THE URBAN PLANNING STRATEGY IN AL-HUSSEIN PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMP IN AMMAN: HETEROGENEOUS PRACTICES, HOMOGENEOUS LANDSCAPE[1]

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INTRODUCTION

This article deals with the issue of refugee camps improvement and governance. It focuses on al-Hussein Palestinian refugee camp in Amman.[2] It aims at assessing the different improvement practices and planning strategy which have taken place in the camp over the past decades. Furthermore, it considers this strategy in relation with broader urban development trends (particularly of the camp surroundings), as the camp holds a central location in the urban environment. Officially, two entities operate in the camp, i.e. the Jordanian Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). While the former is in charge of governing the camp, the tasks of the latter focus on services provision. However, this paper considers the work not only of these actors, even if they are the central part of the analysis, but includes other actors involved in the process of improvement, such as Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC), Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), NGOs, etc. It analyses as well different types of actions, whether one-off initiatives or recurrent interventions, if they were specific to the camp or implemented city wide, which aspects they cover (physical infrastructure, housing, services, urban layout, etc.) and on which scale (small projects or broader programs of development). This article argues that when it comes to urban improvement, even if the DPA is officially the sole actor in charge of governing the camp, UNRWA and other institutions also contribute, while more informally, to the 'governmentality' of the camp-space (see Oesch 2012). It therefore questions governance issues and interactions among the different actors involved in the process of improvement. Finally, it also considers the timing of actions, comparing them with broader context-related issues such as regional developments and events.

In others words, it is the urban planning and development process of the refugee camp that motivates this article. Which form does it take? By whom is it implemented? What happens when there are two main agencies (UNRWA and DPA) which operate in the camp and which are functioning according to different 'rationalities of government' in the Foucauldian sense, i.e. different ways of thinking and acting, according to different procedures, objectives, etc. How do these two rationalities, one that can be qualified as 'state-centred' (DPA) and another one that can be qualified as 'transnational' (UNRWA), interact when related to the same issue

[2] It is based on research materials gathered for a PhD thesis. It makes reference to interviews which were conducted between 2006 and 2010 in Amman with employees from UNRWA, DPA and other government departments such as HUDC, as well as NGOs.

(urban development). And finally, to what extent do they merge or hybridize into a strategy or 'apparatus' of urban planning that expresses on its own a particular form of governmentality proper to the camp (see e.g. Bigo 2007 ; Rose *et al.* 2006).[3]

The camp: between an ordinary urban space and a space of exception

There are 1,979,580 registered refugees in Jordan. 359,410 of these, or in others words around 17 per cent, live in the 10 camps co-managed by an international UN body – the UNRWA, and by a specific department of the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs – the DPA (UNRWA 2012). In Jordan, most of the Palestinians refugees also hold Jordanian citizenship. Camps officially remain temporary spaces established mostly on private lands 'provisionally' lent to UNRWA. However, through the years, as this article will show, it is real urban development, although particular in its forms and actions, which has been taking place.

Al-Hamarneh considers that:

> The general strategy of Jordan has always sought to integrate the Palestinian refugees in the socio-political structure of the country and to integrate the Palestinian refugee camps into the municipal planning and construction.
> (Al-Hamarneh 2002: 174)

Others consider that camps have more to do with spaces of exception (see Hanafi 2008). As Destremau (1996) considers, and as this article will show, regarding the issue of urban development and camp management in Jordan, the truth is certainly somewhere in between. Ten years ago, Hart also pointed out that for many people in Jordan, al-Hussein camp has become:

> [B]arely distinguishable from surrounding areas of the city: the same infrastructure, the same low quality housing, the same economic conditions as much of East Amman. […] This argument takes no account of the meaning that the *mukhayyam* (camp) has for the inhabitants of Hussein camp themselves.[4]
> (Hart 2000: 72)

We could add to Hart that 'this argument' also does not take into account the management and planning perspective, which is characterised by a heterogeneous ensemble of practices and rationalities, and the creation of a new planning strategy which came to respond to the special conditions of the camp, which in turn respond to the consequences of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in the region and the question of the place of Palestinian refugees in Jordan.

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[3] According to Foucault (1980: 194-5), an 'apparatus' is 'a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.'

[4] Hart (2000: 72) says that residents define the specificity of the camp 'as a social space distinguished by its sociality and modes of social organisation; a moral space with its own variation of common values and codes of behaviour; a "Palestinian" space which houses a particular community with a common past rooted in the land of Palestine.'

