual morals is common among most Iraqi men and women. Adam does know that the reality might be somewhat different, as his cousin told him that unlike what is shown in the films, American girls hardly ever wear mini-skirts. Omar (#42), who is a conservative Muslim, expressed his concerns about life in the west. He admits that he is quite anxious to travel. Will he be able to hold on to his beliefs? And will he have to “humiliate himself” as he put it, by doing unskilled work? Omar is also concerned about the future of his two young daughters. He wonders if they leave to a western country they will start to consider him as old-fashioned. But he also knows that, as he stated in one of our many informal conversations that regardless of where they go, he

cannot keep his daughters away from romance and love, as he has seen that ‘even’ in Iraq women now use Facebook to find men. Changes in policies in western countries, regarding migration but also regarding other matters, were discussed online in great detail and could potentially influence where one imagined the future. For example, the recognition of same-sex marriage in the US made some Iraqi refugees doubtful about their dreams for going to the US. The uncertainty of the future not being set in stone also meant that the Iraqi refugees had some potentials to change their orientations and preferences.

Both Linda (#40) and Nour (#35), young Christian Iraqi women, stated that in the towns they respectively came from, the future for young women was difficult and that marriage was the only ways to obtain some comfort. Linda explained: *“So all girls think that marriage is better. There is nothing else to do. I think that... in Holland, things like relationships, sex, and these things are accepted. But in our town it is not.”* Nour and Linda are both excited about the prospect of going to a western country as they imagine there will be more space for them as young women. Nour explained that most of her female friends are now married, just sitting in their homes. She wants to be different: *“In the community there needs to be some space for me. I am part of this society.”* Nour is planning to continue her studies after she and her family have been resettled. In Iraq, going to university is a quite common practice for young women, and it is quite common to only get married after finishing your studies. This resonated in how my presence was read in the Iraqi refugee community: being a (mature) student was a valid reason for me not being (yet) married. After her studies, in Australia or the US, Nour expressed she would *“need to be a housewife”*. Her choice of words imply that is what is expected from her but what she also expects from herself: to take care of her children and her husband-to-be.

Osman (#37) explained how he imagined life in the US: *“Living a good life. Maybe for some time I would go partying, to cafes, mixing with people in general. I am considering this. I will be part of the society, but to a certain degree”*. He envisions a balanced life, enjoying western freedoms and rights while holding on to his religious practices and sense of self. Moreover, he imagined himself actively partaking in American society. As such it contrasts with the ‘absent presence’ cultivated around being in Jordan and the active refraining of becoming involved in Jordan’s society as explored in Chapter 6. In the US, Osman would be able to be a citizen, whereas in Jordan he is a right-optional guest. His use of the word ‘good life’ again resonates with Berlant (2011) even though her work is situated in late modern societies in

the Global North. She argues that that attachments to the ‘good life’ and social upward mobility can make difficult lives bearable. Fantasies of the ‘good life’, Berlant (p. 15) argues, are deeply related to actual experiences of precarity and crisis as well as to cultural production. When there are no promises for material betterment in the present, there is the need to hold on to the idea that future life is and will be meaningful.

The lives of many people worldwide are constrained by deeply rooted structures of global inequalities and considered through the mirror image of potential lives elsewhere. Koen Leurs (2016) questions what the lasting effects are of the transnational affects that digital devices bring about. He argues that Somalian migrants in Ethiopia refrain from altering the very position they are in, just because of the fantasies transnational connections bring about: “In articulating their daily routines, it seems their subjectivity is completely future oriented. They feel stuck, their life is at a standstill, and they live in total dependency of loved ones and strangers abroad... (p. 28)” In contrast to the Palestinian diaspora who managed to build up online communities despite physical dispersal (Aouragh, 2011), it seems that – like the Somalian migrants in Leurs’ study (2016)- among Iraqi refugees in Jordan future imaginaries based upon transnational connections and mass-media restrict the possibility to establish more collective struggles to improve their rights within Jordan. In Chapter 5 I described how Iraqi refugees organised a demonstration, but the reasons for organising this were related to demands for communication and resettlement, not for improving legal conditions in Jordan. Leurs’ notion of ‘total dependency’ however negates that waiting is a deeply active and affective experiences. It is a tiring, but not passive, process of constantly trying to stay hopeful and orienting oneself to lives elsewhere. Many Iraqi refugees act. Not only is there the ongoing search for ways out of Jordan – by interpreting the news, navigating the Internet for alternative ways to travel, by visiting the different embassies and by organising protests at UNHCR to demand a solution as described in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6 I have shown how the hope for a future elsewhere also propels many Iraqi refugees to spend their ‘waiting’ time in ways that could be useful for the aspired future elsewhere: many Iraqi refugees are, for instance, motivated to already learn English or to acquire practical skills through Internet tutorials. Dreams of a better life elsewhere can be an act of not giving into the environment and instead to continue to negotiate for better lives (Ahmed, 2006, p. 18). Media and digital technologies thus serve as orientation devices that enable forced migrants to dream and direct their hopes and

attention to places elsewhere in order to make life in Jordan bearable.

7.4. Conclusion

The ubiquity of transnational images and communication influences the everyday experiences of Iraqi refugees who are living in waiting. Though their affective affordances and their pervasiveness, digital connections spur emotions and leave behind impressions. In the first section of this chapter I considered attachments and detachments to Iraq. Images of Iraq's warscape can bring about feelings of loss and despair for the future of Iraq. Mediated attachments towards the past and to Iraq also can also spur a hopeful sense of nostalgia, of holding on to particular meaningful elements of the past that keeps people going in the present and that signify aspirations for the future.

I then considered what impressions transnational digital connections make: they provide ways of 'being together' but also reinforce a longing to be physically together and for having a stable home. Temporal experiences of the everyday and of movements in life are also read through the mediated mobility of similar others, who did get the opportunity to travel. These connections potentially reinforce feelings of 'stuckness'. It seems that rather than reinforcing disillusion, this seemed to enforce determination as the mediated connections show that waiting can be meaningful and that futures elsewhere are achievable.

In the last section I explored how transnational connections and images feed into one's imagination of futures elsewhere. In Chapter 3, I stated that anthropologist Ghassan Hage (2015, p. 2) differentiates between waiting that implies hope whereas being stuck would imply a paralysis of the imagination. I argued the opposite: in 'stuckness' the imagination plays a crucial role for holding on to the idea that life is meaningful and for making life bearable. Holding on to one's imagination can be understood as an act of not giving in to structural constraints.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

This PhD thesis considered how everyday experiences of living in prolonged displacement in the Global South are mediated. I conducted ethnography among a specific forced migrant population, who are living in prolonged displacement in the Global South: members of Iraqi refugee households in Jordan. The research questions which I aimed to answer in this thesis were the following:

- How is the everyday situated experience of living in prolonged displacement among Iraqi refugee households in Jordan mediated?
- How do the socio-historical contextual and localized circumstances of living in prolonged legal and social uncertainty in Jordan feed into the mediated practices and interpretations of media content of Iraqi refugees?
- How do mediated practices interact with and potentially reconfigure situated experiences of living in prolonged displacement among Iraqi refugee households in Jordan? What social and subjective functions do media have in the lives of Iraqi refugee households in Jordan who find themselves in prolonged uncertainty?

Throughout this research I found that precisely because of the precariousness of their legal and social context Iraqi refugees in Jordan find themselves in, particular mediated affordances are crucial in the lives of Iraqi refugees in Jordan. There has been valuable research on the intersections of migration and mediation. But so far, limited attention has been given to the mediation of forced migration, let alone to the mediated experiences of forced migrants living in prolonged legal and social uncertainty in the Global South. I argue that forced migrants are digitally connected migrants. Migrants have always been involved in maintaining mediated connections through cultural objects, language and religion (Karim, 2003). Technological developments, however, have made it easier for migrants to maintain active attachments to places and people elsewhere and have made it possible to see what happens in other places in the world. The ubiquity and pervasiveness of technology might have also have provided additional (virtual) spaces for place-making and sense-making processes that were previously dormant (Miller & Slater, 2000)) and/or invisible, at least to academic attention.

Through empirical examples I have provided an interpretative understanding of how media

use and digital technologies can play out in the experiences and sense-making processes of Iraqi refugees living in prolonged uncertainty in Jordan. The legal and social constraints the Iraqi refugees in this study have experienced are actively reinforced by particular mediated practices and readings. Mediated connections enabled the people in this study to hold on to people, places and hope, and to challenge how one is positioned, but this is equally influenced by how life in Jordan was perceived as transit.

