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Constructing Order: Palestinian Adaptations to Refugee Life



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Preface

During its seventh Plenary meeting in Antalya in December 1994, the Refugee Working Group (RWG) of the Multilateral Middle East Peace Process encouraged Norway in its capacity as Shepherd of the Data Base Theme to undertake this study of refugee camps. The present study complements earlier work by Fafo submitted to the same Plenary meeting under the title of *Finding Ways*.

Finding Ways analysed the adaptation strategies of refugees in the various host countries, and described how refugees adapted to, and constructed a livelihood in, different opportunity situations in these countries. In *Finding Ways* we suggested distinguishing between three qualitatively different strategies of adaptation, namely assimilation, incorporation and separation. Our analysis showed how refugee families pursue different strategies according to their aims and the resources under their control. In sum, the report demonstrated a variety of strategies and adaptations, and argued that future policies must make room for individuality, multiplicity and choice with one aim being to increase the resources at the disposal of individual refugees in their struggle to adapt to changing environments.

In the present report we pursue the theme of adaptation further in three directions. First we study how refugees are adapting to the conditions of the camp life and how they create functioning social systems under the restrained conditions in a Gaza Strip refugee camp. Second, we study refugees and their careers as labor migrants to the Gulf disclosing their strategies and paths within a particular form of adaptation chosen by a significant number of refugees. Third, we make an explorative attempt to identifying some themes related to how Palestinians returning to the West Bank adapt to their new life. Like *Finding Ways* the present report is based on case oriented, qualitative research, and not on statistical data and analysis. It thus complements other more statistically oriented work by Fafo on the living conditions of refugees.

We present this report in the hope that it will prove useful for all those who are concerned with Palestinian refugees and their future. To us, the main function of the report is to provide an indication of the complex realities that have been constructed “on the ground”, and as a reminder of the respect that must be paid to the efforts which have gone into constructing a meaningful social order under adverse conditions for over 50 years.

We wish to express our gratitude to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs which commissioned and supported this project, both financially and practically in the field. Fafo is grateful to Professor Elia Zureik from the Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, and by his assistant Mr. Amer Nur, Research fellow at the Arab Studies Society in Jerusalem for their contributions to their present study. Thank are also due to Research Director Jon Pedersen, who has directed the project, and to Geir O. Pedersen who, in his capacity as the managing director of the Center for International Studies at Fafo, initiated and managed the project in its early phases. We wish to express our gratitude to all the researchers in the Centre who have provided valuable comments and ideas, in particular to Research Director Jon Hanssen-Bauer. Moreover, we would like to thank Anh Nga Longva of NUPI and Dr.Frauke Heard-Bey at the Centre for Documentation and Research, Abu Dhabi.

Oslo, November 1997

Arne Grønningseter,
Managing Director

1 Introduction: Migration, homecoming and community organisation

Jon Pedersen

Almost 50 years have passed since Palestinians fled the towns and villages in what is now Israel. Since then, they have settled – and have been settled – in various locations in the Middle East and elsewhere. As the peace process progresses, and the final status negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel are about to begin, the question of the future of the refugees has been put on the agenda. Inescapable topics on this agenda are the future of refugee camps and other settlements in which the Palestinians live, their access to labour markets, indeed their whole integration into the societies where they live or will be living. This is simply because the refugee question is not only one of rights, but also one of a sustainable way of existence.

The aim of this work is to examine aspects of the present integration by focusing on three topics: the social organisation of a refugee camp in Gaza, labour migration from Gaza and settlement from abroad by Palestinians in the West Bank. These topics far from exhaust the list possibilities, but we believe that they can provide insight into some of the crucial issues involved, such as how the refugee identity is expressed in different situations, their interaction with other Palestinians, the permanence – or lack of such – of the camps as social entities.

In a volatile socio-political environment such as that of the Middle East, it is difficult to use studies of the present to predict the future. Nevertheless, studies such as this illuminate some of the choices and some of the constraints on policy that must be taken into consideration.

To some extent the policies of the Middle East, and of the Israeli/Arab conflict in particular, have been framed by the relation between space as a physical fact and place as a social (Appadurai 1993), although this, of course, is not the only way it can be seen. At a basic level such a viewpoint leads to a whole set of questions about controlling the right to territories, but at another level it entails the construction of communities and social networks in physical space: the

transformation of a given space into social place. It is in the latter set of questions we primarily deal with here.

The refugee camps, we will argue, are one of the most telling cases of that transformation. They were constructed initially on temporarily acquired land. The inhabitants braved the weather in tents. Infrastructure was completely lacking. They were inhabited by a more or less haphazard collection of people whose only claim to community was their common origin as Palestinians and the fact that they had fled. From that point their inhabitants have developed complex forms of social organisation through the compelling need to cope with their life as refugees. In doing so they have created a social space out of the physical space offered to them.

As discussed in an earlier Fafo publication (Gilen et al 1994), pre-1948 Palestinian social organisation may be seen on the one hand as based on villages, where locality, kinship, marriage, economic and social organisation were all interwoven and overlaid in a way that constructed communities which were extremely localised. On the other hand, this description was not adequate in the case of the urban part of the population, and especially not the merchants. In this case, kinship, marriage, and social and economic organisation are still very much interwoven but not overlaid in a way that creates spatially localised communities. Rather the locality was virtual in the words of Appadurai; it existed in the sense that the subjects could be known to each other, could be organised, and act together, but not necessarily as physical co-residence.

The portrayal of those two modes of social organisation within the Palestinian society to some extent mimics a general division of description and analysis in Middle East ethnography.

On the one hand, there is in literature an emphasis on egalitarian societies that are politically organised primarily through systems of segmentary opposition. In such systems political action is organised through pre-existing lineages based on descent, in this case patrilineal, i.e. through the male line. There is no centralised power, and conflict lines and alliances closely follow genealogical distance in that close relatives unite against more distant ones; distant relatives unite against even more distant ones, and relatives unite against relatives. Thus, if two brothers quarrel, nobody else takes sides, but when two cousins quarrel, each group of brothers unite and so on as the genealogical distance increases. There are two key features of this way of depicting the social structure of the Middle-Eastern societies. First, it is very much a picture that emphasises *structure*. Thus, actors are seen as enacting a social structure which is seen as given, and where the relation between the individual and the social structure is first and foremost one where individual acts reproduce and visibly display the structure. Second, the social structure is to a large extent one that is conceived of as internal to the societies in question, or, put another way, as part

of the very definition of those societies. Thus, being a member of the society entails living out the rules given by the social structure.

On the other hand there are authors who emphasise social contract and negotiation between interested actors who continually create a fluid social world where action is necessarily dependent on context rather than fixed structures. This is the case, for instance, in much of the recent anthropological literature on Middle Eastern societies, especially in the tradition of Geertz, (1979), Abu Lughod (1993) and others. In their view kinship becomes a set of resources, rather than fixed set of rules, and specifically one that defines, together with codes of honour and other cultural resources, a universe moral discourse (Meeker 1976).

What is common to these conceptualisations of the Middle East, however, is that both see the actors as bearers or creators of specific forms of social organisation, rather than as simply reflections of a generalised western cultural hegemony (Lindholm 1995).

Why this excursion into the social theory of the Middle East? The perhaps obvious insight that the Palestinian social organisation has to be studied on its own merits has considerable consequences when applied to the study of the refugees. As Said repeatedly has made us aware, it does make a difference in which language of analysis our tapestry is woven. It is tempting to describe the social organisation and the conditions of the refugee camps simply as a result of the events that led to the categorisation of Palestinians as refugees. The refugee camps have been seen as a metonym for the whole conflict: the camps have been the logical starting point for explicating the whole chain of grievances suffered by the Palestinians. "The refugee camps represent the core of the problem, as well as being a symbol of it" as Abu Amer (1989:23) puts it in a study of the camps. That view has been adopted by Palestinians themselves, and by the host countries as well as external observers. Several studies point out the force of this conceptualisation for the continued existence, on the ground, of the camps. Thus, in a study of the Jabal Hussein and Wihdat camps in Jordan, Destremau (1995) finds that the building regulations forbidding shelters (itself a word that connotes the temporary character of the camps) from having floors added maintains the distinct character of the camps in the cityscape. The single-floor structures of the camps in contrast to the taller buildings around make the visual merging of the camps with the surrounding squatter settlements impossible. In addition, the study points out the nature of the camps as a testimony to the lack of a solution for the Palestinian problem in general and the refugees plight in particular. Thus, partly symbolically, camps act as witnesses to the collective differentiation of the refugees relative to the population in their host countries.