AL-HUSSEIN CAMP: PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Al-Hussein camp is located a few kilometres northwest of the historical city centre of Amman. It is situated along the recently constructed 'four-way' road *al-Urdun* (two lanes in each direction) which starts behind the Citadel hill and leads to the northern cities of the country, Jerash and Irbid. After its start, the street meanders along the bottom of the valley, the *wadi al-Haddada*, where a small intermittent river used to flow but has now been drained and covered by the road. Medium and small size houses typical of Amman are built on both sides of the valley, first at *jabal al-Qusur* and then *jabal an-Nuzha*. At this point, after a little more than one kilometre, the street takes a significant S-turn after which al-Hussein camp is located on its left for about another kilometre. In the words of many, i.e. inhabitants of the camps or the area, employees of UNRWA or DPA, professionals of urban planning in Amman, etc., the road now marks one of the borders of the camp. This has become a shared and accepted fact, even if in reality the street meanders along the official border, the boundaries of the camp coinciding at some points with the street, while at other places lying in retreat of the road or beyond it.[5]

Population

Al-Hussein camp was established in 1952 to provide shelter for Palestinian refugees who gathered in the area. According to Destremau (1995: 32-4), it was originally designed to host 8,000 persons. On 1 January 1967, it counted 20,451 registered refugees. In 2008, the population estimate according to UNRWA stood at 29,560 persons (DPA 2008: 50). However, many suggest that the real number of inhabitants is larger. UNRWA's estimate is based on registered refugees only. There are refugees living in the camp without being officially registered at the agency. Furthermore, there are also non-Palestinian residents renting houses despite the fact that renting is officially not permitted. A DPA (1997: 24) report actually states that 20 per cent of shelters are rented in al-Hussein camp. According to Hart (2000: 101), some are migrant workers in search of cheap accommodation, by far the largest number of whom are Egyptians. Between 40,000 and 60,000 inhabitants is the unofficial number often stated.

Residents of al-Hussein camp are principally refugees from pre-1948 Palestine and their offspring and are of diverse origins, both rural and urban (Hart 2000: 72).[6] Currently, most of them are merchants, entrepreneurs, artisans, members of liberal professions and employees of the administration, or involved in construction work (mainly unskilled labour) and some in vehicle maintenance (Abu Helwa and Birch 1993: 405-6 ; Latte Abdallah 2006: 91-2).[7]

Land

The size of the camp is estimated to range from 367 Dunums (HUDC 1997: 3), to 418 (DPA 1998: 16) or 445 Dunums (DPA 2008: 50).[8] This variation could be attributable to the road construction which 'took away' some portion of the camp – but this is doubtful since the 2008

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[5] If some merely cite this fact as taken for granted, for others it might be part of a deliberate strategy corresponding to the wish of assessing clearly identifiable camp border marks.

[6] From the centre of Palestine, from al-Lyd and Ramleh (45%), Jaffa and its region (20%) Sarafand al-Amar, Beit Dajan and Safriyeh (15%) (Latte Abdallah 2006: 91). These figures are based on the archives of UNRWA. Hart (2000: 75) mentions that refugees from al-Lyd are especially numerous and are prominent in the institutions of the camp.

[7] This information is based on the archives of DPA.

[8] One Dunum is equal to 1,000 m[2].

figure is the largest. Alternatively it reflects a controversy about whether some parcels located in the south of the camp are officially part of it or not. UNRWA's office and school, the police station and some shelters are located in that area. According to an engineer who used to work for the DPA, in the 1990s original land owners even asked for the removal of these shelters. As stated in the 2008 DPA report, the totality of the camp space is rented by the government (DPA 2008: 25).[9] However, according to the same engineer and confirmed by UNRWA staff members, the contested area has recently been bought by the government from the original owner.

Services

Within the camp, UNRWA runs four schools. The agency also runs 10 schools in the neighbouring area of an-Nuzha (*jabal an-Nuzha*) (DPA 2008: 51). If class numbers are limited, some pupils living in the camp can be sent to an-Nuzha. Similarly, some pupils residing outside the camp but close by can be accommodated in the camp's schools. A UNRWA Public Information Officer even mentioned that there are some 'exchanges' with governmental schools in certain cases. Furthermore, camp schools only offer schooling up to a certain level, after which pupils are obliged to go to an-Nuzha or elsewhere to complete their studies. In the camp, UNRWA also runs a health centre. There are an additional 11 private clinics and the Zakat committee health centre (DPA 2008: 51). Refugees can receive UNRWA health services at no cost. They can also go to other health centres or clinics inside or outside the camp and ask for reimbursement from UNRWA, but as of recently, as reported by a UNRWA staff member, fees coming from private establishments are no longer reimbursed. There are five mosques in the camp, one youth club (supervised and supported by the Higher Council of Youth and the DPA), and several permanent NGOs, supervised and supported by the government or UNRWA (DPA 2008: 50-2).[10] These are the services provided within the limits of the camp. However residents can also benefit from services or facilities located or 'delocalised' outside the camp.[11] For example, the association of the city of Ramleh and al-Lyd are within proximity of the camp, as is the Islamic centre *al-Habura* (Latte Abdallah 2006: 95).

Housing

In 2008, the number of housing units reported by DPA was 2,488, while the number of dwellings stood at 3,726. The report still referred to a housing unit as the initial planned area of 100 m^2 which was given per household, while the dwellings referred to the actual number of houses in the camp, as in some cases more than one house has been built on the original 100 m^2 (DPA 2008: 50). Number and denomination have evolved over years and in the mid-1960s, 3,628 houses (called 'huts' at that time) were counted for 3,171 families (Goichon 1964: 172). In 1997 (just before the construction of *al-Urdun* street and the ensuing

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[9] Camps are mainly built on lands that were 'temporarily borrowed' from their private owners by the Jordanian government and given to UNRWA. The compensation given to owners is based on the initial value and does not reflect the actual market price of the land.