Not all forced migrants have equal access to digital technologies, but it is safe to say that digital connectivity has at least to some extent become embedded in the everyday experiences and sense-making processes of all conflict-affected people who have become displaced. Iraqi refugees who made their way to Jordan were overwhelmingly middle-class and highly educated. This suggests that Iraqi urban refugees might have more prior knowledge and easier access to ICTs than many other forced migrant populations who find themselves in prolonged displacement. But there were also many Iraqi refugees who were struggling financially who nonetheless prioritised the little money they had for the purchase of Internet-data. Moreover, older Iraqi men and women purchased a smartphone only upon arrival in Jordan. This suggests that especially in uncertainty and conflict, the need for (adequate) information on what is going on back home, communication with dispersed loved ones, and knowledge regarding ways to navigate within and perhaps beyond that new country, are crucial.

The functions of these mediated practices go beyond the practical and instrumental use of digital technologies alone. Mediated technologies are not mere devices to be used and mediated messages are not just to be consumed. They act upon the world. The different affordances – the potentials for action - of media and digital technologies play important social and subjective functions in the everyday experience of prolonged displacement and insecurity. I have been attentive to the ways in which these refugees are users that navigate composite environments of polymedia (Madianou & Miller, 2011a, 2011b). The usages and meanings of different media are relative to each other. People do not experience the world through one singular medium, but instead make sense of their experiences through the interactions and interpretations of different media as well as through their own embodied and situated circumstances. I will now provide an overview of the chapters in this thesis and how I have come to this understanding.

8.1 Summary of the chapters

In **Chapter 2** I provided the research context that served to situate the experiences of the Iraqi refugee population in Jordan. I discussed the socio-historical developments in Iraq and how these are deeply related to the western involvement within that country. Years of warfare and political chaos have resulted in pessimism about the future of Iraq and, connected to this, a lack of desire for return. I then considered Jordan's temporary refugee protection context. Most Iraqi refugees are living in Jordan's capital Amman. UNHCR stepped in as surrogate state to protect people seeking refuge in Jordan. While this legalises the stay of refugees in Jordan, this protection is only temporary and restricts the right to work and other social rights. In the MoU with the Jordanian government, UNHCR also committed itself to finding what is called a durable solution outside of Jordan for those whom they have legally recognised as refugees. Since return to Iraq was, at the time of this PhD-research, not viable the only durable solution available for Iraqi refugees would be third country resettlement. Initially there was a rather extensive resettlement program, mostly to the US, but in 2015 these slots had become sparse and many of the refugees in Jordan found themselves in legal limbo. Over the years, many other Iraqi nationals found irregular means to travel into Europe and applied for asylum there. The presence of Iraqi nationals in western countries as well as prolonged personal experiences of social and legal marginalisation have reinforced the idea that life in Jordan is only temporary.

This context is also influenced by the media landscape in the Middle East. The increased availability and affordability of satellite TV, Internet and smartphones in the Arab-speaking world is significant as these technologies provide means to circumvent state control, and to challenge political powers and patriarchal and other socio-cultural norms. However, national governments, political parties and religious leaders continue to exercise control and militant groups can equally use online spaces for their own agenda. Pre-invasion Iraq was largely closed off from the transnational and global market, but in 2003 first satellite TV and then Internet became widely available. Many different Iraqi-news channels with different takes on the war in Iraq emerged. The civil war (2006-2007) was played out via Iraqi and international news-channels, and this increased a distrust towards broadcast media. It is therefore important to attempt to understand the relationship between the condition of prolonged displacement and the rapid changes in the media landscape in the Middle East.

In this study, I consider how experiences of not being-at-home are mediated. In **Chapter 3**, the literature review, I therefore first explored how early Non-media-centric Media Studies have shown that television reconfigures the home, but equally so, how social relations within and beyond the home inform mediated practices. However, the work by Morley (1986) and Silverstone (1990, 1993; 1994) focuses upon stable western homes. In order to see if and how these studies travel into and can be deployed in the Global South, I considered media ethnographies on TV-viewing practices in Brazil, Egypt and India (Abu-Lughod, 1997, 2004; Mankekar, 1999; Tufte, 2000). These studies have shown the importance of contextual specificity for the comprehension of how mediated experiences are constitutive of social identity and social life.

I then considered studies on the mediation of migration. Migrants tend to have a more unsettled sense of where home is, also because of ongoing social and sometimes legal marginalisation in one's physical location. Studies have shown the relationship between both media forms like film and television and the construction of transnational identity as well as the importance of new forms of digital connectedness to the experience of migration. Moreover, as opportunities for digital connectivity have increased, meanings and usages are interlinked to each other and form an environment of polymedia that is co-constitutive of the social relationships people maintain (Madianou & Miller, 2011a, 2011b). However, I am cautious of celebrating the figure of the 'connected migrant' (Diminescu, 2008): digital connectivity needs to be fully grounded within the structural, societal and material constraints in which migrants find themselves.

This becomes more evident in the few studies on mediated practices by forced migrants. Where legal and social uncertainty are often the norm there is a tension between engaging with digital technologies in order to stay connected, and accepting that such activities could make one more visible and subject to surveillance. In the case of prolonged displacement in the Global South, refugees' subjectivities are deeply influenced by what Didier Fassin (2012) calls 'humanitarian reason', which emphasises short-term solutions and then institutes an experience of waiting. Digital technologies not only provide a crucial means for searching for ways to travel onwards (out of waiting); they are also central to coping with living in prolonged uncertainty. Whilst static concepts like 'place' and 'home' are perpetually challenged (Brun & Fábos, 2015), home-making practices are relocated to the virtual (Doná, 2015).

Since the condition of waiting is characteristic of prolonged displacement, it is important to consider it as an affective phenomenon. Hope is future-oriented (Hage, 2003). Laurent Berlant's (2011) understanding of optimism relates to the endurance of the present. These works are both situated in late modern societies in the Global North. Studies on transnational affect (Mar, 2005; Wise & Velayutham, 2006) and the 'pragmatics of hope' of Palestinian refugees (Allan, 2014) enable me to comprehend further how in non-western contexts remaining hopeful is hard work that might be necessary to make life bearable. In bringing these ideas together I made a theoretical argument for mediation: the interaction between mediated and situated practices constitutes experiences and meaning-making processes in place.

In **Chapter 4** I have argued that ethnography as a methodological approach will enable a deeper interpretative and situating process of media-use in the context I have outlined. I discussed some debates on the use of ethnography in the disciplines of Forced Migration Studies and Media Studies. Ethnography as a methodological approach enables me to connect localised experiences to larger political and social structures in an ethical and reflexive manner. Ethnography enabled me to consider the simultaneity and richness of the media environment within refugee households. Digital technologies provide additional spaces for interactions, actions and intimacy, but my study focused on how these online actions and perceptions are also grounded in place. I then discussed the different stages of fieldwork. First, I discussed my preparations including preliminary fieldwork and the decision to focus on households to understand further how the lives of Iraqi men, women and adult children are experienced and mediated differently. I then described the iterative process of conducting fieldwork and how this eventually resulted in my move into a refugee household. What was framed as 'Europe's refugee/migrant crisis' made an already intense experience even more affective. My departure from the field was difficult but crucial in order to be able to reflect and write. Writing is part of ethnography and is a reflexive process that foregrounds care. I ended this chapter with a short introduction of the people and households that have played a more central role in this dissertation.

In **Chapter 5** I considered the communication and information process between Iraqi refugees and UNHCR, and how online and offline interactions are useful to challenge and interpret UNHCR's policies. Much of Iraqi refugee life in Jordan was constructed around

‘waiting’. This understanding is deeply mediated, and is partly played out through and in interaction with digital technologies. The ambivalent presence of the UN Refugee Agency as a surrogate state (Kagan, 2011) seemed to suggest to the Iraqi refugees that there is a regime that holds power over them and has the potential to resolve their uncertainty. There was an ongoing interplay between online and offline interactions. Through these ‘talking spaces’ (Gillespie, 2006), the Iraqi refugees were continuously trying to understand their prospects, and possibilities of legalised and irregular travelling. These sense-making processes occurred largely through a self-referential understanding of deservingness (who is most entitled?), and the necessity of obtaining a sense of order.