But singular emphasis on the temporary nature and destitution of the camps easily leads to an underestimation of the capacity of Palestinians to cre-

ate and develop new social forms in exile which in themselves have implications for the conditions for the refugees.

Let us give an example. A typical conceptualisation of a refugee camp in the general setting of humanitarian aid is that the refugee camp is a temporary place of refuge, where the resident does not have any particular rights to the camp itself other than the right of temporary residence. The rights of the refugees are solely constructed in relation to their place of origin before the flight. The implication of this way of thinking is that the discussion of compensation, repatriation or resettlement can take place without giving consideration to the rights and relations of the refugee to the camp itself. For instance, as has sometimes been argued, one could obtain part of the funds needed for possible compensation to the refugees by realising of the values represented by the refugee camp, such as the sale of houses and land which nominally belong to bodies other than the refugee population. The alternative view would be that during their stay in the camp the refugees have constructed a community and achieved rights in this community and to its wealth in addition to the rights they have in relation to their status as refugees. In such a view the houses and land, regardless of the formal titles, would be seen as belonging to refugees. As we will see below, there is much evidence that it is the latter view that is held by the refugees themselves. Tuastad (see part III below) recounts for instance, how refugees that fled the Bureij camp in Gaza in 1967 left a representative of their kin group in the camp in order to guard their property. Such facts must in themselves be taken into consideration when policies are planned, regardless of one's position on the question of legitimacy of the rights.

Another danger in the analysis is that of simply assuming that Palestinians, in terms of social organisation, somehow have not quite realised that they no longer are in their village of origin. Some authors (e.g. Rubinstein 1991) portray the social organisation of the camps and of the refugees as a transfer of people from the original villages, but with few other organisational implications. The camp is basically seen as a kin and locality based unit which is a mirror image of the homeland – while the main ideological difference between before and after the flight is the longing for return through the mirror. In this view, the refugee camps are simply empty spaces, devoid of social organisation in their own right; what organisation they have is really spatially located in the original homes of the refugees. The camps are not, in Appadurai's terms, places in their own right; they merely only spaces that are inhabited with reference to a quite different place, namely the village of origin.

As Said (1993:209ff) puts it, the charting of cultural territory often precedes the recovery of the geographical, and the creation of independent social forms may

well entail the recovery of forms that were themselves partially or completely determined by the forces outside of domination. Nevertheless, the data presented in this report suggests that although the focus on return and original social organisation is undoubtedly an important feature of refugee camp social life, a different mode of analysis is also fruitful. Even though there are continuities in social organisation based on models from home villages, the reconstruction has been stepwise, and the social organisation has been transformed in light of the political new situation. One can identify distinct phases in the development of political organisation of the camps, for instance.

The thread that goes through the argument presented here is that we have to transcend the two viewpoints that either is the social organisation of the refugees simply a reflection of external forces, and in particular Israeli domination, or it is a reflection of localised micro processes of purely internal Palestinian character. Such a transcendence will facilitate a much more realistic discussion of policy options. As Destremau (1995) points out in her discussion of the Amman camps: there is a double territorial identity, one generated from external processes, another from the internal.

Similar arguments as those discussed above also apply to the study of labour migration in the Middle East. On the one hand there are studies which relate migration mainly to overall social structure. Typical examples are the studies by Gabriel and Levy (1988) and Gabriel and Sabatello (1986) that analyse migration in terms of overall economic, political and demographic indicators, such as the unemployment rates in Gaza and the West Bank, the amount of external transfers, Israeli settlement activity and so on. It has been shown, for instance, that the overall level of external transfers to the territories is negatively correlated with to the migration rate.

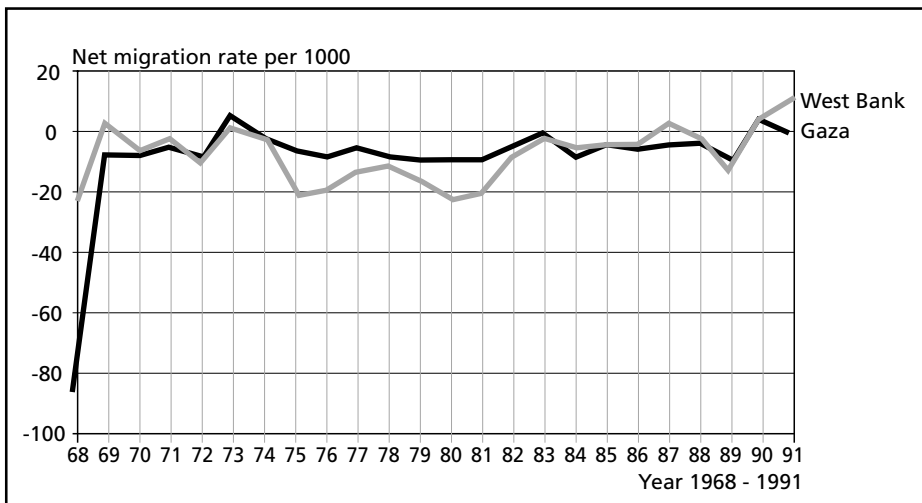
On the other hand, there are approaches, such as the one used in this work (part II) that consider labour migration predominantly in terms of individual and household adaptations to a complex social world. The question of the overall level of migration is not addressed, although an the argument might be made that this level is simply an aggregate result of the individual decisions. This issue of considerable importance in social theory is, however, not the topic here. Rather the emphasis here, is again one of giving Palestinian adaptability and response predominance in the analysis. The dynamics of the context are not given the weight that a more complete analysis, perhaps deserves. What is carried out in the analysis, though, is a mapping of the factors in the context that appear important for migration choices.

The main findings and their implications

The present work is divided into three main parts. Part I deals with labour migration to the Gulf, Part II analyses the social organisation of the Bureij refugee camp in Gaza, and Part III considers the plight of returnees to the West Bank. The three parts all relate closely to the themes announced above: the creation of Palestinian communities and social organisations.

It is difficult to over-emphasise the importance of migration, displacement and flight in Palestinian social organisation. The numbers that fled their towns and villages in 1948 are not entirely clear; estimates range from 500,000 to as much as 900,000 (Morris 1989:297). There are very few of these first generation refugees left; estimates from the PCBS/Fafo demographic survey of the West Bank and Gaza Strip suggest that only 3 per cent of the population are now first generation refugees¹. That does not imply, however, that migration and displacement have ceased to be important. First, the descendants of the first generation refugees make up a large portion of the West Bank and Gaza Strip population. In the Gaza Strip the demographic survey found that 64 per cent were refugees according to the UNRWA definition, while in the West Bank the figure was 27 per cent. Second, the 1967 war created even more displacements. Third, migration since 1967 has been substantial. As Figure 1 shown, migration from the West Bank and Gaza has been the important factor in keeping the population growth of the West Bank and Gaza down.

Figure 1 Migration from the West Bank and Gaza 1967-1991



¹ References to the PCBS/Fafo demographic survey relate to a survey that was carried out in the summer of 1995 with a sample size of about 15000. The results referred to here are based on calculations on the data files. Results have also been published in PCBS 1996

Thus, if we assume a population growth of between 3 and 4 percent, the migration rate of 10–20 per thousand during extended periods reduced the actual growth rate by 25 to 50%.

Nevertheless, it is not only as a safety valve for population growth that migration has been important. Migration has left a substantial mark on the Palestinian population structure within the West Bank and Gaza. There are much less young and middle-aged men than there are women of those age groups. As the case histories in Part I indicate, migration has also been highly selective: the Gulf states received the cream of the Palestinian labour force. Whether this, given the overall situation, was detrimental or a benefit to the development of the West Bank and Gaza is difficult to say: The Palestinians did not become less qualified by working in the Gulf, and their remittances have been an important fuel for West Bank and Gaza economic development both through the direct effects on consumption levels and investments in housing; and as one of the case studies in Part II shows, directly as investments in productive enterprises.