[10] Women Program Center (UNRWA); Zakat Committee (Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs); Friends of Children Society (Ministry of Social Development); Women Federation (Ministry of Interior); Information Technology and Community Services Center (National Information Center, DPA and Camp Services Committee).

[11] Latte Abdallah (2006: 95) considers that the small number of NGOs is due to the extension of the camp in the urban space and the mobility of its inhabitants.

demolition of houses) there were 1,970 'shelters' (DPA 1997: 24).[12] Overcrowding of houses and lack of available plots in the camp is regularly mentioned as one of the main challenges to address.[13]

In the mid-1960s, Goichon (1964: 171) reports that the original tents provided had disappeared, and refugees had built small houses in concrete with fibrocement roofs.[14] Later, Abu Helwa and Birch state that:

> Housing conditions in the camps and their fringe areas were generally much poorer that in the rest of the city [...]. [M]any units are characterized by problems resulting from poor construction, inadequate ventilation and dampness, and low levels of maintenance. Whole areas suffer from very high densities of development, with each crudely-constructed concrete unit tightly packed against its neighbours so as to make the maximum use of the available plots.
> (Abu Helwa and Birch 1993: 407)

In 2010, UNRWA states that within the Jordan field, approximately 15 per cent of shelters within camps are assumed to be in a dilapidated condition (UNRWA 2010: 33).

Infrastructure

The latest report of the DPA (2008: 50) notes that 98 per cent of houses have connections to the water supply and sewerage system. These numbers are the same compared to the 1997 report (DPA 1997: 25) which adds that 100 per cent have electricity and 35 per cent telephone service. In the mid-1960s, Goichon (1964: 172) reported that some houses only had water installations, while others were forced to use water supply points in transversal streets. Abu Helwa and Birch (1993: 407-10) maintain that in 1993, in terms of infrastructure provision, namely piped water and electricity, surveys indicate that refugee housing differs little from the rest of Amman's housing. The camp had also been connected to the city's sewer system and they noted that major improvements in the provision of main public utilities had been achieved in recent years. Infrastructures come under the responsibility of the government. A UNRWA Public Information Officer explains that as Jordanian citizens, refugees are entitled to benefits from utility infrastructure. UNRWA has only the responsibility for its services infrastructures.

The area of paved roads and concrete footpaths is indicated to have dropped drastically within the last 10 years, to the point that these numbers and the eventual deterioration of this infrastructure are questionable, all the more so considering the work carried out during the Community Infrastructure Program (CIP) in 2000–01. Concerning the total surface of paved roads, it is supposed to have gone from 77,455 m^2 in 1997 to 18,000 m^2 in 2008. Concrete

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[12] Apart from a change in the counting criteria, the diminution in the number of units could be the result of the destructions that occurred during the civil war of 1970–1 known as 'Black September' and the combats between the Jordanian army and the guerrilla groups. However, destroyed units have long since been reconstructed, and given the density of housing it is difficult to imagine more built-up spaces.

[13] Abu Helwa and Birch (1993: 405-8) found that 57 per cent of households count four to nine persons and 34 per cent more than 10, knowing that 54 per cent of houses have two living/sleeping rooms and only 29 per cent three or more rooms.

[14] The information was confirmed in 1997 by an internal document of the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC 1997: 3) which states that 'most of the housing units are built with concrete blockwork for walls and covered by reinforced concrete roof.'

footpaths went from 16,375 m^2 in 1997 to 11,500 m^2 in 2004 and 9,126 m^2 in 2008 (DPA 1997: 25, 2004: 40, 2008: 50).

Layout

In contrast to Goichon (1964: 171) mid-1960s description of al-Hussein camp – 'Well organised. Streets are wide, at least at the entrance. "Village" is the word that comes to mind'[15] – today, at first glance, al-Hussein camp recalls more of a 'working-class' neighbourhood.

The regularity of the plan of the camp is noteworthy. Imagine an imperfect rectangle of about one kilometre long and 200-300 meters wide situated on a slope corresponding to the side of the al-Hussein hill (*jabal al-Hussein*). In the middle, along its longest portion, the camp is divided into two parts by its main road, where commercial surfaces and activities are concentrated.[16] At regular intervals along its shortest portion, about 50 transversal narrower streets lined with houses run from the bottom of the hill upward, crossing the main street perpendicularly.[17] No barriers or walls separate the camp from its surroundings. Furthermore, the camp is contiguous to the urban landscape on each of its sides. The 'borders' of the camp are formed only by streets, except in the far southeast of the camp where it is contiguous to the neighbourhood of *wadi al-Haddada*, an area also known as *Hay as Sina'a*.

Literature often distinguishes between the upper part of the camp and its lower side (see Al-Hamarneh 2002: 184 ; Hart 2000: 80 ; Latte Abdallah 2006: 92). Houses located on the top of the slope are described as better off than those at the bottom. However, this article argues that this is perhaps less the case today as initiatives have been undertaken to improve the houses situated along the road. Furthermore, Hart (2000: 81) states that many of the poorer houses with corrugated-metal roofs were knocked down to make way for the new road. However, several such houses can still be found today at the bottom where the most serious problems such as rainwater or sewer flooding in wintertime occur. When asked to describe the valley area before the construction of the road, some inhabitants also said that it was a dangerous place.[18]

The camp and its surroundings

It is impossible to talk about the camp without mentioning its surroundings. Above, on the eastern border of the camp starts the higher end middle-class area of Jabal al-Hussein. Only a medium-size street – called *Yafa* on the city plan – 'separates' them. Separation is however not the adequate word as there is much continuity in the urban landscape, even if the distinction in the urban fabric is quite easy to see. The main visible differences lie in the density and physical conditions of housing. Across the street and upward, there is (more) space between houses, which look bigger, more robust and built in a single shot.