The trust for a route out of Jordan via third country resettlement dwindled as policy changes by UNHCR and developments around what was framed as ‘Europe’s refugee/migrant crisis’ made the Iraqi refugees question their own rights, the (il)legitimacy of border-crossing, and what their status as Iraqi refugees in Jordan effectively meant. In the legal and social uncertainty it seemed impossible to find answers that could satisfy, perhaps because they were simply not present. The Iraqi refugees in Jordan organised collectively to challenge UNHCR, but the question remains whether UNHCR has the capabilities to help them, as the agency has access only to limited resettlement slots. Omar (#42) and Zeineb, whose decision-making process I followed closely, eventually decided to move onwards. Their decision was directly based upon the mediated information they acquired of developments in Europe, including the temporary suspension of the Schengen-regulation, and seeing people on TV whom they believed were not morally justified refugees like them. Several other Iraqi refugees I know also found alternative ways to travel out of Jordan, but this onward journey does not provide a guarantee for a life free from uncertainty. In prolonged displacement uncertainty is the norm. Media play a central role in experiences of uncertainty and ‘stuckedness’. Through different, often contradictory, messages Iraqi refugees continuously try to make sense of their insecurity, to challenge their perpetual unsettledness and to search for ways out of Jordan.

In **Chapter 6** I further considered the roles that digital technologies play in managing the insecurities in everyday life in Jordan and for home-making practices. I first discussed the many faces of insecurity. These include physical safety, bodily integrity, legal protections, financial and material certainty and ontological security. Material and affective circumstances further shape the experiences of uncertainty. In response to this multi-

layered experience of insecurity, I argued that the Iraqi refugees in Jordan were maintaining an ‘absent presence’. Because of financial constraints many Iraqi refugees withdraw to the safety of their home, where different digital technologies make different ways of coping and feeling at home possible. They largely refrained from interactions with Jordan’s host population, but also from consumption of Jordanian news-outlets. Virtual home-making practices provided a sense of routine, a continuity with the past and familiarity to TV-shows. As such this plays a role in overcoming and coping with the uncertainties associated with life in Jordan.

Media play a central role in how waiting time and the domestic space are configured. Time can be structured around mediated practices, but as there is much time to spare, mediated practices equally serve to overcome boredom or acquire skills that might be useful for a future elsewhere. The Iraqi refugees largely stay in their temporary homes, but the way this is experienced is deeply gendered and mediated. For the women, life in Iraq had already largely been taking place in the confines of their homes; in Jordan their domestic and emotional labour continued. They watched the same drama series as in Iraq, enabling a form of attachment to ‘home’. Iraqi men however felt lost in the ‘home’, as they were used to work outdoors and felt their masculinity was undermined. Most men reported a significant increase in their media-use because of their restricted mobility as refugees in Jordan. Especially for the younger Iraqis, the smartphone and other devices that connected to the Internet played an essential role as this made the multiplication of spaces possible within the cramped environment of the refugee household. As such this enabled the younger and older refugees to carve out their own spaces and to maintain a personalised ‘absent presence’ in Jordan through virtual co-presence in the lives of people and places elsewhere.

Chapter 7 showed how digital connectivity is an important means for staying hopeful, and to ground oneself in one’s past while imagining the future. Through affective affordances – the potential of different media forms to bring about affects like hope and anxiety – Iraqi refugees are able to detach, attach and re-orient themselves. In Iraqi refugee households the affective atmospheres were continuously balancing between the despair of feeling stuck and the necessity for staying hopeful for better futures.

I first drew upon the attachment the Iraqi refugees were maintaining with Iraq. I showed

how the Iraqi refugees in this study were knowledgeable about the power of the state-owned and private media and their roles in ideological and actual battles in Iraq. Seeing Iraq's warscape seemed to evoke worries about loved ones who were still there, but also enforced pessimism about the future of Iraq. This closed down the options for imagining a return in the near future. The symbolic linkages with Iraq and to Iraqi-ness, however, continued to be of importance. Mediated sounds and images might evoke a sense of loss, but they also seem to bring about a hopeful form of nostalgia. Positive characteristics of the past can serve as a basis for imagining futures that are more in line with a stable and secure past than they are with the present.

Digital connections provide means to stay actively and affectively involved in the lives of loved ones who have travelled onwards. The case of Kholoud shows how she drew upon a wide variety of affordances to maintain an active presence in the life of her granddaughter, but that the distance however continues to hurt. For others it seemed that seeing and hearing of the social mobility of 'others' who were once Iraqi refugees like themselves potentially reinforces one's feeling of 'stuckness', of not moving and the idea that the waiting time in Jordan is wasted time. Some people like the daughters of Naima (#27) and Adam (#32) put parts of their lives on hold in response to the idea that life in Jordan is only temporary.

Like in Iraq, there were 'no futures' legally available and deemed possible in Jordan. As such there was the need for orienting oneself to other places, for futures elsewhere. Digital technologies serve as orientation devices as they enable people to imagine futures elsewhere. These orientations are deeply informed by mediated input such as American TV-series and films, as well as by the experiences of friends and loved ones who are already in those countries. The Iraqi refugees in Jordan did not uncritically endorse western life. If anything, there seemed to be a mediated optimism about the ability to rebuild a 'normal' life, free from waiting and with the opportunities to work, study and move on.

8.2 Drawing conclusions

Ever since I left the field in September 2015, I have remained connected with many people in this study. The prospects for some are more hopeful than for others. Some are still

waiting in Jordan, but others have found legal or irregular means for physical onward movement. Those who are now in Europe are (again) going through the procedures to become recognised refugees. Several Christian and Sabeen Iraqis have been resettled to Australia, as this country started to run a separate resettlement procedure for Iraqi minorities. Others managed to travel via personal sponsorships and are now rebuilding their lives. Solomon, the youngest son of Kholoud, managed to get into a private school in Jordan via his work for an NGO, which opens a window to a better future.

However, at the time of writing the EU is once again fortifying its borders and enforcing its containment policies. Like in 2004, efforts are enhancing refugee protection ‘in the region’ while simultaneously limiting (the access) to protection in(to) Europe (Hyndman & Giles, 2011, p. 370). Through overseas development assistance, countries such as Jordan are rewarded for their cooperation in keeping refugees at bay with only limited protection. As Alexander Betts and James Millner (2006) already observed: Europe is willing to pay for, but not to accommodate, refugees. At the moment the US goes a step further, as the US government has drastically cut its foreign aid and has suspended the country’s resettlement program (International Rescue Committee, 2017; Siegfried, 2017). The crisis in which many refugees in Jordan and beyond are living continues, and refugees continue to make sense of, negotiate and challenge the situation in which they find themselves.

‘Waiting’, as Hyndman and Gilles (2011) put it, once again becomes the ordering principle that (re)produces refugees as voiceless subjects. In this PhD-thesis I have however shown that Iraqi refugees are not passive in their waiting. The Iraqi refugees would indeed often describe their experience as ‘waiting’, but waiting implied a passivity that did not resemble the actions, anxieties and affects I had encountered. In line with Cathrine Brun (2016, p. 393) it has become clear to me “that the people, whose experiences and practices I am writing about are not entirely stuck [...] There may be geographical movement; there may be social movement or mobility, which could see people moving on, and even though they do not move on, there are changes in their lives”. Even if people do not move physically, times change and subjectivities are altered through mediated and situated interactions. I eventually decided to build upon and expand Ghassan Hage’s concept of ‘stuckedness’ (2015) as an experience of invisibility, uncertainty and arbitrariness. I suggest that ‘stuckedness’ is an active process. I deploy ‘stuckedness’ as a subjective, material and mediated experience of uncertainty and immobility that is deeply grounded in unequal

power relations. It recognises that people often spend years in waiting, but this does not mean that people are passive in waiting or are paralysed by uncertainty. ‘Stuckedness’ is something that is done to people, for instance by exclusionary policies of nation-states and that is experienced and internalised by people themselves, but that also sets in motion a process through which people try to undo that situation. The situation can therefore also be negotiated and contested. The uncomfortable uncertainty made the Iraqi refugees in this study very active in making sense of and trying to overcome their ‘stuckedness’.