They have left, but they are not away. That is an important conclusion that emerges from the discussion of the migrants in Part I. The migrants have built and kept bonds to the communities that they left behind partly because the migration in many cases was not an individual strategy, but a part of the adaptation of a household or a wider kin group. Moreover it stems from the general tendency of the Gulf states to segregate the labour migrants (Palestinians as well as other groups) from the native population in terms of formal policy and legal status as well as in terms of informal social organisation. It is difficult to say if the separation in terms of informal social organisation in the Gulf is larger or smaller than, say the segregation of Pakistanis in Norway or North Africans in France. For our purposes the important observation is that the segregation is there, and that it leads to very loose ties between the Palestinian expatriate community and their host societies. To put it bluntly: the migration is singularly economic in nature; without the higher wages and work opportunities in the Gulf the Palestinians would not stay. While the analysis of some case histories in Part I suggests that political persecution or fear of such persecution was among the reasons for leaving for the Gulf, this appears more to be a reason for leaving, than as a reason for staying in the Gulf.

The continued social presence of the migrants, even though they are physically absent, must be seen as an important characteristic of the Palestinian communities in Gaza and the West Bank. We have already mentioned the importance of remittances, but the scale of this social presence may also be indirectly seen in the fact that there is a large number of houses or flats that migrants have built, standing empty waiting for their owners. According to the PCBS/Fafo

demographic survey, around 6% of the total housing units are vacant, despite the difficult housing situation in many parts of the West Bank and Gaza. The tenancy laws make it difficult for an owner to evict a tenant if the owner needs the house for other purposes. For a migrant owner who intends to return, it is therefore not advisable to let out the house.

The PCBS/Fafo demographic survey also indicates another aspect of the fairly close ties between the migrants and the population in the West Bank and Gaza. In the West Bank, 61 per cent of the household heads report that they have close relatives abroad, close relatives being defined as siblings, parents, children or a spouse. In Gaza, the percentage is lower at 53. Although it is difficult to translate these percentages into numbers of Palestinians outside the West Bank and Gaza, they indicate that a substantial portion of the migrant community has close ties with the territories.

Hence, available statistics very much bear out the conclusion of close ties between the migrants and the residents indicated by the case stories in Part I and Part III. Moreover, in contrast to what is often the case in situations of prolonged labour migration, even though the migrants have been away for a long time, indeed often much longer than expected, the migrant will sooner or later return to the West Bank or Gaza, or try to do so.

Is there evidence that the migrants from the West Bank and Gaza are more often refugees than not? The question is difficult to answer, because our quantitative evidence comes from within the West Bank and Gaza (i.e. from the PCBS/Fafo demographic survey), rather than from the Gulf itself. Comparison between subgroups based on data on the reported number of close relatives abroad assumes that the age structures of the groups interviewed are similar, that the migration history as well as the demographic characteristics of the migrants have been

Table 2 Mean number relatives of household heads abroad and in the Gulf, proportion of household heads with close relatives abroad and in the Gulf

	West Bank		Gaza	
	Non-Refugee	Refugee	Non-Refugee	Refugee
Mean number of relatives abroad	1.7	1.5	1.2	1.1
% with relatives abroad	66	59	56	47
Mean number of relatives in the Gulf or abroad	0.4	0.4	1.0	1.3
% with relatives in the Gulf	26	26	57	65
n (household heads, weighted)	1910	4175	1701	847

Source: PCBS/Fafo demographic survey. Relatives comprise spouses, siblings, parents and children. Refugee status is the status of the household head, not the migrant (following the UNRWA definition of Palestinian refugee, however, the majority of the migrants are also refugees).

similar across the subgroups, and thus that the only difference is intensity. With these caveats, a tentative reply to the question that there appears to be little evidence for a contention that labour migration is an adaptation particular to the refugees. Table 2 shows the number of relatives abroad reported by refugee and non-refugee household heads in the West Bank and Gaza.

As Hovdenak points out in Part I, an important characteristic of the migrants from the West Bank and Gaza is whether they have obtained and if so retained their Israeli identification documents. According to the demographic survey, a fairly low percentage have Israeli identification documents. In Gaza, 11% of the Gulf migrants reported holding identity cards (17% of all migrants) while in the West Bank 6% of the Gulf migrants (15% of all) have identity cards. Since the data have been obtained by asking relatives about the possession of identification papers, the data should be treated with due caution. Nevertheless, the data do suggest that there is a fairly small group of Palestinians that have been able to retain their formal links to the West Bank and Gaza, while there is a large group that have not been able to do so.

Even when the migrants and refugees have kept their ties with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, their return is by no means uncomplicated as shown in Part II. Paradoxically, the flip side of the tight social integration documented in our discussion of the Bureij refugee camp is that it is not particularly easy to enter the communities. Integration is not simple, partly because the returnees' charting of the cultural territory is incomplete. As shown in Part II, the conceptual map of what the new reality should be like is not necessarily what it has turned out to be. To return to the West Bank was not experienced as a homecoming, but rather as an immersion into a new set of adaptation problems. This was especially so in the case of women. They often had gained access to the West Bank from abroad by ties of marriage, and appeared to find themselves isolated from their own closest kin. This is in contrast to marriage patterns generally among Palestinians, which tend to preserve the contact between a woman and her kin or immediate social environment at marriage because of the tendency to marry endogamously with respect to kin groups and locality (see Part II).

The observation about the plight of women is an important one, and can be generalized to aspects of the other studies. Hovdenak points out that women actually make up a significant group in the migration of labour and, if we also look at the migration between the West Bank and Jordan women make up an important part. However, the topic has only been touched upon here, although it deserves much further study.

If the picture given above is correct, it points to a conclusion of some relevance for the possible integration of expatriate Palestinians into the West Bank and Gaza. Of the expatriate Palestinians, labour migrants – for a large part –

have been in a position to maintain links with their communities in the West Bank and Gaza. Other Palestinians, and especially refugees, have not. This is partly because the communities in many cases simply do not exist any longer, or have been displaced more or less in toto to another location, and partly because travel has been difficult or impossible. The arch examples of this are the Palestinians living in Lebanon and Syria- the PCBS/Fafo demographic survey did not find close relatives in Lebanon. It is not so true of the links between Jordan and the West Bank and Gaza, where ties of kinship are extensive. Depending on the kind of person, a return to the West Bank or Gaza from abroad is quite different.

An importance aspect of the 'will to return' to the territories is what one may term social maintenance work, effort that migrants put into maintaining links with the West Bank and Gaza. One example is that given by Tuastad in his description of the flight of what has later become known as the "Gaza refugees" in Jordan, that is refugees from 1948 residing in Gaza who left Gaza during the 1967 war. Some of those, according to Tuastad, left some members of their family behind in Gaza in order to guard their perceived rights in the refugee camp.

Many aspects of the case material presented here bring out the role of kinship in Palestinian social organisation. We have considered above how the role of kinship in social organisation is linked to the question of the conceptualization of the Palestinian agency in more general terms. However, the studies presented here also highlight how relations between kin of various categories mediate social relations: they form networks that are used in labour migration and are important in the political organisation of the camps, to mention but a few arenas where kinship emerges as important. In Europe, civil society originally was used as a concept for the level of moral and social order that could mediate between the individual and the state in a context where the inscribing of the individual in society in the form of sharply defined social classes (like nobility and commoners) had broken down (Seligman 1991). It has since come to mean nearly any form of non-governmental, non-party, non-kinship social organisation that stands between the individual and the state.

From the description of the Bureij camp, it has become clear that the development of political organisations outside the sphere of family and kinship has varied in importance. While the overall political organisation has generally been heavily influenced by kinship, during periods of the Intifada the political parties and factions became more important. However, as is documented by Tuastad, their political infighting took forms that were scarcely different from that of kin groups, and after the Intifada ended the kin groups re-emerged. Nevertheless, during the elections in 1996 political groups that were not based on kinship again surfaced.

It is important to pinpoint the difference from the European development of civil society here. In Europe the feudal state to large extent had destroyed the political effectiveness of kin groups. The kin groups in Europe were generally bilateral, thus forming corporate groups with more difficulty than the unilineal ones in the Middle East. Civil society, as well as political parties, develops in the Middle East at the same time as kinship-based social organisation remains very much alive. The social result is well illustrated in the Bureij camp as described by Tuastad: a continuing fluctuation between various forms of political organisation, but where primordial loyalties remain important. These fluctuations are one reason for the unpredictability of camp political organisation – in order to predict one has first to predict what form of political organisation will emerge to take possession of the political problem to hand.