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[15] My translation.

[16] There are 751 registered commercial shops in the camp, 5 bakeries and 5 pharmacies (DPA 2008: 50).

[17] The camp recalls a tree leaf where the main road would be the central main vein (midrib), and the perpendicular small roads, the secondary veins that are connected to the main one and going to the extremity of the leaf.

[18] This echoes Hart (2000: 80-1) when he says that 'in particular, the area of the seil (drain) itself was considered a dangerous place where young ruffians loitered, engaging in various anti-social activities such as glue-sniffing, consumption of alcohol, sex with younger boys and gang fights using razor blades and knives. People said that prostitutes worked in this area particularly.'

More explanation is necessary concerning the western border of the camp located downhill at the bottom of the valley. As mentioned earlier, many consider that *al-Urdun* street, built in 1998, forms today's border. Opposite the road starts the working-class neighbourhood of an-Nuzha. Before the establishment of the street, the area was only roughly separated by the riverbed of an intermittent stream which was at a certain point covered and drained. Without the street, the distinction between the two areas would not be easy to make, and as Hart explains:

> Where the camp adjoins Jabal al-Nuzha, it was, until 1998, harder to detect where one ended and the other began, for the housing was largely of the same poor quality with narrow streets and alleyways. In the perception of inhabitants, the boundary between the two was vague.
> (Hart 2000: 76)

The only major difference would still be that reported by Abu Helwa and Birch:

> Such areas are mainly distinguishable by particular features of street layout, building height and size. These all show less uniformity than in camps because control over building development was more lax.
> (Abu Helwa and Birch 1993: 407)

When interviewed, UNRWA and DPA employees, as well as professionals of urban planning in Amman, unanimously declare that people on both sides 'are the same' and share family or origin ties. For example, the engineer who used to work for the DPA says that 'before it was only one area, people living in safh an-Nuzha thought about themselves as being part of the camp, it is the street which created two areas.' Furthermore, for UNRWA employees, this border does not seem to bear a lot of significance as their area of duty seems to include both an-Nuzha and the camp, except maybe to some extent for the Officer who coordinates UNRWA services for the camp, as well as for garbage collection and sanitation activities which are limited to the space of the camp.

Hart (2000: 76) reports that many living on the an-Nuzha side of the street had been living there since the establishment of the camp. In fact, it seems that people gathered in that area even before the creation of the camp. A portion of the area just opposite the camp called *safh an-Nuzha* is what is referred to in Jordan as an informal neighbourhood (*sakan `achwai*). Some even used to refer to it as a 'slum' or a 'squatter settlement'. People established houses without building authorization on plots which did not belong to them. This however does not necessarily mean that they were 'squatting' the land, as some leased it or bought it from their original owner. Nevertheless, the transaction was not officially registered. Houses resemble those in the camp, as it is apparent that their construction underwent several stages. Be that as it may, since they were not constrained by regulation, they show less uniformity than in the camp and are generally higher. Density of housing is also very high, with very few empty lots. Access to the neighbourhood and the street scheme are not as regular and functional as in the camp. Streets are usually very narrow, wandering between the houses in many directions. As we will see, the neighbourhood was upgraded and 'officialised' by the government in the 1980s and again in the 1990s. This is also the case for *wadi al-Haddada*, another informal neighbourhood adjacent to the camp to the far southeast.

CAMP MANAGEMENT AND INSTITUTIONS

At the institutional level, the DPA is in charge of governing the camp and UNRWA of services provision.[19] Although the camp is located within the city boundaries, officially its management does not come under the jurisdiction of the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) or the other ministries of the Jordanian government which are normally in charge of city management. However, in reality, other actors, such as the GAM or other governmental ministries or agencies, as well as international actors, have an influence and intervene to some extent in the management or 'governmentality' of the camp-space, either regularly or occasionally and directly or indirectly. This article considers several cases related to urban development issues in the next section.

UNRWA

In the camp, UNRWA's main tasks and activities are the same as in its entire area of operations, which is to provide relief, social, health and education services to registered refugees. Furthermore, a small camp service office is based in the camp, in addition to the schools, health centre, ration distribution centre and the women's program centre. On top of that, UNRWA is responsible for collecting and dumping the waste from the camp. In fact, 28 UNRWA sanitation workers and two foremen, dressed in blue, are responsible for some streets, while municipality employees, dressed in orange, take care of others and of then evacuating the collected garbage from the camp.[20] UNRWA also takes care of the physical maintenance of its own infrastructures and of some shelter rehabilitation, depending mainly on additional funding availability.[21]

DPA

The DPA is the government hand in the camp. According to one of its spokespersons, it is involved in all matters and is like a small government coordinating with the big government. It coordinates with other governmental entities, as well as supervising and facilitating activities taking place in the camp. Among its many tasks figure: monitoring the building of additional housing units inside the camps, carrying out rehabilitation works, opening of shops, and following up contracting bids related to construction (DPA 2008: 17).[22] In the camp, DPA counts a handful of office managers. Two of them tell me that the DPA office in the camp is similar to a small municipality. One of their main jobs is the yearly renewal of commercial licenses. DPA managers and UNRWA staff members meet from time to time to discuss day-to-day matters. For example, in one of the joint meetings which I attended, a UNRWA Officer asked the DPA managers if the government could do something about the floods that occur regularly on street number four.