Throughout this thesis I have tried to move away from dichotomies, such as stuck/mobile, absent/present and vulnerable / empowered, as well as the mediated /non-mediated, which are far from mutually exclusive categories. Instead I have focused on the processes of refugee-ness, stuckedness and (un)belonging, and emphasized how personal experiences of living without legal and social certainty are social and mediated. I understand ‘stuckedness’ not as the paralysis of the imagination. In fact, the imagination might be crucial for staying hopeful against the odds, and for being creative in finding ways to move forward. The structural and material constraints should not be disregarded because, as I have shown, experiences of negotiating immobility/mobility are deeply shaped by legal and social restrictions as well as experiences of material and symbolic violence.

I have often struggled throughout this thesis to do justice to the words and experience of my participants. Containing the ideas generated through ethnographic work is always a problem. This research shows that there are many other avenues that require attention within this field of research. This includes the need for expanding research on digital connectivity in other prolonged conditions of displacement in the Global South, and among other refugee populations in Jordan, such as the Syrian and Palestinian refugee populations and the Sudanese and Somalian refugees who also experience structural racism. More research on the mediated and situated experience of (Iraqi and other) refugee children could also be another important avenue for attention. A focus for research could also go out the mediated memory: the interplay between troubled memories and mediated experiences of living in prolonged displacement. Another avenue that requires attention is, whether digital connectivity can somehow improve the social and legal rights of refugees and if so, how? Finally, it is important to remember that the work of humanitarian organisations is restrained by geographical and political boundaries. State actors play a crucial role in digital freedoms, control and restrictions and their roles in the lives of the

forced connected migrant requires more attention.

What my research has demonstrated is that digital connections are “not a miraculous transformatory manna from heaven” (Trimikliniotis et al., 2015, p. 3). They do not provide the solution for the legal and material difficulties in which Iraqi refugees are living. This also becomes clear in the following words of Adam (#42) when we were discussing the amount of time he spent playing video games. He sighed as he stated: *“As a refugee... this is the best solution I have.”* His words say that that this is the best solution he has, but also seem to imply that it is not good enough. Digital connections do not solve the structural problems, deeply embedded into broader questions around power, inequality and social injustice that the Iraqi refugees and many other migrants worldwide are experiencing. Digital technologies, however, do perform important functions for the aspirations, identity-construction and place-making practices of refugees, especially if their place in the world continues to be uncertain. They are useful for staying involved with what happens in their native country and in the lives of loved ones elsewhere, for planning and imagining potential pathways, for holding on to a sense of stability of self, for coping with and navigating uncertainty, for staying hopeful about the future and for making their lives in Jordan bearable.

Appendix 1- Table of informants

# as referred to in thesis	Pseudonym used	Gender (as identified)	Age (if unknown by approximation)	Time spent in Jordan	Summary of household / family situation
#1	Fadi	M	27 years old	3 years and 3 months	Single man. Lives with his mother, his brother and sister. Roman Catholic. Has lived as a student in Syria. His father is working in Iraq. He has many relatives in the US.
#2	Riem	F	26 years old	2 years	Single woman. She lives with her sister and her mother. Sunni Muslim. Father passed away and brother disappeared. Older sister has been resettled to the US.
#3	Hasan	M	45 years old	15 years	Divorced man. He lives by himself. His two children are in Iraq. Shi'a Muslim.
#4	Abu Maisoun	M	48 years old	6 years	Married, he lives with his wife and 3 children (21 years; 19 years; 12 years). He is originally Kurdish / Sunni and she Shi'a. His brothers are in Sweden. Her siblings and parents are in Iraq.
#5	Abu Mahmoud	M	55 years old	1,5 years	Married, he lives with his wife, their son Osman (see #37) and daughter Amal (#38). Sunni Muslim.. Another daughter (#39) is in Jordan with her family. Eldest son Mahmoud lives in the US, another son is studying in an Eastern-European country. His two oldest children from his first marriage are in Iraq.

# as referred to in thesis	Pseudonym used	Gender (as identified)	Age (if unknown by approximation)	Time spent in Jordan	Summary of household / family situation
#6	Um and Abu Maryam	Couple (M/F)	In their 50s	1 year	Married couple, they live with their three youngest children (24 years; 21 years; 18 years). Sabean. Their oldest daughter is in Iraq. All of their siblings are living in western countries.
#7	Nabila	F	41 years old	1,5 years	Single mother of 4 sons, her two youngest sons (21 years and 12 years) live with her. Shi'a Muslim. Her eldest son and husband died in an explosion. One son lives in Canada.
#8	Abeer and Muadh	Couple (M/F)	He: 45 years old She: 40 years old	2 years,	Married couple, they with their three children (12 years, 11 years, 2 years). Sunni Muslim.. His sister and brother are in European countries.
#9	Rosa	F	27 years old	9 months	Married, lives with her husband Abu Yusuf (#11), their two young children and her cousin. Assyrian Christian. His brothers are living in Sweden and the US.
#10	Warda	F	55 years old	1,5 years	Single woman, lives by herself. Sabean. Her siblings are in Germany, Sweden, Denmark and Norway and Canada.
#11	Abu Yusuf	Relatives (M)	31 years old	9 months	Abu Yusuf is married to Rosa (#7), they have two young children. They share the house with her cousin. Assyrian Christian. One of Abu Yusuf's brothers was killed in Iraq. His two other brothers are in the States and in Sweden.

# as referred to in thesis	Pseudonym used	Gender (as identified)	Age (if unknown by approximation)	Time spent in Jordan	Summary of household / family situation
#12	Abu and Um Mohammed	Couple (M/F)	55 years old	8 months	Married couple, live with daughter Nadia (28 years old, #25) and their son Mohammed (26 years old). Sunni Muslim. His brother is in the US. They live in an apartment this brother owns.
#13	Abu Raheem	M	29 years old	6 months	Married, lives with his wife and two young sons. Assyrian Christian. Two of his brothers live in the US, two of his brothers are in Iraq.
#14	Susu and Aram	Couple (M/F)	She: 33 years old He: 37 years old	10 months	Married couple, live with their two young sons, his cousin and his family. Assyrian Christian. Most of his siblings sought initially refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan and are now looking for ways to get to Jordan.
#15	Abu Lilian and Lilian	Father and daughter M and F	He: 65 years old She: 27 years old	1 year	Elderly couple, living with their daughter Lilian and their daughter-in-law. Assyrian Christian. Their three sons live in the US
#16	Abu Simon and Martina	In-laws M and F	He: 60 old. She: 32 years old	1 year	Elderly couple, living with their son and their daughter-in-law Martina. Assyrian Christian Two sons are living in the US
#17	Abu Ali	M	47 years	8 months	Married, three young children. Sunni Muslim His wife's family is also living in Jordan. .

# as referred to in thesis	Pseudonym used	Gender (as identified)	Age (if unknown by approximation)	Time spent in Jordan	Summary of household / family situation
#18	Khaled	M	23 years	2 years.	Single man. Lives and provides financially for his siblings Shi'a / Sunni Muslim He and his siblings been in Syria for years as registered Iraqi refugees, but initially returned to Iraq. His mother is Jordanian but lives elsewhere. His father and his second family are in Iraq.
#19	Michael	M	35 years	10 months	Married. Lives with his wife Sara and their son, his mother and the family of his brother. Assyrian Christian. His father is working in Iraq. His wife's family is also in Jordan (see #40 and #41)
#20	Hossan	M	20 years	1 year	Single man, lives with his cousin. Sunni Muslim. His parents and siblings are in Iraq. His "cool" aunt is in Australia.
#21	Khalil	M	35 years	1,5 years	Married. Lives with his wife, his two small sons and his father. Shi'a Muslim. His brother was killed in Iraq.
#22	Sohrab	F	40 years	2 years	Divorced, lives with her adult son, daughter and young son. She is Sunni, but her ex-husband is Shi'a making her children formally Shi'a. Her oldest daughter is in Iraq. Her siblings are in Mosul.
#23	Ismail	M	33 years	1 year	Single man, lives together with two western friends. Sunni Muslim. Does not have contact with his family.

# as referred to in thesis	Pseudonym used	Gender (as identified)	Age (if unknown by approximation)	Time spent in Jordan	Summary of household / family situation
#24	Um Sanghar	F	46 years	12 years	Married/separated, 4 sons (ranging from teenagers to young adults). Kurdish / Sunni Muslim. Her husband was living for years in Syria, but recently joined them in Jordan.
#25	Nadia	F	28 years	8 months	Single woman. Lives with her parents (#12) and her brother Mohammed (26 years old). Sunni Muslim.
#26	Samir	M	28 years	6 months	Single man, lives with his brother. Sunni Muslim. His parents are in Iraqi Kurdistan.
#27	Naima	F	51 years	9 years	Married, lives with her husband and her son. Sunni Muslim. They own their house. Two of her daughters live in Jordan. One daughter is in the UK, another daughter is in Canada.
#28	Um Haydar	F	50 years	2 years	Widow, lives with her son and daughter. Shi'a Muslim. Eldest daughter is in the US.
#29	Ahmed	M	23 years	1 year	Single man. Lives with his mother and brother. Sunni Muslim. Owns a car in Jordan.