In a world where refugees are becoming increasingly important, UNHCR counted 14.4 million refugees in 1995 (UNCHR 1996:248), not including Palestinians who make up perhaps around 4 million more. Palestinian refugees occupy a special place because of the status as a refugee transmitted through patrilineal succession in contrast all other refugee groups. Thus if a person's father is a refugee, that person is also one. This raises the question of the reproduction of refugees as a group, and not only as a category. Tuastad presents compelling evidence of how refugee status is transformed into social identity through the collectivity of the camp. However, other phenomena, such as marriage rules and practices are also involved.

In contrast, labour migration and return to the West Bank does not seem to have that large implications for the management of a specific refugee identity; in these cases the i Palestinian identity appears more important.

2 On the Gulf road: Palestinian adaptations to labour migration

Are Hovdenak

Over the past decades, the oil-exporting Gulf countries have been a popular destination for work-seeking migrants from both the Arab world and from Asian countries. Palestinians have constituted a substantial part of the expatriate communities in the Gulf from an early stage, even before the oil-boom of 1974. Here we focus on how labour migration to the Gulf area has functioned as a coping strategy for Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Has the fact of being refugees influenced their migration priorities? Do Palestinian refugees migrate to the Gulf out of poverty, or are there other reasons? Their intentions on departure from the West Bank and Gaza to the Gulf, their performance as guest workers in the Gulf and their future migration plans are addressed and discussed. Efforts are made to assess the nature of any possible aspiration to return back to the self-ruled areas among Palestinians living in the Gulf. The Gulf is here defined as the six member states of the Gulf Co-operation Council: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman.

Beside the possibility of working in Israel, migration to the oil-producing Gulf-states has been an attractive option to secure income for not only the migrants themselves, but also for their families and relatives, many of whom with time became quite dependent on the remittances from “a rich uncle” in the Gulf.

As time went by, successful migrants assisted other family members to get visas and jobs in the Gulf. Palestinian migrant colonies have developed gradually in this way since the 50's in the Gulf; first in Kuwait, later in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Only smaller numbers migrated to the remaining Gulf emirates. Access to the labour market in the Gulf was tightened by economic problems of the oil-producing countries from the mid-80's.

The Gulf crises of 1990 and the ensuing war to force Iraq out of Kuwait was a turning point for the communities of expatriate workers in the area. The extreme vulnerability of the migrant population was clearly illustrated by the return of some 1.5 million persons because of the crisis (Naggar 1993:145). Accusations of popular support for the Iraqi invasion among migrants of certain nationalities, and the

failure of their respective governments – and the PLO – to take a clear stand of unconditional support for Kuwait, led to harsher reactions from the governments in the Gulf states against some nationalities than against others. Palestinians, Jordanians, Yemenites and Sudanese were all affected by government policies of expulsion from the Gulf.

Figures for how many Palestinians fled from the Gulf because of the crisis in 1990/91 are disputed (as are the figures for how many were there before the crisis). Just after the war some estimates ran up to 400,000 Palestinian returnees only from Kuwait. ESCWA claimed in 1993 that the number of Arab returnees was smaller than previously thought, and estimated that altogether 255,000 Palestinians and Jordanians had fled because of the war (International Migration 1, 1994). According to the Jordanian Ministry of Planning and the ILO, the number of returnees from Kuwait to Jordan was estimated at 200,000 (Shami 1994:234). Estimates of the number of Palestinians still living in the Gulf are not considered to be any more accurate. According to the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* (July 25, 1995), there were 324,000 Palestinians living in the Gulf in 1995, of whom 182,000 were in Saudi Arabia and 75,000 in Kuwait. There is a general lack of reliable demographic information and other data on labour migration between Arab countries.

In spite of the fact that Palestinian expatriates share language and religion with the inhabitants of the host countries, they never reached a high degree of social integration in any of the Gulf societies. The contact they have with local inhabitants is limited to what is necessary for doing the work they are there for. Socially, Palestinians mix mostly with each other, and more with other Arab expatriates, such as Lebanese and Egyptians, than with locals. The lack of integration into the local environment underpins a common statement of Palestinian Gulf-migrants: “We never intended to settle there. The Gulf is a place to work and save money, to prepare for a better life when we return one day.” That is a comment often made by the migrants. On the other hand, many migrants stayed longer than they say they had intended at the outset. With time, many also brought their families – an act that in migration theory usually is interpreted as a step towards settlement. The Palestinian communities in the Gulf countries acquired therefore some of the characteristics of permanent migration movements.

The ongoing peace process between Israel and the PLO might have influenced the desire to return in those of the Palestinian expatriates in the Gulf who have ties to the self-ruled areas, i.e. those who were born or have lived there and have relatives still living there. The question of the return of Palestinian refugees in the Gulf is an important one for the new Palestinian self-rule authorities, according to the head of Department for Palestinian Expatriates, Anis Barghouti.¹ One

¹ Interview with Anis Barghouti by the researcher, Jerusalem, 4.10.96.

reason is that this segment of the Palestinian diaspora consists of people with economic and human resources; many of them have a high level of education, skills, advanced work experience and accumulated capital. Their presence in Palestinian territories and participation in the ongoing process of institution building will be of crucial importance according to Barghouti.

One reason why migration behaviour in the case of Palestinian labour migrants in the Gulf deserves attention is that knowledge about this subject can also – with reservations – indicate some trends in migration aspirations among other segments of the Palestinian refugee population. As most of the respondents in our study left the West Bank and Gaza as labour migrants, they moved with a certain degree of voluntariness. The attitudes towards return, and its actual implementation, among those who have the opportunity to do so, might say something about how attractive the option of return is among those Palestinians in exile, who are barred from the alternative of coming back. Their evaluations of the costs and benefits of return might give some indication of how strong the aspiration of returning is in general, should this option be presented to wider segments of the Palestinian diaspora during the forthcoming negotiations between Israel and the PLO on the refugee issue.

It must be stressed, though, that when we discuss the “return” of our respondents from the Gulf, it is – in the case of refugees – return to their previous refugee homes. This fact might affect their aspirations for going back to West Bank and Gaza, as they still are denied what they claim is their right to go back to their places of origin within what is today Israeli territory. Moreover, a large proportion of the migrants are not refugees.

Methodology

This analysis is based on life histories collected through in-depth interviews with 32 heads of household among Palestinian refugees who are working, or have previously been working, in one or more of the six Gulf co-operating Council (GCC) States. The interviews were conducted in August-September 1995 in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, where the interviewees were on summer vacation with their relatives, or had returned permanently from the Gulf. The respondents were selected in part by two field assistants in Nablus and one in Gaza before the field work had begun, and partly during the field work, as some of the interviewees led us to other interviewees. By utilising this “snowball” method a sample was established which included respondents from different walks of life among Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza strip with work experience in the Gulf. It included age, education, work, gender, refugee category, length of experience in the Gulf and degree of success whether as migrants or as returnees. It should be stressed that the

sample does not claim to be representative in any quantitative sense. The analysis is based on a qualitative, anthropological approach, where the aim is to understand processes, rather than to count outcomes.

The decision to conduct the interviews in the West Bank and Gaza, rather than in the Gulf countries, has both advantages and disadvantages. One disadvantage is that those Gulf-migrants who are present in West Bank/Gaza are those who have closer ties with their first place of refuge than those who do not spend their summer vacation in the Palestinian territories. However, an important advantage is that the interviewees probably feel able to speak more freely and openly about subjects that might be considered too sensitive to talk about in the Gulf countries. Criticism of the conditions for expatriate labour, might affect relations with local authorities or employers. This point was underlined during the conduct of the field work, as those who have returned from the Gulf clearly articulated more outspoken criticism about discrimination during their stay in the Gulf than did those who are still working there.

A model of Palestinian migration to the Gulf

The analytical framework we will use to understand the migration aspirations among the interviewed Palestinian Gulf-migrants is a model where migration aspiration is dependent on two main sets of factors. The first one encompasses the options at hand for the migrants, limited or facilitated by state regulations, political events and the results of peace negotiations. The other group of factors, which is the one we will concentrate on, centres on the respondents' own priorities from among the options they perceive as available to them. The economic advantages – as seen from the migrants' point of view – of migration will be focused upon, especially when it comes to differences in standard of living variables such as work opportunities, housing, health and education. The respondents' expressed aspirations of migration will be seen in the light of their actual plans and concrete preparations for future movements.