The repartition of tasks and collaboration between the DPA and UNRWA in the camp, and the merging and hybridization of different ways of acting and thinking would necessitate

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[19] There are three types of Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. Four camps were created after the 1948 war and are managed by DPA and UNRWA (among which al-Hussein camp); six camps were set up after the 1967 war and are also managed by DPA and UNRWA; three camps managed only by the Jordan government were also established after the 1967 war.

[20] UNRWA (no date), but the document must have been established in the mid-2000.

[21] The UNRWA field office has an Engineering and Construction Services department. One of the engineers is assigned to the North Amman area.

[22] To this purpose, the DPA headquarter has a Planning and Project directorate.

further in-depth analysis. This article mentions some initial aspects related to urban development.

Camp Services Improvement Committee (CSIC)

Residing in the same massive centrally-located building which shelters the DPA and the computer centre which was built about 12 years ago and atop which the Jordanian flag flies is the Camp Services Improvement Committee (CSIC).[23] It was institutionalised in 1976 and placed under the responsibility of the DPA. Latte Abdallah (2006: 93) notes that the recruitment of the members of the committee is carried out through co-optation from the population and decision of the Director of the DPA in accordance with the Governor of the region (*muhafez*). The committee is composed of a dozen persons appointed for four years, with the exception of the director, who often remains in office longer.[24] The intermediary between the inhabitants and the state, it is financed by the DPA, even if it receives a small amount of funds from UNRWA, and sometimes contributions from merchants and liberal professionals. For example, in 2007, the camp received 60,000 Jordanian Dinars (JD) from the DPA, compared to 35,000 JD in 2003 (DPA 2004: 87, 2008: 90).

Police

Among the institutions which have physical premises in the camp, there is also the police station, situated at the southern extremity of the camp, on the main street, next to the UNRWA camp service office. It is in fact a branch of the main police station of *jabal al-Hussein*. Furthermore, a police officer is assigned to the DPA/CSIC building. The *jabal al-Hussein* station holds a monthly meeting with, among others, managers of the camp such as UNRWA staff members to discuss security issues.

IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES AND PLANNING STRATEGY

This section reviews interventions on housing, physical infrastructure or urban layout which were conducted in or around al-Hussein camp in the course of the last 30 years. It gives details about the scope of each action in order to highlight similarities or differences, and eventually to explain how together they form a specific strategy of urban planning. Significantly, it does not only consider the work of the DPA which officially is the sole actor governing the camp, but includes UNRWA which also takes part in the process, as well as other institutions which are portrayed as lying outside the governance of the camp, i.e. the municipality, specific departments of the government dealing with urban development, as well as NGOs. The actions of these institutions inside the camp or at its margins all contribute to shape its governmentality and the form of its urban development. When speaking of UNRWA, Hanafi (2010) has proposed the notion of 'phantom authority' to label such 'informal' participation to the governmentality of the camp.

Housing

Improving the structural conditions of housing seems to be one of the most urgent needs in al-Hussein camp. The camp has its own regulations concerning housing construction, in

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[23] The ration distribution centre of UNRWA is also situated on the bottom floor of the same building.

[24] The current director lives on the upper part of *jabal an-Nuzha*, in a street with high end houses which were built by 'returnees' from Kuwait (see Le Troquer and Hommery al-Oudat 1999). It is said that he has been successful in the Gulf.

particular with reference to vertical extension. At first, the enforcement of regulations was the task of UNRWA, but since 1975 it has been passed on to the DPA (Destremau 1996: 539). The maximum height of houses was limited to the ground floor. Now most houses have a second floor which is tolerated, but some have even added a third or fourth floor. In their survey, Abu Helwa and Birch (1993: 409-10) found that 50 per cent of current householders in al-Hussein camp had made extensions to their houses for an average size increase of 28 per cent. If extensions are mainly vertical, refugees have also from time to time encroached on the streets. If nearly all houses had a kitchen, it was often only a part of the living room, 52 per cent did not have a kitchen sink with running water, and only 13 per cent had a separate bathroom.

Most of the inhabitants transform their shelters themselves, in accordance with their resources. DPA and UNRWA, in collaboration with ministries (such as the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation), NGOs or donors, each also have their own 'programs' of shelter rehabilitation or of help to refugees for improving their houses. Information regarding many of these projects can be found either in institutional documentation or in newspapers, but it is difficult to clearly identify or differentiate between the projects taking place inside each of the two institutions. Shelters are rehabilitated sporadically, depending on available funds, and in an isolated manner. Moreover, the two entities have each their own eligibility criteria and a low level of collaboration between them in the domain of housing reconstruction has been noted, as reported by a UNRWA Officer. An UNRWA staff member declares that in the past the DPA used to coordinate with UNRWA regarding design criteria, to get examples of shelter plans from UNRWA. In addition, the CSIC also tries to play a role in that field by attracting NGOs or encouraging donors.