# as referred to in thesis	Pseudonym used	Gender (as identified)	Age (if unknown by approximation)	Time spent in Jordan	Summary of household / family situation
					His father and his sisters are in Iraq. Many relatives in the US.
#30	Rima and Enhar	Couple (F/M)	She: 35 years. He: 45 years.	2 years	Married couple. Parents of three young sons. Sabean. He lost contact with his brother in Syria. Another brother is in Sweden. Her sister is in Sweden.
#31	Zakaria	M	21 years	2 years	Single man. Lives by himself. Sabean. His parents and his two younger brothers are in Sweden.
#32	Abu and Um Rami	Couple (M/F)	He: 72 years. She: 45 years	1 year	Couple. Parents of seven children (age range 23 years old to 2 years old). Assyrian Christian. Her sister is in the US.
#33	Abu and Um Yahya	Couple (M/F)	Both in their late 40s	8 months	Couple. Live with their 4 children (25 years; 12 years; 8 years; 5 years). Sabean. Her brother is in Syria. Several relatives in Australia.
#34	Adam	M	21 years	4 years (5 years in Syria)	Single man. Lives with his mother Kholoud (#36), his father and his brother Solomon. Sunni Muslim. Were previously registered Iraqi refugees in Syria for 5 years. His sister is living in the US. Most of his aunts and uncles are in the US or Europe.
#35	Nour	F	22 years	1,5 years	Single woman. Lives with her parents and her two older brothers. Assyrian Christian. One brother is a priest in Iraq. Aunts and grandmother are living in Australia.

# as referred to in thesis	Pseudonym used	Gender (as identified)	Age (if unknown by approximation)	Time spent in Jordan	Summary of household / family situation
#36	Kholoud	F	50 years	4 years (5 years in Syria)	Married. Lives with her husband (Abu Adam) and her two sons Adam (#34) and Solomon. Sunni Muslim. Were previously registered Iraqi refugees in Syria for 5 years. Her daughter Samar and her granddaughter live in the US. One sister still lives in Iraq. Another sister lives in the US, her brothers are in Europe.
#37	Osman	M	22 years	1,5 years	Single man. Lives with his parents (his father is Abu Mahmoud #5) and his sister Amal (#38). Sunni Muslim. Another sister also lives in Amman (#39). His brother Mahmoud lives in the US, another brother is a student in an Eastern European country. Two half-siblings are in Iraq.
#38	Amal	F	24 years	1,5 years	Married to an Iraqi with a Scandinavian passport, was pregnant and awaiting re-unification with her husband. Lives with her parents (#5) and her brother (#37). Her sister (#39) and her family are also in Jordan. Sunni Muslim. Her oldest brother is living in the US. Another brother is a student in an Eastern European country. Two half-siblings are in Iraq.
#39	Ibtisam	F	27 years	1,5 years	Married. Lives with her husband and their two children. Her parents (#5), youngest brother Osman (#37) and sister (#38) are also living in Jordan. Sunni Muslim. Her brother is living in the US. Another brother is a student in an Eastern European country. Two half-siblings are in Iraq.

# as referred to in thesis	Pseudonym used	Gender (as identified)	Age (if unknown by approximation)	Time spent in Jordan	Summary of household / family situation
#40	Linda	F	23 years	8 months	Married. Lives with her husband Simon, her daughter, her mother-in-law (#41), her brother-in-law and me. Her parents and brothers and her sister-in-law with her family was also living in Jordan (#19). Assyrian Christian. Another sister-in-law and several cousins are living in the US.
#41	Mama Heba	F	55 years	1 year	Widow, lives with her two sons, her daughter-in-law (#40), granddaughter and me. Another daughter and her family are also in Jordan (#19). Assyrian Christian. Her eldest daughter is living with her family in the US.
#42	Omar and Zeineb	Couple (M/F)	35 years	8 months	Married couple. Parents of two young daughters. Sunni Muslim. Her sister is in Belgium. Her mother is in Jordan. His family is in Iraq.

Appendix 2 – Participant information sheet - English and Arabic version

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Project:

Insecurity and Everyday Life: An Ethnographic case-study on Everyday insecurity and Media-use among Syrian and Iraqi Refugee Households in Jordan.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

As a PhD-candidate in sociology and media, I aim to understand the consumption of different kinds of media in order to manage insecurity in refugee households in Jordan. This research project aims to understand what types of media (television, internet, mobile phones etc.) are central to coping with displacement and how they are used by different family members.

Who is organising and funding the research?

I am conducting this research for my PhD thesis at the University of Leicester. This university provide me with funding to conduct this research.

Why have you been invited to participate?

The project aims to collect information about experiences of being a refugee in Jordan, everyday life and media use. Due to your personal experiences your contribution will be extremely valuable. You can add help to obtain insight into experiences of refugees in Jordan.

Do you have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet and will be asked to sign a consent form.

If you agree to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form which is the University's ethical research

policy. The consent form will not be used to identify you. It will be filed separately from all other information. You will be provided with your own copy of this information sheet and the consent form includes my contact details.

However, if you prefer not to sign anything but like to participate anyway, giving oral consent is also sufficient.

If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen if you take part?

There are two ways in which you can take part in this research.

1. One possibility is that you will take part in an interview at the time and place of your convenience.
2. The other possibility is: in order to further my understanding of everyday experiences among refugee households I would like to spend some time with you and your family to observe how media use fits into your everyday life and daily routines.

At any stage you have the right to not answer some or all questions, or refuse to give permission for the use of information about yourself.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You will help advance knowledge to be used in academic and English media publications about refugee life in Jordan, on the role media plays in the context of forced migration in Jordan, and about the use of media to find possible solutions for refugees.

Is the information from the study confidential?

Yes. All the information you give is **anonymous and confidential** and only used for the purposes of this research. The information will only be accessible to me. Notes will be taken during the interview, and if you agree they will be recorded by voice.

At no point will your name be disclosed in publications, but you might be anonymously referenced in publications. We can agree beforehand as to how you will be referred to in publications. I will destroy the tape recordings of the interviews, and I will only keep field and interview notes without names or other means of identifying people. This information will be stored on password-protected files.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The data will be published in my PhD thesis, and potentially in other publications, which may include journal articles and books. The information might also be used in reports for NGOs or the UNHCR.

Thank you very much for your time and help!

Mirjam Abigail Twigt
PhD Student and Graduate Research Assistant
Department of Sociology / Media and Communication
University Road, Leicester
LE 17RH United Kingdom
mat35@le.ac.uk

Research Project Consent form

I agree to take part in the project entitled Insecurity and Everyday Life: An Ethnographic case-study on Everyday Insecurity and Media-use among Refugee Households in Jordan. This is research towards the submission of a PhD dissertation in Sociology at the University of Leicester, conducted by Mirjam Abigail Twigt.

I have had the project fully explained to me and I have read the information statement about the project which I may keep for my own personal records. I understand that my own contribution will be used for the purposes of Graduate research only and that I can withdraw from the research at any time.

I also understand that this project will be carried out in accordance with the University of Leicester's Code of Research Ethics. It will not be possible to identify me in any of the written work that results from this project. Material gathered as part of this study will be treated as confidential and securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name [PRINT]

Signature

Date

عنوان المشروع:

إندماج الأمن والحياة اليومية : دراسة حالة اتكنولوجية حول إندماج الأمن اليومي واستخدام الإعلام بين أسر اللاجئين في الأردن.

لقد تم دعوتك للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية . من قبل أن تقرر ما إذا كنت تريد المشاركة ، من المهم أن تفهم لماذا تم القيام بهذه الدراسة ، وماذا سوف يتخللها . الرجاء أخذ بعضاً من الوقت لقراءة المعلومات التالية بعناية .