Within this more general model, we will focus on some crucial indicators that disclose important aspects of the nature of Palestinian migrants' relations to the host society in the Gulf. First, we will focus on the reasons behind migration and the initially intended length of stay. Second, we will look for indicators that tell us how deep the roots are which the migrants have planted in the host society in terms of duration, and social and economic ties. To what extent do they feel that they belong to this new society, or do they still feel like strangers? And if they perceive themselves as excluded, do they wish to be more integrated – or do they

voluntarily keep a distance? Third, what kind of ties do they keep with their families in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip? Finally, what plans do they have for the future? Have they prepared their return in any concrete manner? What are their outspoken wishes, and how do these wishes fit in with their current and previous actions?

Some theoretical considerations

The model described above is an attempt to draw upon traditional theories focusing on the importance of push-pull factors which influence population movements, as well as some more recent theoretical achievements. Several variations of the general push-pull approach exist in migration literature. Some are behavioural in orientation, and concentrate on the decision making process of the individual migrant, who is seeking to maximise his opportunities in life. Others have a narrowly economic approach, and focus on the cost/return for the society of investment in human capital (Shami 1993:6). Common to those varieties is a mapping of one set of central factors in the place of departure that might encourage inhabitants to leave (push factors), and another set of factors at the point of destination that attracts the attention of migrants (pull factors). These factors do not only cover consideration of possible differences in economic returns between two places; the relevant push-pull factors also include political and social change as well as attraction by the destination region. As such, this model is an open one; it can include most imaginable reasons for would-be-migrants wanting to leave one place and settle in another.

These approaches have aimed at explaining why people move from one place to another, without questioning who migrates and who does not within a certain population. The gap was filled by the research carried out by Kutznets who emphasises the selectivity of the migrant stock. Kutznets stresses the importance of human resource characteristics in explaining migration, claiming that migrants come from select groups, with a higher propensity to migrate (Gabriel 1988:4).

Other traditions have stressed the duality of voluntary and forced migration and the duality of individual and group migration (Shami 1993:11). Voluntary migration is normally associated with movements of humans caused by expectations of improving the existing level of standard of living by moving to a new locality. This category is distinguished by the migrant's possibility to choose between a set of options, including the alternative of not leaving the original place of residence. Persons leaving their home town or country in search of work represent a typical form of voluntary migration. Involuntary migration, on the other hand, is characterised by the lack of options; the migrant is forced to leave his home by circumstances he does not control, seeking refuge from, for instance war, political

persecution or natural disaster. In some cases, but far from all, international law recognises involuntary migration as legitimising refugee status for the migrant.

The second duality, that of individual and group migration, points to which unit is the subject in focus: single, independent humans on the move, or groups moving together. The two concepts are interrelated in the way that involuntary migration is normally coupled to group migration, with refugees as the classical example. Similarly, voluntary migration is most commonly seen in connection with individual migration, represented by the labour migrant, going abroad alone in search of better economic opportunities than those available at home.

In recent literature the categorisations in these approaches have been criticised for being too rigid and for ignoring the element of choice when it comes to the decision of whether to flee or stay in a critical situation. It has been argued that migration should be seen as a type of social action rather than a passive reaction to events, and that the relationship between external forces and adaptation strategies pursued by displaced peoples should be seen as an interactive process that continuously informs and influences decision-making. Furthermore, the element of choice for so-called economic migrants might be seriously questioned in cases where people are forced by poverty to move to find alternative means of living. An even more important criticism is one concerning the linking of the two concepts. In matters of labour migration it might not be appropriate to analyse this as an individual act, as the migrant often is acting on behalf of his family, and thus the unit for analysis should be the household as a whole rather than the individual migrant (Richards and Waterbury 1990:384).

These remarks apply to the case of Palestinian labour migrants in a constructive way. Firstly, Palestinian refugees working in the Gulf have experienced both the “forced” and “voluntary” types of migration in two successive stages. Many of them fled from a direct war situation in 1948 and found refuge in the West Bank or Gaza. At a later stage they moved on to the Gulf, attracted by the prosperous opportunity of employment caused by the oil-boom. It should be noted that there is not necessarily any contradiction between the identity of a forced migrant, in this case with a refugee status, and that of the later stage, when the same migrant decided to move voluntarily. Rather, we will underline that these two stages might be interrelated, as a Palestinian who has been displaced by war in the first place might use the option of labour migration as a coping strategy in their struggle to adapt to the challenges of a new environment. Thus, one type of migration has given rise to another: forced migration has led to voluntary labour migration.

It is noteworthy that not even those Palestinians who fled from West Bank or Gaza because of the war in 1967 came to the Gulf as refugees. They all went to another country before they moved on to the Gulf. Accordingly, and in line with international conventions, the authorities in the Gulf states consider them as an

expatriate community similar to any of the numerous other colonies of foreign nationals.

The second distinction, with regards to whether the analysed unit of labour migration should consist of individuals or groups, is no less central to the case of Palestinian labour migrants. As previous studies have shown, the household economy of Palestinian refugees is generally highly collectively oriented (Gilen et al. 1994). The use of labour migration to increase the economic viability of the household will be viewed in this study in light of their collectively oriented coping strategies in exile. This means that a migrant's relations with the rest of the family will be a central focal point before, during and after the period of migration.

To sum up, we will map some central push and – pull factors which will be viewed in the light of the collective organisation of the Palestinian household. We will analyse the characteristics of the migrants, which can explain the type of human capital and its contribution to migration.

The history of Palestinian Migration to the Gulf

As noted, there is a general lack of regular reliable data on migration flows to Arab countries. Of the six Gulf countries, only UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait held censuses in the 1980's. Saudi Arabia had no census between 1974 and 1992. Furthermore, the existing sources of data lack demographic characteristics for labour migrants. Therefore migration estimates in the available literature vary widely. To assess migration flows from the West Bank and Gaza Strip to Arab countries is even more problematic, since no Arab country differentiates between a Palestinian refugee holding a Jordanian passport and a native Jordanian in their statistics. Furthermore migration between the West Bank and the East Bank of the Jordan River before 1967 was not registered as both territories were a part of the Kingdom of Jordan, and no permits were required for Palestinians in the West Bank to settle in the East Bank.

Let us first draw a picture of the general trend of labour migration to the Gulf area from the Arab world. The history of modern Gulf migration can be divided into five phases, adding one to those of Richards (1990: 378):²

1. Before 1974. At this stage the foreign labour force in the Gulf was characterised by a relatively high skill level, and Arab labour constituted four fifths of the expatriate labour force in the Gulf.

² We have added the last phase to Richard's originally four phases.

2. After the dramatic increase in oil-prices in 1974. The boom in the construction sector caused a rapid growth in the import of unskilled labour from poorer Arab countries.
3. Late 70's. The share of Arab migrants decreased, as Asians flocked to the region. At the same time, the demand for unskilled labour slowed down, because the main infrastructure and development projects were completed.
4. Falling oil-prices from 1982. The growth in demand for foreign workers went down even further, and the shift from unskilled to skilled labour continued.
5. 1990/91 Gulf crises led to the return of 1,5 million workers to their home countries. Jordanian, Palestinian and Yemeni workers were largely replaced by other Arab or Asian labour. Nationalisation of the labour pool has become a central aim in several Gulf states.

There is little reliable information on the destination of Palestinian migrants from the occupied territories (Gabriel 1988:3). The rapid changes in the Gulf labour market have, however, undoubtedly affected the economy and migration pattern of the West Bank and Gaza. Even if the data we have do not allow us to quantify the proportion of Palestinians working in the Gulf, an historical overview of the total out-migration from the Occupied Territories can be useful.

Out-migration from the West Bank was high during the years of Jordanian rule. From 1950 to the outbreak of the war in 1967, 400 000 Palestinians crossed the Jordan river to the East Bank in Jordan. During the 1967 war, or just after, some additional 200 000 fled the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Gabriel 1988:2). A large part of this wave was made up of women, children and the elderly. During the first few years of the Israeli occupation migration fell, but rose again in 1974, during the major oil-boom.

The scale of out-migration from the West Bank can best be illustrated by the fact that of those who were teenagers in 1961, only 24 per cent were residing in the West Bank 20 years later. In other words, four out of five from this age-group had emigrated, After taking those who had died in this period into consideration (Gabriel 1986:251). Considerable emigration can also easily be seen in the shape of the Palestinian population pyramid.