At UNRWA, the Engineering and Construction Services department and the Relief and Social Services department have a program of rehabilitation for the 'Special Hardship Cases'. Generally speaking, this consists of the construction of one room, with kitchen and bathroom. In 2003, the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission (ECHO) launched a partnership with UNRWA. Under this program between April 2005 and May 2006, 54 shelters were rehabilitated in Jordan, three of which in al-Hussein camp (UNRWA 2007). The European Union also regularly supports the government and the DPA in the rehabilitation of shelters in refugee camps. This also consists in constructing one-room housing units, including a small kitchen and bathroom, which recalls UNRWA standards (Jordan Times 2007). As a former employee of the DPA explains, this particular program started with pilot projects implemented by an Italian NGO *Istituto per la Cooperazione Universitaria* (ICU) in the early of 2000s and continues to run today.

However, UNRWA emphasized the need to change its strategy and its *Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2005-2009* mentioned the agency's aim to develop a comprehensive shelter and rehousing strategy, and to establish an Urban Planning Unit to that purpose. The agency also highlighted the possibility for larger scale housing schemes, as this article will encourage in the conclusion (UNRWA 2005: 4). Five years later, the agency re-iterates that:

> UNRWA needs to take a more systematic approach to planning and implementing shelter upgrading. Focusing on bringing the worst shelters up to minimum standards, rather than

the more costly approach of demolition and reconstruction will be important to ensure that more refugees benefit from shelter improvements.[25]
(UNRWA 2010: 36)

Infrastructure setting up

According to Destremau (1995: 22-3), originally collective infrastructure has been installed in the camp at the same pace as in the rest of the city. The electricity grid reached the camps between 1962 and 1963, with the responsibility of connecting up in the hands of the inhabitants. In 1965, the water distribution network was installed in the camp. Again, inhabitants have to pay for the connexion and the meter. Main streets were tarred in the 1970s, in collaboration with the municipality. In the mid-1970s, the sewage system was installed, individual connection being at the expense of the users. Finally, in the early 1980s, the telephone network was inaugurated.

This infrastructure was installed and is supplied by the municipality and other ministries or entities, as is the practice in the rest of the city. It is thus possible to note that these practices of providing utilities differ from the official line that keeps emphasising the specifically institutional management of the camps. However, in refugee camps, the DPA is filtering, supervising and coordinating the activities of the municipality and other ministries or entities.

Restrained improvement projects

Small-size projects of infrastructure improvement take place regularly. It is mainly the DPA which is responsible for these. Funds come from the government, though sometimes through donors. If the DPA is not responsible for the project, it supervises it and coordinates with the interested entities. As mentioned, the DPA headquarters has a Planning and Project directorate where it can establish plans for the necessary interventions. Generally speaking, the DPA then hires a contractor to implement the work. One of the office managers of al-Hussein camp cited the example of the rehabilitation of some sewer pipes that took place in early 2009.

Urban Development Program (UDP)

The first large scale initiative of urban development in the area took place in the 1980s around the camp, in *safh an-Nuzha*. The informal neighbourhood which is located next to the camp was integrated into an Urban Development Program (UDP) aiming at improving the conditions of urban housing, especially informal settlements or so-called 'slums'. At that time, urban upgrading and rehabilitation initiatives were gaining momentum in Jordan. An Urban Development Department (UDD) was established for that purpose within the Jordanian government, through the National Planning Council and with the support of the World Bank. Most of the hired employees were freshly graduated Jordanian engineers, architects or social workers, as well as a few international consultants. According to these employees, their work was directed toward 'real slums'. Most of these spaces were concentrated in the Amman area (Amman, Zarqa, Ruseifa), and inhabited by Palestinian refugees, with a great deal of them situated around refugee camps. UDD used a comprehensive approach, targeting physical infrastructure, services, housing, urban layout as well as the issue of land tenure and social

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[25] Interestingly, and going into a previously unexplored area, at least in Jordan, the strategy also mentions that 'there are groups of vulnerable refugees living outside camps, in informal gatherings. UNRWA will take steps to ensure that shelter rehabilitation does not overlook these vulnerable refugees.'

and community development. In *safh an-Nuzha*, the work started in 1986 and was completed between 1987 and 1988[26]. Major interventions on the networks of water distribution and electricity grid, sewage and storm water system were carried out. Improvements on the circulation network (mainly pedestrian) and thus on the urban layout were carried out as well. Furthermore, security of land tenure was provided to inhabitants. The number of beneficiaries was about 3,000 for an area of 24,000 m^2 (al-Hussein camp is more than 15 times bigger). The cost of the project was 376,000 JD (see Al Daly 1999 ; UDD 1988).

The informal settlement of *wadi al-Haddada*, also neighbouring al-Hussein camp, was initially included in the program as well. However, the plans for the construction of the *al-Urdun* street led to the abortion of the project (partially upgraded afterwards in the late 1990s at the same time as al-Hussein camp). Indeed, a UDD (1988: 11-2) report states that it was estimated that 50 per cent of the project surface and 30 per cent of the beneficiaries would be affected by the construction of the road. The construction of the street was the second most important urban development initiative in the area.