ما هو الغرض من الدراسة؟

الدراسة ، التابعة لبحث تقوم به طالبة دراسات عليا ، تسعى لفهم استقبال أنواع الإعلام المختلفة من أجل تدبير حالة إندماج الأمن التي تعيشها أسر اللاجئين في الأردن . المشروع يريد أن يفهم ما هي أنواع الإعلام (التلفاز ، الإنترنت ، الهواتف المحمولة ، ...إلخ) التي تتركز في عملية التعامل مع النزوح وكيف يتم استخدامها من قبل أفراد الأسرة المختلفين .

من يقوم بتنظيم وتمويل البحث ؟

تقوم بإجراء هذا البحث من أجل أطروحة الدكتوراة في جامعة لستر . هذه الجامعة تقوم بتمويلي للقيام بهذه الدراسة .

لماذا تم دعوتي للمشاركة ؟

يهدف المشروع إلى جمع المعلومات حول التجارب في الحياة اليومية واستخدام الإعلام ، لذلك سوف تكون مشاركتك ذات قيمة عالية . بسبب تجاربك الخاصة ، يمكنك من إضافة رؤية حول تجارب اللاجئين العراقيين في الأردن .

هل يجب عليّ أن أشارك ؟

لا .

القرار يرجع لك في ما إذا أردت المشاركة أم لا . إذا قررت أن تشارك سوف تعطى ورقة المعلومات ويطلب منك التوقيع على نموذج موافقة .

إذا وافقت بالمشاركة سوف يطلب منك التوقيع على نموذج موافقة الذي يمثل سياسة أخلاقيات البحث للجامعة . نموذج الموافقة لن يستخدم للتعرف عليك . وسوف يتم حفظه كملف مفضولاً عن كل بقية المعلومات ، كما سوف يتم تزويدك بنسخة الخاصة من ورقة المعلومات هذه . ونموذج الموافقة سيُتمل على تفاصيل التواصل معي .

لكن ما إذا فضلت عدم التوقيع على أي شيء وتود المشاركة على كل حال ، إعطاء الموافقة الشفهية ممكن أن تكون أيضاً كافية . وإذا قررت المشاركة ، سيبقى لديك كامل الحرية في الإمتحاب بأي وقت ومن غير إعطاء أي أسباب .

ماذا سيحدث لي إذا شاركت في البحث ؟

هناك طريقتان يمكن من خلالها المشاركة في هذا البحث :

1. إحدى الإحتمالات هي أن تشارك في مقابلة في الوقت والمكان المناسب بالنسبة لك .

2. الإحتمالية الأخرى هي : من أجل توسيع مفهومي حول التجارب اليومية للأُسَر اللاجئة ، أتمنى أن أقضي معك بعض الوقت وأسرتك من أجل ملاحظة كيف استخدام الاعلام يلائم حياتك اليومية والروتين اليومي .

في أي مرحلة لديك الحق بعدم الاجابة عن بعض أو كل الأسئلة ، أو رفض إعطاء الصلاحية باستخدام معلومات عن نفسك .

ما هي الفوائد الممكنة من المشاركة ؟

سوف تساعد في تقدم المعرفة من أجل أن تستخدم في المنشورات الأكاديمية والإعلام الناطق باللغة الإنجليزية حول دور الإعلام في إبطار الهجرة القسرية في الأردن ، وعن استخدام الإعلام في اكتشاف حلول ممكنة لللاجئين .

هل المعلومات من الدراسة سرية ؟

نعم .

كل المعلومات التي ستقدمها سوف تحاط بالسرية وستبقى مجهولة الهوية ، وسيتم استخدامها فقط لأغراض هذه الدراسة . سوف تكون أنا فقط من لديه الإمكانية للوصول إلى المعلومات . وسوف يتم أخذ ملاحظات خلال المقابلة ، وإذا ما وافقت سوف يتم تسجيلها صوتياً .

لن تكون هناك أي نقطة يتم فيها كشف اسمك على منشورات ، ولكن يمكن أن يشار إليك بصفة مجهولة . كما يمكننا أن نتفق مسبقاً على كيفية الإشارة إليك في المنشورات .

سأقوم بتدمير كل المقابلات المسجلة ، ولكنني سأحتفظ فقط بالملفات والملاحظات من اللقاءات من دون ذكر أسماء أو أي طرق أخرى للتعرف على الناس . هذه المعلومات ستحفظ على ملفات محمية بكلمة مرور .

ماذا سيحدث للنتائج من هذه الدراسة البحثية ؟

تلك البيانات سوف يتم نشرها من خلال أطروحتي للدكتوراة ، ومن المتوقع نشرها في منشورات أخرى ، التي يمكن أن تشمل مقالات في دوريات أو كتب . المعلومات يمكن أن تستخدم أيضاً في التقارير المعدة من قبل المنظمات الغير حكومية أو المفوضية السامية للأمم المتحدة لشؤون اللاجئين .

شكراً جزيئاً على تخصيصك حيزاً من وقتك ولمساعدتك !

ميرم أيجيل تويغ

طالبة دكتوراة ومساعدة بحوث الدراسات العليا

قسم علم الاجتماع / وسائل الإعلام والاتصالات

شارع الجامعة ، لستر

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نموذج الموافقة على مشروع البحث

أنا أوافق على المشاركة في المشروع تحت عنوان إنعدام الأمن والحياة اليومية : دراسة حالة إبتولوجية حول إنعدام الأمن اليومي واستخدام الإعلام بين أسر اللاجئين في الأردن . هذه الدراسة تسعى إلى تقديم أطروحة الدكتوراة في علم الإجتماع في جامعة ليستر ، تجريها ميرجم أيجيل تويغ .

لقد تم شرح المشروع بالكامل لي وقد قمت بقراءة بيان من المعلومات عن المشروع الذي يمكنني أن أحتفظ به من ضمن سجلاتي الخاصة . أفهم أن مساهماتي سوف يتم استخدامها فقط لغرض إجراء بحث دراسات عليا ويمكنني أن أنسحب من البحث في أي وقت .

أفهم أيضاً بأن هذا المشروع سوف يتم إجراؤه وفقاً لقانون جامعة ليستر في أخلاقيات البحث . لن يكون هناك احتمالية للتعرف علي في أي من الأعمال المكتوبة كنتيجة لهذا المشروع . المواد التي تم جمعها كجزء من هذه الدراسة سوف يتم التعامل معها كمعلومات سرية وسيتم حفظها بشكل آمن وفقاً لقانون حماية البيانات للعام 1998 .

الإسم [مطبوع]

التوقيع

التاريخ

Appendix 3 – Interview guide

Research question:

How do refugee households in Jordan make sense of their situation through the media they consume? What role do media play in the coping with everyday life in displacement and in thoughts regarding the future?

Abstract:

This research focuses upon how refugees use media. It does not focus on social media in particular, but looks at how different kinds of media together influence one's sense of security in Jordan and second, on how media might be used in creative ways to negotiate their state of legal limbo. How do refugees stay connected to (people in) their homeland, how is information double-checked and how do media representations from what happens back home, in Jordan and further afield feed into the everyday experience of everyday (in)security.

General information:

- How is the household build up? Who are the members?
- How long have you been in Jordan?

Life in Jordan

- Can you describe a normal day here in Jordan?
- Do you have friends or family in Jordan? Can you tell me something about them? How often do you see them? Where do you see them?
- How is your contact with your Jordanian neighbors? And with fellow (Syrian/Iraqi) refugees?
- To what other areas do you go?

Access and use of media

- What kinds of media do you use? For what reasons do you use them?
- What media don't you use? Why not?
- Are there different media used communally? Or what things are personalized?
- Have you been, since your displacement, introduced to new media or media sources you weren't using before?
- This research focuses also on difference within the household. Do you see differences in regard to media-intake for instance, in regard to your parents, brother, children? What is important to them? And for what reason?

TV-consumption

- Do you watch the news? What kind of news-channels or news-programs? Why these?
- What tv-programs do you often watch?
- What tv-programs do you like to see?

- Can you tell me something about your favorite TV-program? What is it about? Why do you like this?
- Do you often watch films? What kind of films do you like? Why?
- Do you watch as a family, with friends, neighbours? Who decides what you are watching?

Mobile phone / smartphone

- Where do you use your mobile phone for? What is the main function of your phone for you – do you use all of its functions?
- What kind of telephone subscription do you have? What advantages does it have over other one's?
- Is your mobile phone more important to you then it was before you were a refugee? How important is, you think, a mobile phone for refugees here in Jordan?
- Do you use Viber, Tango, Skype? What do you use it for? What advantages does it have over normal phone contact.
- How do you feel when you see a loved one, talking to you from abroad?
- What other applications do you use? What is your favorite application. Why?