The first and by far the most important target for Palestinian labour migration to the Gulf was Kuwait, where the start-up of commercial oil production coincided with the Palestinian exodus of 1948/49. During the 1950's Palestinians with Jordanian passports could enter Kuwait even without prior work contracts. Palestinians/Jordanians constituted a third of the expatriate community, and 16,6 per cent of the total population in 1965. Palestinians obtained central positions in the bureaucracy of this underdeveloped new state. Palestinians were dominant in the

education sector where they constituted 49 percent of the teachers in 1966-67 (Brand 1988:116).

After the 1967 war and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the number of Palestinians resident in Kuwait increased. As was the case with migration to Jordan, this wave of migrants was characterised by a high proportion of females. As the profile of Palestinian immigrants changed towards family units the Palestinian community in Kuwait became more settled. By 1975 nearly half the Palestinian/Jordanian community in Kuwait of 204,178 was female (Brand 1988:116).

Kuwait instituted regulations to control the influx of foreigners from the late 1960's. The pillar of these regulations was the sponsor system, which meant that a *kafil* – a Kuwaiti employer and sponsor – was responsible for all the legal and financial matters of their non-Kuwaiti employees. Residency could only be obtained through a Kuwaiti employer, and the employee would have to leave the country once the job was finished or when he reached the age of retirement. Moreover, adult children of immigrants had to leave the country, even those who had been born and grown up in Kuwait, unless they obtained their own individual sponsorship. The sponsor system, with minor variations, is practised by all the Gulf states in their dealings with foreign labour.

Even though Palestinians in Kuwait kept a low profile, they preserved their identity more cohesively and openly than in any other of the Gulf states. Palestinians were concentrated in certain neighbourhoods of Kuwait City and set up their own community institutions based on the village of origin or the family clan. The Kuwaiti government agreed to a 5 percent income tax to be turned over to the PLO's Palestine National Fund, and collected it from the salaries of Palestinian expatriates. For a period the PLO was allowed to organise its own schools for Palestinian children after the access of foreign nationals to free public education was tightened by the late 1960's.

As increasing numbers of Kuwaiti nationals graduated from colleges and universities, the positions of Palestinians in the bureaucracy, public services and the commercial sector came under pressure. Kuwaitis were preferred for government jobs as part of the Kuwaitisation policies which were pursued with increasing momentum from the mid-70s. Career opportunities for Palestinians were reduced. This trend was accelerated by the fall of the oil-prices and the increasing use of cheaper Asian labour from the first half of the 1980s (Lesch 1991:45). Nationalisation of the labour force became a declared aim of several of the Governments in the Gulf. In the fifth Saudi Development Plan (1990-95), it was estimated that 220,400 Saudis would replace non-nationals, and that foreign labour would drop by 1.2 percent per year. The means of achieving this were partly incentives for employers to employ

nationals by reducing the wage differentials between nationals and foreigners and partly the pursuit of a stricter immigration policy (Naggar 1993:168).

The Gulf War of 1990-91 occurred at a time when there already was pressure within the Gulf countries to restrict further immigration of Palestinians. The Palestinian community in Kuwait was collectively punished because of its alleged widespread support for Saddam Hussein, and the returned Palestinians were replaced largely by Egyptian and Asian migrants.

The Gulf crisis illustrated not only the fragile situation of the migrants, but it also revealed the anxiety felt by many political leaders of the GCC states. The presence of large expatriate communities, approximately half of the GCC population, was perceived as a threat to society and the countries as a whole. The policy to counter this perceived threat has been to minimise opportunities for permanent residency and maximise the rotation of foreign workers. Asian workers have been the fastest growing alternative to Arab labour since the mid-80s, not only because they are cheaper, but also because they are regarded as more compliant politically (Middle East Report 1993:7).³

The legal framework and the range of options

The set of available legal migration options within the Middle East for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza has been determined by both the Israeli and Arab states' regulations, and has changed considerably over time. The different legal status of inhabitants of the West Bank and inhabitants of the Gaza Strip has given the latter far less opportunities than the former. West Bank residents may carry proper Jordanian passports when they obtained full citizenship rights after Jordan annexed the West Bank in 1950. This gives the West Bank Palestinians as well as Palestinian refugees in Jordan the same access to other countries as Jordanian nationals. Residents of the Gaza Strip, on the other hand, are not holders of any citizenship. They carry Egyptian travel documents which are not so easily accepted for immigration purposes in Arab countries. Thus, the West Bank population has had much easier access to travelling abroad than the Gazans.

The labour receiving countries in the Gulf have adjusted the immigration flow according to their needs in the labour market by issuing visas dependent on employment. One main decisive factor for Palestinians' access to the Gulf has therefore been the general economic situation in the area. The in-flow of Palestinians to the Gulf has followed the main trading cycle of the oil-producing countries, increasing when oil-prices went up, like in 1974, and slowing down when the prices collapsed a decade later. The primary goal for migrants were Kuwait and Saudi Arabia

³ March/April 1993, No. 181 Vol.23, No. 2, p.7

and the smaller Gulf states, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman. The second choices were Iraq, Libya and Algeria.

Political considerations, other than that of limiting the overall number of migrants, have also influenced the Gulf countries' immigration policy, going back to before the Gulf war. From the late 1970s regional instability, caused by the civil war in Lebanon, activities of radical Palestinian groups throughout the region, the revolution in Iran and the successive Iran-Iraq war led to a generally stricter immigration policy in the Gulf states, culminating with the extradition of migrants in the aftermath of the Gulf War.

Besides entering legally, many found other ways of entering and staying in the Gulf countries. Already from the early 1950s Palestinians crossed the border of the British Protectorate of Kuwait on foot through the Iraqi desert from the north, or by sea (Ghabra 1987:63). Of those who arrive legally, there are several who remain illegally after their work contract is finished and visa expired. For instance, a popular way of getting to Saudi Arabia, is to obtain a *haj*-visa to join the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca and remain there illegally. Occasionally, the Saudi government would declare an amnesty for those *haj*-immigrants in order to get them registered.

In addition to the Arab states' immigration policy, the movement of Palestinians has also been affected by Israeli regulations. Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip who had left the territories before or during the 1967 War were not included in the Israeli census later that year. The absentees lost their residence rights and had to apply for family reunification if they wanted to return. The Israeli policy has been to not restrict out-migration from the Occupied Territories, but return has been made more difficult if the migrant did not return before specified time limits had expired

The way to the Gulf

The life histories of the respondents reveal different motives for migrating to the Gulf region. Even though economic considerations have been the dominant driving force, some were forced to leave their place of residence for fear of persecution. Others moved to join a spouse or another family member already living and working in the Gulf. In what follows, we will present some cases which illustrate different life situations which propel people to migrate.

The cases also show different ways of getting to the Gulf: through family network, embassies, or with the help of UNRWA. Besides these legal ways of emigration, there were also several illegal methods of getting into the Gulf countries.

Family network

The following case of Khaled who went to Kuwait belongs to the early period of Gulf migration, when it was possible to get to Kuwait even without a visa:

Khaled was only 17 years old when he went to Kuwait in 1962. The life he left behind was one of poverty. He had grown up in the Balata camp, near Nablus in the West Bank, where his family settled after they fled from the village of Jammasin, near Jaffa in 1948. He quit school after 8th class to earn money for the family by polishing shoes in the streets of Nablus. In the season he also worked in an olive oil press, where he made better money. The first one from Khaled's family to go to the Gulf was a maternal uncle who had worked in Kuwait as a construction worker since the mid-fifties. His letters to the family told of the prospects of a better life in the hot, desert emirate, which at that time was still a British protectorate. Khaled followed his older brother who emigrated to Kuwait in 1960. Khaled had neither a visa nor a job contract when he crossed the Kuwaiti border from Saudi Arabia in a bus filled with other Palestinian labour migrants from Jordan. He stayed in the flat of his brother, who like himself was still unmarried. With the help of his brother's Kuwaiti contacts, Khaled succeeded in getting a job as a clerk in the reception of a hospital. In spite of an interrupted education, Khaled's eight years in school were more than any of his three brothers and five sisters had received. He had been the most clever of the brothers at school, and that was the reason why his parents sent him to Kuwait rather than one of his two older brothers who were working as unskilled labourers in Nablus.