Construction of al-Urdun street

'The street was on the plans of the municipality for more than 40 years' an engineer of the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (MPWH) tells me. According to him, it was delayed 'for political reasons'. The latter were the presence of the al-Hussein camp on the path of the planned road. He then explains that 'we thought that maybe there would be a solution, so they waited. Then it lasted too long so they decided to build it anyway'. 'They' refers to the urban development decision makers in Jordan, and 'solution' to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the refugee's issue. Officially, solving the conflict or the refugee question would imply the subsequent dismantling of the camp. This would have 'rendered available' the land portion of the camp necessary for the establishment of the road. Without this, the demolition of camp houses required for the construction of the road was a sensitive and risky initiative which could possibly be interpreted by refugees as a sign that their presence is no longer tolerated, and could in turn become cause for protest. No peace accords were ever reached, but Al-Hamarneh speaks of a widespread realistic and pragmatism 'post-Oslo approach' throughout the population of the camps:

> [T]hey have realised that their future is now in Jordan. […] Now they try to make the best of their situation in Jordan for themselves and for their children. They exploit their old networks to make appropriate investments in the camps and co-ordinate their activities with the plans of the international community and its organisations, as well as with the local authorities and non-governmental organisation.
> (Al-Hamarneh 2002: 184-6)

This new approach has certainly rendered possible the construction of the road as well as other initiatives of urban development in the camps. Again, subsequent to the Urban Development Program of the 1980s, the construction of the road can be interpreted as an increasing involvement on the part of the government, and particularly the municipality, in camp development and its surrounding.[27]

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[26] The work was to have started in 1983, but the start of the project was delayed by reservations related to the effects of the municipality's previous plans to build *al-Urdun* street (which was finally implemented in 1998) (UDD 1988: 12).

[27] Hart (2000: 78) mentions that 'when the residents of homes along the path of the proposed new road learned that they were to be made homeless and that the compensation offered would be meagre, many expected that

Furthermore, following the establishment of the road, about 30 houses, from now on situated on both side of the street, were rehabilitated between the late 1990s and early years of 2000, under the initiative of the *Arab Women Organization of Jordan (AWOJ)* with the support of ECHO. The project manager tells me that after the construction of the street 'it became evident that the area needed help'. Low-quality houses that 'were once inside [the camp], were now on its side', therefore highly visible for anybody taking the new road. She also tells me that they received substantial support from GAM, which had made studies in the area (in view of the construction of the new road). The municipality helped to identify the needy houses. According to the project manager, GAM did not want to limit its effort to the new road, but wanted the entire area to have a better look. Again, it is possible to note the influence of the GAM in the urban development, even when present in an indirect manner, and without having the camp 'officially' included in urban development plans.

Community Infrastructure Program (CIP)

This is the last important urban development scheme, although limited in its interventions, to take place in the area. Robins (2004: 183) mentions that the establishment of the Social Productivity Program (SPP) and its Community Infrastructure Program (CIP) component were part of the creation of a social safety net in Jordan which followed the measures of structural adjustment adopted after the economic crisis of the late 1980s. It can also certainly be attributed to the post-Oslo context discussed above as one of its main component, the CIP part A (CIP-A), targeted the upgrading of refugee camps and informal settlements (mainly inhabited by Palestinian refugees and many of them located around camps).

The SPP was adopted in 1996 and aimed at alleviating poverty and generating job opportunities for the poor. In early 1997, the agreement with the World Bank and other entities concerning CIP-A was signed, the implementation starting in early 1998 and completed for the most part by the end of the year 2004 (several projects were delayed). CIP-A deals with upgrading the essential infrastructure of 27 squatter settlements and refugee camps. The Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC), a governmental department, was selected as the implementing agency.[28] The program was financed by the Government of Jordan, the World Bank (WB), *Kreditanstalt fur Wiederaufbau* (KFW), the Islamic Bank and the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development (see HUDC 2004). For the first time, in the official line at least, refugee camps were included in a nation-wide urban development program, and included with other poor neighbourhoods of Jordan. In practices, the areas selected were all inhabited primarily by Palestinian refugees living in poor conditions (whether camps or informal settlements), and the upgrading tended to differ depending on whether it was carried out in a camp or in a settlement.

According to engineers involved in this program, the physical conditions of the chosen areas were better off than the ones upgraded during the 1980s by UDD. Some infrastructure and services already existed, as discussed above. Interventions were minimal and limited to the upgrading of physical infrastructure as well as, in the case of informal settlements only, the

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UNRWA would intervene. […] UNRWA did ultimately get involved, […] but this organisation's ability to effect any changes for the benefit of those being evicted was evidently negligible. […] Although residents understand the camp as a Palestinian space, […] the government's ability to destroy several hundred houses was clear evidence that its future existence depends on Jordanian policy.'

[28] At the beginning of the 1990s, UDD merged with the Housing Corporation. Under the umbrella of the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, the HUDC was established.

creation or widening of roads and paths (which lead to the demolition of houses and the relocation of people).[29] Upgrading was limited and less costly than the projects carried out in the 1980s, and few cost recovery mechanisms were put in place. Land tenure issues as well as social and community development were not included. As an HUDC employee declares: 'our work was to put things right'.