Internet / social media

- Did you use Internet before you came to Jordan? Why did you start to use Internet?
- Do you use Facebook: why do you use Facebook? How regularly do you use it? What do you use it for?
- What are your thoughts on other social media? How do you use these? For what reasons? How do you access them?
- Did you ever write a blog or shared some of your personal experiences online? How did this make you feel? Do you feel free to express your thoughts online?

Other media

- Do you ever read the newspaper?
- How do you think newspapers report on what is happening in your home country?
- How do you think newspapers report on refugees in Jordan?
- Are there other media-sources you use we haven't talked about?
- **In Jordan.**

Displacement

- What did you know, before you left your country, about refugee life here in Jordan?
- How were you informed about the different options you could go to? Why Jordan?
- How did you know how to come here and what to do in those first days you were here? How where you informed? How did you know where to go?
- Did you feel welcome? Did you feel safe?
- When did you for instance buy a TV and satellite dish? And a mobile phone? Was that easy to do? Did it help the settling process at all?

Communication with UNHCR and NGOs

- How do you communicate with UNHCR? How does UNHCR communicate with you?
- How do you communicate with other organisations? How do they communicate with you?
- How do you know about the assistance provided by UNHCR and the other NGOs?
- What do you know about your rights and position here in Jordan? How do you know?

Jordanian policy towards refugees

- What do you know about your position here in Jordan? How do you know?
- How do you inform yourself about in regard to rights and safety for the refugees in Jordan?
- What do you do, to somewhat negotiate this for instance by finding informal work?

Reflections upon Jordanian media

- Do you find it important to stay informed about what is going on in Jordan? Why? How do you stay informed? In what way?
- Do you watch any Jordanian channels? For what purposes do you watch these?
- And in regard to the other Jordanian TV-programs?
- What is your opinion on Jordanian media on how they portray the news? On how they talk about refugee in Jordan?
- Do you feel that with the dead of the pilot, Jordanian media has changed? How does this make you feel? Do you feel that Jordanians in your community react differently?

Connections to your homeland

- Do you find it important to keep yourself informed about what is happening in your home country? How do you keep informed?
- Do you still have friends and family in your homeland? Can you tell me something about their lives there? How do you know? How do you stay in touch?
- How do you remember your homeland? Are there means to bring back memories (positive, negative) of the country you left behind, for instance particular media, songs or photos? How often do you look or listen at these?
- Are there people you lost connection to? Why? How does that make you feel?

Connections further afield

- What do you know about the situation of refugees elsewhere in the world? How do you know?
- Do you still have close family members, friends back in other countries? Can you tell me something about their lives? How do you know?
- What is your impression of the countries where they are? How do you compare your situation in regard to theirs?
- What are your thoughts about a future elsewhere?
- How do you compare your situation in regard to theirs?

Only if appropriate: In what ways are you looking for opportunities:

- Elsewhere, in the western countries?
- Here in Jordan

What are your thoughts when you see

- news about your home country? Does it make a difference on who reports on them?
- Turkish TV-dramas, based in romantic villas?
- American talent shows and/or its Arabian equivalents?
- Do you compare yourself and your life to how lives are portrayed on TV?
- Are there TV-shows that make you extra aware of your situation in Jordan? In what ways?

Appendix 4: Visual Methods – English and Arabic version

Summary of the project

This research focuses upon how Iraqi refugees use media to make sense of their live in Jordan. The project wants to understand what types of media (television, internet, mobile phones etc.) are central to coping with displacement and how they are used by different family members. The project aims to collect information about experiences of everyday life and media use and therefore your contribution will be extremely valuable. Because of your personal experiences you can add insight into experiences of Iraqi refugees in Jordan.

What do I ask you to do?

I would like to ask you to select 5 things connected to media which are significant to you in your daily live. This can be pictures from your smartphones – you either took yourself or received from a friend of family, but it can also be Facebook pages you regularly look at, a particular TV-program or a conversation you had on Whatsapp (if you want to disclose this of course).

I would also like to ask you to make 5 pictures with their smartphones of their everyday life.

If you use or make photos of other persons make sure that the other person is okay with it.

And what happens after?

We will have a conversation in which you will show me the pictures you have selected and made, and what it means to you.

The main purpose of these pictures is to hear from you what matters to you. The images are your property, and only if you are fine with it, I might use them in my research.

All the information you give is **anonymous and confidential** and only used for the purposes of this research. The information will only be accessible to me. Notes will be taken during the interview, and if you agree they will be recorded by voice.

At any stage you have the right to not answer some or all questions, or decide not to take part.

The information you provide will be used for my PhD thesis, and potentially in other publications, which may include journal articles and books. The information might also be used in reports for NGOs or the UNHCR.

At no point will your name be disclosed in these publications, but you might be anonymously referenced in publications. We can agree beforehand as to how you will be referred to in publications.

رسالة دكتوراه حول الاعلام واللاجئين في الأردن

لـ مريم أ. تويخت

أيار، 2015

ملخص البحث

هذا البحث يركز حول كيفية استخدام اللاجئين العراقيين لمختلف وسائل الاعلام لتفهم كيفية تفاعلهم معها ضمن إطار معيشتهم في الأردن. المشروع يهدف الى فهم نوع الاعلام (التلفزيون، الانترنت، وجهاز الموبايل الخ.) وكم هو أساسي لتقبل الناس فكرة كونهم مغتربين وكذلك دراسة اختلاف استخدام مختلف أعضاء العائلة الواحدة لوسائل الاعلام

البحث يهدف الى جمع معلومات حول النشاطات التي يقوم بها الفرد في حياته اليومية وكذلك استخدامه للإعلام ولهذا مشاركتك في البحث تعني الكثير لنا. بسبب تجاربك الشخصية وجهة نظرك تضيف كثيرا لتجارب اللاجئين العراقيين في الأردن

- ما احتاجه منك هو

لطفا سأطلب منك ان تختار خمسة أشياء مرتبطة بالاعلام تتعلق بحياتك اليومية. ممكن ان تكون هذه الاشياء الخمسة عبارة عن صور من هاتفك الشخصي-الصور اما تكون اخذتها بنفسك او أرسلت اليك من اصدقائك او عائلتك، ممكن كذلك ان تكون الصور لكروبات الفيس بوك التي تتابعها باستمرار، او برنامج تلفزيوني او محادثة اجريتها على (الواتس اب (إذا رغبت بمشاركتها معنا بالتأكيد

إذا أمكنني ان اطلب منك خمسة صور تتعلق بحياتك اليومية

إذا استعملت او أخذت صوراً لأشخاص آخرين ارجو ان تكون بموافقتهم وعلمهم

- ما سيحدث لاحقاً هو

سنجري محادثة والتي ستريني فيها الصور التي اخترتها واخذتها وستخبرني عما تعني كل واحدة من هذه الصور لك

الغاية الأساسية من هذه الصور هو لمعرفة ما تمثل كل منها لك. الصور هي خاصة بك فقط في حالة موافقتك مشاركتهم معي سأدرجهم ضمن بحثي

كل المعلومات التي ستشارك معي ستحظى بالخصوصية والسرية والثقة وستستعمل فقط في البحث الذي اجريه. الشخص الوحيد الذي سيكون له اطلاع على هذه المعلومات هو انا. ستكون هناك ملاحظات اثناء المقابلة، و فقط في حالة موافقتك سيتم تسجيل المقابلة صوتياً

لديك الحق في أي مرحلة الرفض عن الإجابة على أي او كل من الأسئلة التي سأطرحها عليك، او حتى يمكنك رفض

المشاركة في المقابلة

المعلومات التي ستزودني بها ستستعمل فقط ضمن إطار رسالة الدكتوراه الخاصة بي، وفي أي من المنشورات التي تضم مقالات الصحف والكتب. المعلومات يمكن أيضا ان تكون مستعملة في تقارير المنظمات الغير حكومية او من منظمة الأمم المتحدة

لن يتم ذكر اسمك في أي من المکتوب أعلاه. ولكن يمكن بصورة غير مباشرة الإشارة اليك ضمن أي من المنشورات يمكننا مناقشة الكيفية التي تراها مناسبة للإشارة اليك في أي من المنشورات

Appendix 5 – Procedures towards resettlement

In UNHCR's Resettlement Handbook (2011, p. 37) the following resettlement submission categories to select and determine which refugees are eligible for resettlement are described:

Resettlement submission categories

Legal and/or Physical Protection Needs of the refugee in the country of refuge (this includes a threat of *refoulement*);

Survivors of Torture and/or Violence, where repatriation or the conditions of asylum could result in further traumatization and/or heightened risk; or where appropriate treatment is not available;

Medical Needs, in particular life-saving treatment that is unavailable in the country of refuge;

Women and Girls at Risk, who have protection problems particular to their gender;

Family Reunification, when resettlement is the only means to reunite refugee family members who, owing to refugee flight or displacement, are separated by borders or entire continents;

Children and Adolescents at Risk, where a best interests determination supports resettlement;

Lack of Foreseeable Alternative Durable Solutions, which generally is relevant only when other solutions are not feasible in the foreseeable future, when resettlement can be used strategically, and/or when it can open possibilities for comprehensive solutions.