The case of Khaled is an example of how much the family can be involved in the process of migration. First, it was a family decision to send Khaled, rather than his brothers, due to his skills. Second, the travel and arrival arrangements were facilitated by his brother – just as his brother had been helped by his uncle on his arrival some years earlier. Thus, this is a fairly typical example of what is called chain migration; the migrants depended upon family members for a network facilitating the migration of other family members.

Recruitment through embassies

Others, as in the following case, had their job and travel arrangements organised through embassies of the Gulf countries.

Forty-three year old Heitham has been living and working for the last 20 years in Saudi Arabia. He grew up in poor conditions in Askar Refugee camp in the West Bank with his parents who had fled from Jaffa in 1948 and six

older brothers. The income from his father's small shop in the camp did not allow him to provide further education to any of Haitham's brothers after secondary school. They all started working as labourers in Nablus to earn money for the household. Because of his brothers' contributions, Haitham, as the only one of the seven children, was able to study at the al-Najah Institute in Nablus, where he obtained a diploma as a physical training teacher. Also Haitham earned money to support the family as a construction worker in Israel during the summer vacations. When he graduated from al-Najah in 1975 he could easily have obtained a job as a teacher in Nablus, he believed. But working in Nablus was not his first choice, "Because at that time everybody was heading towards the Gulf. The salary there was several times higher than what we could get in Nablus or even in Israel", Haitham recalls. Together with a relative he went to Amman where they both stayed at the home of Haitham's cousin for two months while approaching the Gulf embassies in search of work opportunities. Haitham received job offers both at the Kuwaiti and the Saudi Embassies, and chose the latter because the salary was higher. At the embassy he was interviewed by an envoy from the Saudi Ministry of Education who came to Amman for the summer in order to recruit teachers for the following school year. When this 23 year old unmarried teacher entered the airplane from Amman to Riyadh with a ticket paid for by the Saudi government in his hand, he had no idea of what life would bring in Saudi Arabia or how long he would stay. "I thought I might work there for a couple of years to earn some money and then return to marry", says Haitham. Actually he did return to get married after three years – to a girl also from Askar Camp. However, he could not have foreseen that he would take his wife back to Saudi Arabia and raise nine children there during the next two decades.

As was the case with Khaled, support from kin – the financial help from his father and brothers for his education – made the migrant able to obtain a well-paid job in the Gulf. In contrast Haitham did not depend on relatives when it came to gaining entry to the Gulf. He belonged to the large group of Palestinians in the mid-seventies, who received jobs and visas directly through the Gulf embassies, many of which sent special envoys to recruit the required manpower. In this case the pull-factors were the decisive ones, rather than the push-factors; he did not feel that he had to leave the West Bank, and he believes he could have got a job as a teacher in Nablus, had he applied. But he left because he believed the economic benefits were considerably higher from migrating to Saudi Arabia, than by staying.

Haitham went to the Gulf when the oil-boom was at its highest point, just a year after oil-prices quadrupled and facilitated a dramatic demand for new infra-

structure projects throughout the Gulf region, thus attracting new waves of foreign labour.

Emigration facilitated by UNRWA

Some migrants got in touch with employers in the Gulf through the offices of UNRWA. During certain periods UNRWA received officials from Gulf embassies, who were permitted to use the UNRWA offices for recruiting skilled workers. This was the case with a young teacher, Amal, who in 1959 was hired for a job in Bahrain after being interviewed by a representative of the Bahrainian government in the UNRWA office in Gaza. She quit her job in Rafah School in the Gaza Strip, and moved to another teaching job in Bahrain. For the next ten years, while she still was single, she sent most of her salary back to her family, giving several of her brothers and sisters the opportunity to study. Amal had no family connections in the Gulf before. For her it was UNRWA that was the entrance ticket, as it was for several of the interviewees. It is interesting to note that UNRWA has functioned as a catalyst for Palestinian out-migration in its role as an office for employment exchange.

Migrating for security reasons

In all of the above mentioned cases economic benefits were the main reason for migrating. Some of the migrants mentioned security or political reasons as an additional reason for moving. This was the case for Amal's older brother Mustafa, who fled from the Gaza Strip after the 1967 war:

Mustafa was a 23 year old volunteer in a Palestinian group of soldiers under Egyptian command when the 1967-war broke out. He fought against the Israeli troops for two days in Khan Younis in the middle of the Gaza Strip, before his group decided to withdraw and hide on the coast. He was caught by Israeli soldiers and imprisoned in a school building with other prisoners, many of whom were wounded. He had managed to change to civilian clothes before he was taken, so the Israelis did not know that he had been fighting. When he was released he did not dare to go back to his job, a position in the Egyptian Financial Directorate in Gaza City. He was afraid of being caught again by the Israeli security police, for fear that they would find out that he had participated in the fighting. He and his cousin decided to flee to Jordan where half of their family had settled in 1948.

From Amman he made contact with his sister, Amal, who was still working in Bahrain, and asked about the possibilities of visiting her in order to find

a job. For three months he stayed with relatives in Amman until Amal sent a visitors visa to him. In the meanwhile, he got a job as an accountant in a commercial company in Amman.

When he arrived in Bahrain, she had already found a job for him as an accountant in an international company. He had to leave the country though, to obtain a residence visa. He went to Kuwait, from where he arranged the visa formalities, and returned to Bahrain. During the next 22 years he had an impressive career in the business and banking sector in Bahrain.

The idea of going to the Gulf did not appear suddenly for Mustafa, just as an escape route from the insecurity under occupation. Already during his business administration studies in Cairo from 1961-66, he had been aware of that option. His sister Amal, who helped him to get to Bahrain, was the main source for financing his education, and he was regularly in contact with her. Nevertheless he enjoyed living in Cairo and, had it been possible, he would have tried to find work there. However due to Egyptian restrictions on Palestinian labour, he was not allowed to seek employment, so he returned to Gaza. At that time he took no initiative to go abroad again; he preferred rather to stay with his family – until the Six-Day-War broke out. Given the war and the Israeli occupation, he had to flee for his personal safety, but it was not obvious where he should go. He had close relatives in Amman because his family had been split while fleeing in 1948; one group fled to Gaza, the other to Amman. He could have remained in Amman, but chose at the first opportunity the more prosperous alternative of the Gulf.

The case of Mustafa illustrates how different reasons for migration can be interrelated. Egyptian legal regulations prevented him from working in Cairo; security considerations made him leave Gaza, while economic reasons led him to move towards the Gulf, rather than stay in Jordan. Mustafa's education, facilitated by his sister's remittances, made him attractive in the labour market and put him in the position of deciding his own priorities. Furthermore, his actual access to the option of migration was conditional on his sister's personal contacts.

Besides the Gulf-migrants who originally fled from Palestinian territory because of the 1967-war or to escape from the Israeli occupation, others have sought refuge in the Gulf-states for fear of persecution in other Arab states.

Fuad and Amina, a married couple, came to Saudi Arabia in 1980 after having had problems both with the Libyan and the Jordanian secret police. They had grown up in the Gaza refugee camp of Jabalia. Fuad worked as a teacher of mathematics in Benghazi, Libya, since the early 60's. Amina, who was his cousin, joined him after they married in 1966. She started studying there, and graduated from Benghazi University before she started teaching herself. In 1980 they started feeling uncomfortable about the Libyan secret service, the *mukhabarat*, which approached them several times and asked them to become members of the local Revolutionary Committee. The Revolutionary Committees are the backbone of Colonel Muammar Gadhafi's informal power-structure. This was during a period when relations between Libya and the PLO were strained. If they chose to become members, they feared problems from the PLO, and if they refused, they would have problems with the Libyan authorities. Trapped in this dilemma, they left the country and went to Jordan where they were met with suspicion by the Jordanian *mukhabarat*, which kept their Egyptian travel documents (as Gazans they had no proper passports), leaving the couple with four children in a position where they could neither work legally in Jordan nor leave the country. After three months they succeeded in getting back their travel documents through the help of a *wasta*, a personal connection in the Jordanian Army, who knew a previous village major from their place of origin, Na'ila, now inside Israel, and therefore decided to help them.

In this situation Fuad and Amina did not have too many options. They were not allowed by the Israeli authorities to return to the Gaza strip, because they had left the territory before the 1967 war, and were thus not present at the time of the Israeli census which was taken after the occupation. Migrating to the Gulf seemed to be a good solution to their problem. Amina had a cousin in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, from whom they received information about life there. But Fuad and Amina did not need his assistance. They both got employment easily as teachers through the Saudi Embassy in Amman, and left the same autumn with their children for a rural village in the south of Saudi Arabia.