Apart from studies, in informal settlements, HUDC prepared detailed design plans and supervised the work of contractors, except in the case of *safh an-Nuzha*. HUDC asked local consultants to prepare detailed design plans and to supervise works in the camps. Projects financed by KFW were tendered to a joint venture of consultants (local and German firms). Close coordination with the DPA was also advocated and HUDC employees often complain about this interference which limited the scope of their work. The government agency for urban development was thus less directly involved in camps compared for informal settlements.

The project in al-Hussein camp was financed by KFW and estimated at 180,000 JD. Work started 11 July 2000 with its completion forecast for 10 May 2001. A 10-month contract was awarded to a local contractor. Before the work, the appraisal study of HUDC reported that:

> The access roads are in good condition. All of the roads and footpaths are paved, but some footpaths are in a bad condition. The camp is provided by water and sewerage network, about 250 sewer house connections need intervention to prevent back flow. Stormwater drainage is provided for some parts only.
> (HUDC 1997: 3)

Later, the completion report (HUDC 2004) stated that the work carried out on various infrastructure items were as follows: Maintenance of roads, pathways and stairs; Improvement and maintenance to the electrical grid; New storm water network; Minor works on sewer system.

Safh al-Nuzha was also financed by KFW, for a total cost of about 650,000 JD, among which 65,000 for upgrading. The portion upgraded is neighbouring the area which had already been improved in the 1980s. An initial contract was awarded from 15 May 2000 to 15 November 2001 for work on a school to a local contractor for a sum of 425,000 JD. A second contract was awarded from 27 May 2000 to 27 March 2001 to another contractor for upgrading work. The rest of the sum was allocated for the health centre, the day care centre and pedestrian bridges (above *al-Urdun* street, joining the camp). The completion report (HUDC 2004) mentions that these pedestrian bridges were constructed to serve the school built in that area. Minor improvement to storm water sewage network and electrical grid were realised.

Around the same time, *wadi al-Haddada*, which is also neighbouring the camp, was upgraded as well, for a total cost of about 209,000 US dollars, which was financed by the World Bank. The contract was signed on 9 October 2000. The works focused on: Insufficient pathways and damaged surfaces; Old corroded water networks; Absence of storm water drainage; Insufficient road illumination; Adaptation of the electrical grid (HUDC 2004).

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[29] The HUDC (2004) completion report states that 'infrastructure components in squatter settlements and refugee camps (CIP-A) have been selected to improve the level of infrastructure services to a defined minimum level alternatives for addressing each deficiency were considered consistent with sound engineering and design standards.'

CONCLUSION: HETEROGENEOUS PRACTICES, HOMOGENEOUS LANDSCAPE

This article has reviewed the improvement practices and urban planning strategy in and around al-Hussein camp. They have definitely all changed the landscape and rendered the camp more viable. However, it has been shown that changes have taken place in and around the camp, but with little coordination in 'urban planning' issues (e.g. between DPA and UNRWA concerning housing), or worst with interferences (e.g between DPA and HUDC during CIP), while the urban development process is evident. Therefore, this article calls for a more coherent, inclusive and comprehensive urban planning process of refugee camps and their surroundings in the future.

Until now, all interventions discussed in this article are not shaping a coherent program of urban planning. They are multiple practices conducted by multiple institutions, whether governmental, transnational or non governmental (UNRWA, DPA, HUDC, UDD, GAM, NGOs), each possessing their rationalities. Nevertheless, as we have seen, despite remaining particularities and basic living conditions, the urban landscape of refugee camps located in city space, and their surroundings, looks today relatively homogeneous. When looking at the broad picture of urban changes in camps, it is thus possible to conclude that theses practices, although emanating from different institutions each functioning according to their own rationalities, together form a strategy, or an apparatus (or *dispositif*) of urban planning in its Foucauldian sense. Furthermore, despite this heterogeneity and lack of coordination, lots of similarities can be found among these practices (e.g. limited interventions centred on physical infrastructure; shared criteria concerning houses renovation; founding coming from World Bank or European Commission). Ultimately, they were all driven by a discourse of 'improvement of living conditions' shared by all actors and which represents the 'system of relations' of this heterogeneous ensemble of improvement practices. This discourse is influenced by the regional consequences of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the question of the place of Palestinian refugees in host countries, where officially, for political and ownership reasons, refugee camps are still temporary spaces. However, a normalization of their temporariness has allowed urban changes and has lead to the creation of this specific strategy of urban planning (Jamal 2009).

The purpose of this article is not to say that the 'specific characteristics' of the camp-spaces are disappearing with this urban planning process. On the contrary, it is to suggest that the characteristics of what constitutes a refugee camp that allow us to define these sites as such are not fixed but evolving over time. The planning strategy specific to camp and informal settlement environments that we are witnessing maintain the character of the camp, as well as 'rights and claims' of refugees, while at the same time allowing changes in the urban fabric and responding to the 'needs of daily life' (Jamal 2009). According to Misselwitz and Hanafi (2010), this constitutes a form of re-conceptualisation of the camp space.

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