Third country resettlement build upon the often limited quotas of resettlement states. Third country resettlement often requires long waiting periods “due to limited annual processing quotes and competing migration priorities”. (p. 277).

In regards to family-reunification some countries have separate quotas for this, and others have no limit to the number of family reunification cases they are willing to receive annually. Other states only consider family reunification within their overall annual quota. Moreover, family-reunification can fall outside of the context of UNHCR resettlement submission, yet UNHCR's Resettlement Handbook also states: “UNHCR also facilitates family reunification processed through the immigration programme of a resettlement country – outside of the context of a UNHCR resettlement submission” (p. 307), providing that one of the parties is a refugees

At the time of fieldwork (January – September 2015) IOM (the International Organisation for Migration) Jordan is contracted by the US government to run its Resettlement Program. At the time of fieldwork, the Resettlement Support Centre Middle East and North Africa (RSC-MENA) was located at IOM Jordan in Amman, Jordan. Sub-offices were located in Damascus, Syria and in Cairo, Egypt. There was also a processing unit in Baghdad at the US Army base. I mention the US resettlement program in particular as many of the Iraqi nationals were registered with IOM in the hope that this would give them a legal way out of Jordan. It is important to note that the current US Government has cancelled all suspended its resettlement program. (International Rescue Committee, 2017; Siegfried, 2017).

In 2015, at the time of fieldwork, The US Government has three different “processing priorities” for the resettlement of refugees worldwide:

Priority 1 (P1) are the referrals from the UNHCR (see above).

Priority 2 (P2) are specific groups identified by the US Department of State as being in need of resettlement. This includes those Iraqi refugees who have been employed by the US Army, the US Government or American organisations in Iraq to personally apply for resettlement. The threat they sought refuge from does not have to be directly related to their affiliation with the US Government.

Priority 3 (P3) enables people who entered the USA as refugees to ‘pull’ (as the Iraqi refugees refer to it) particular nuclear family members.

The process towards actual departure would follow 9 steps:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1 if P2 or P3 | Case creation and application (possible online) |
| 1 if P1 | Referral by UNHCR |
| 2 | Acceptance |
| 3 | Pre-screening Interview |
| 4 | USCIS-interview, conducted by a US Officer |
| 5 | Security check, conducted by the US Government. The RSC does not play a role in this process. This check is ongoing until the final departure. |
| 6 | Medical Examination |
| 7 | Resettlement Agency Placement in one of the United States. |

This placement depends on social ties, medical needs and ethnic background.

8 Cultural Orientation.

9 Travel with IOM Operations

P3 also requires a DNA-test to proof biological family relations.

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Bibliography of TV-channels, TV-programs and applications mentioned

- *Abmar Bel Khat Al Areed* (In bold red) Talk show, broadcasted on LBC, produced by Mazen Laham and presented by Malek Maktabi
- Abu Dhabi TV Arabic television-channel, owned by Abu Dhabi Media Group, the official media organization of the Government of Abu Dhabi, broadcasting from Abu Dhabi.
- Al-Arabiya Pan-Arab television channel, owned by the Saudi-broadcaster MBC, broadcasting from Dubai, UAE
- Al-Baghdadia Iraqi-owned satellite channel, broadcasting from Cairo, launched in 2005. A popular show screened on this channel among the Iraqi refugees in Jordan at the time of research was “*The ninth studio*” presented by Anwar Al-Hamdani
- Al-Hurra (The free one) US-based satellite channel, broadcasting in Arabic, established in 2004
- Al-Iraqia News-channel, owned by the current Iraqi government, established in 2003
- Al-Ishtar An Assyrian broadcasting channel, based in Ankawa, Iraq, launched in 2005
- Al-Jazeera Qatar-based and state-funded Pan-Arab news channel, based in Doha, Qatar.
- Al Qanaat Al Shabaab (Youth channel) Iraqi TV-channel owned by Saddam Hussein’s son Uday Hussein, started broadcasting in 1994, ceased broadcasting in 2003. Broadcasted mainly western subtitled and censored films and music.
- Al-Rasheed Iraqi satellite TV-channel, based in Baghdad

- Al-Sharqiya Iraqi satellite TV-channel, based in London, Baghdad and Dubai, launched in 2004 as first privately owned Iraqi TV-channel
- *Arab's got Talent* Arab reality TV talent show, broadcasted by MBC4, produced by MBC. Created by Simon Cowell.
- *Arab Idol* Arab reality TV talent show, broadcasted by MBC 1, produced by MBC, Created by Simon Fuller's 19 Entertainment
- *Bab-el-Hara* A popular drama series set in Syria during the mandate period of 1930/1940. Broadcasted on MBC, written by Marwan Qawood and directed by Bassam Al-Mulla
- BBC Arabic Arabic-language satellite-channel, by BBC World service and funded from the British television license fee, broadcasting from London, re-launched in 2008
- BomBeach A freemium multiplayer online strategy game developed by the game developer Supercell
- Clash of Clans A freemium mobile strategy game developed by the game developer Supercell
- Dubai TV Satellite TV-channel, owned by the Dubai Government, based in the Dubai Media City
- Facebook Online social media platform. Based in the US. By the Iraqis generally referred to as 'face'.
- *Friends* American TV-sitcom, created by David Crane and Marta Kauffman, originally aired on NBC, from 1994 to 2004
- *Grey's Anatomy* American drama series, created by Shonda Rhymes, originally aired on ABC from 2005 - ongoing
- JRTVC Jordan Radio and Television Cooperation, the broadcaster of the Government of Jordan, formed in 1985 as a merger between Jordan Radio and Jordan Television

- *Haram-al-Sultan*
(*Mubteşem Yüzyıl / The magnificent century*)
A Turkish drama series about an Ottoman Sultan, written by Meral Okay and Yılmaz Şahin, originally aired on Star TV from 2011 to 2014
The dubbed Arabic version is broadcasted by Dubai TV
- Instagram
Photo-sharing application, developed by Facebook.
- *Kalaam Nawaem* (Soft talk)
one-hour, weekly female-hosted Arabic talk show, screened by MBC1
- LBC
Lebanese Broadcasting Company, privately owned satellite broadcasting company, based in Beirut, Lebanon.
- *MasterChef*
Reality TV cooking contest franchise, created by Franc Roddam.
- MBC
Middle East Broadcasting Center, first privately-owned pan-Arab satellite broadcasting company, launched in 1991, based in Dubai, UAE.
- ROYA
First privately-owned Jordanian broadcaster, launched in 2011, based in Amman, Jordan.
- Russia Today Arabic
Russian TV news channel, broadcasting in Arabic, owned by the Russian Government, broadcasting from Moscow, Russia.
- *Selfie*
A satirical comedy show, shown on MBC, first season was aired during Ramadan, 2015.
- Tango
Voice over IP-application, developed by JP Inc.
- *Toq el Banaat (The necklace/ chain of girls)*
Historical drama series, shown on MBC.
- *The Doctors*
American talkshow, shown on CBS, produced by Phil McGraw.
- *The Oprah Winfrey Show*
American talkshow, shown on ABC, produced by Oprah Winfrey, screened from 1986 to 2011.
- *The Voice (Awla Sawt)*
Arabic version of the show The Voice of Holland, created by John de Mol and produced by the Talpa Media Group, screened on MBC1.

- *Titanic* American romantic film from 1997, produced by James Cameron and Jon Landau.
- Viber Popular Voice-over-IP and instant-messenger application, developed by Rakuten Inc.
- WhatsApp Popular Voice-over-IP and instant messenger application, developed by Facebook