According to Amina, problems with the *mukhabarat* in Arab countries were especially common for politically active people, while in their case there was no particular reason for them coming under suspicion.

The Palestinian migration to the Gulf area is, as we see in the case of Fuad and Amina, related to the immigration regulations of other Arab countries. The Gulf has thus been an important route of escape when problems – of political or eco-

conomic reasons – have appeared in other Arab countries. Especially for those who were not allowed to return to the West Bank or Gaza by the Israeli authorities, the Gulf functioned as a last – and economically good – solution.

Economic constraints caused by the Israeli occupation

Besides the deterioration of the security situation for the population of the West Bank and Gaza after the 1967 war, the Israeli occupation also led to economic consequences that resulted in the loss of the means of living for some inhabitants. In the following case, the remittances from migration turned out replacing an income source which was lost because of the new borders that were established after the 1967 war.

The 12 child-family of Osman from Beit Shit, Ramleh, all made their living from the private road-building company Osman established after they settled in Khan Younis refugee camp in Gaza. Osman's company made good profits from constructing roads in the Gaza Strip as well as in Egypt. The 1967 war was a disaster for Osman's company and his handful of workers; the company's equipment happened to be in Egypt, while Osman's workers were in Gaza. Osman was prevented by the Israeli authorities from bringing the equipment to Gaza, so he had to close down the company. Osman started to get old, and had difficulties in starting another business or finding a job. In this situation, he encouraged his sons to go abroad to search for work. Several of them had already been abroad during their studies, financed by the father's business. One of his sons, Issa, went to the UNRWA office in Ramallah, where he was able to fill in an application for work in Saudi Arabia. The UNRWA office thereafter sent his application for a job to the Saudi Embassy in Amman, from where Issa got a positive reply. For the next decade, the income from Issa's work, first as a teacher – later as a businessman – in Saudi Arabia and of his oldest brother, who worked in Jordan, replaced the loss of Osman's income for the whole family.

This is a good example of a labour migrant who should not be defined as belonging to the category of "individual migration". Issa acted more as a representative of his household than as an independent individual.

Getting to the Gulf as a woman's companion

In periods of limited access to the Gulf labour market, for instance after the second Gulf War, "the back-door methods" of getting in – legal or illegal – were important. One such way for men to get to Saudi Arabia was as a so-called *mohram*, a

companion of a single female guest worker. As foreign women are not allowed to live alone, according to the Saudi interpretation of Islamic law, she must bring a companion. The *mohram* must be a male relative, so closely related in the family that he is not allowed to marry her; he could be her father, a brother, son, uncle or nephew. Several of those interviewed mentioned being a *mohram* as an important way of getting access to the labour market in Saudi Arabia. Even though the *mohram* is usually not allowed to work, he might either work illegally, or at least use the opportunity to establish relations with potential employers who can provide him with work later on.

Amina, mentioned above, suddenly found herself in a situation where she had to choose between leaving Saudi Arabia, or getting a *mohram*, when her husband Fuad fell ill and died in 1992:

Amina asked her nephew Samir, who had just returned to Gaza after graduating as a medical doctor in Bulgaria, to be her *mohram*. Samir had already proposed marriage with Amina's daughter, who also lived in Saudi Arabia. He had no work in Gaza, and was happy to have opportunity to travel to Saudi Arabia, so he accepted the offer. Amina then found out that getting a visa for the nephew was more problematic than she had expected. Before the Gulf War it used to be a simple formality to obtain a visa for a *mohram*, but now she had to wait a full year before she could obtain the visa, and then only after paying a bribe of 5000 Riyals (\$ 1300) to her *wasta*. At last Samir came to Saudi Arabia and married his cousin, and started searching for work. A *mohram* of a woman with a private employer is not allowed to have a job, but according to Samir, it is common to find some work illegally. The first year he was only Amina's companion, thereafter he obtained a job as a doctor through a Palestinian friend who knew the Saudi owner of a private clinic. He says that his Palestinian origin made it more difficult to find work there due to wide-spread anti-Palestinian sentiments among the Saudis after the Gulf War. Furthermore, Samir's Bulgarian education was less prestigious than a medical degree from a western country. His wife started working at the same clinic as a pharmacist.

Illegal immigration through the Mecca pilgrimage

A popular way of getting to Saudi Arabia in order to search for work for those without any established connection to a sponsor has been to travel on the yearly *haj* – the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca. The pilgrims get a special one-month visa, and are supposed to leave the country as soon as the festival is over. Every year an

unknown number of pilgrims do not leave the country, but remain illegally in order to find work.

For the family of Jihad in the following case it was more the rule than the exception to get to Saudi Arabia with the pilgrimage as the entrance ticket:

Jihad was an 11 years old boy living in the refugee camp of Khan Younis, when his stepfather Riyad (who also was his uncle), went to Saudi Arabia for the *haj* in 1954. While he was there, he got an offer to work in the fields at a farm in a small village. He was the first one in the family to look for work in Saudi Arabia, so he had no relatives there. He lived at the farm, and made some money, though not enough to send much back to his family in Khan Younis. But at least it was better than working in the fields outside Khan Younis like he used to. The Palestinian land owner did not pay money for the work, he only provided food for the family. The next year, Riyad's brother came to Saudi Arabia to join him at the farm. Also he came on a *haj*-visa, and like Riyad, remained in the country illegally afterwards.

Jihad was in a slightly better position in the labour market than his illiterate uncles; at least he had gone to school and started at secondary school before he had to quit in order to earn money for the household of the grandparents whom he lived with by selling vegetables in the market in Khan Younis. When Jihad was 17 he joined the army in Gaza – a Palestinian unit with Egyptian officers. “All young men without work went to the army”, Jihad recalls. “There was a great political feeling during the Nasser era, with the union between Egypt and Syria at its highest peak. The army was voluntary, and I quit in 1963 because I did not like the Egyptian interference in the Yemen war at that time. We were asked to go there as soldiers, but we refused”, he says. He wanted to go to Saudi Arabia, but because of bad relations with his stepfather he received no help from him. So he used the same *haj*-method to get in. It was through other relatives that he succeeded in finding a job as a store-keeper. His modest salary of 400 Riyals, was huge compared to the 4 Egyptian pounds he earned in the army in Gaza.

Finally, the last one from this family to arrive as a pilgrim and stay as an illegal guest worker was Riyad's cousin, Khalil. He left Cairo and his job as a taxi-driver and headed towards Mecca at the time of the pilgrimage in 1976. One of his many relatives in the town of Jeddah had promised to provide him with a job in a factory. Khalil, a single man at that time, lived with his relatives while he worked in the factory. After two years King Khaled declared a general amnesty for all illegal immigrants, and Khalil grasped the chance to become registered. He then obtained a legal residence visa and a legal job

in another company. The same year, the Saudi government tightened controls in order to secure that *hajjis* did not remain in the country after the pilgrimage was over (Richards 1990:398).

It is an open question whether illegal immigrants have certain characteristics that distinguish them from other immigrants. Still, illegal immigrants are possibly from a lower social segment of the population than the regular labour migrants because they lack the required qualifications to obtain normal immigration visas. Supposedly, migrants would prefer to immigrate in a legal way rather than illegally, if they have the choice.

The family of the many “*haj*-migrants” above are from a fairly poor background, though the economic conditions were quite different for each of the migrants; while the two first migrants left behind them a life of pure poverty in Gaza, the last one had a relatively good standing in Cairo as a taxi-driver.

Conclusion

The different cases we have presented in this chapter show that the Palestinian labour migrants in the Gulf are far from homogenous. Labour migration is not one single phenomenon; it is a collection of different life situations; migrants came from different background and have various reasons for moving. Practical arrangements were also various and organised through different channels; officially through embassies, sometimes with the help of UNRWA offices; privately through family connections; or illegally by remaining in the country after a visitor’s visa had expired.

One main reason behind the migration is the prospect of earning money, as the salaries have been higher in the Gulf than in the Occupied Territories. As well as the prospects of economic benefits, security and political considerations played a role for certain migrants. One fled from Gaza out of fear for his safety after the Israeli occupation in 1967. A married couple came to the Gulf because they were uncomfortable with the treatment they received from the intelligence service in Libya and Jordan and because they could not return to Gaza after the Israeli occupation. Others again had personal reasons, such as joining a spouse or another family member.

The strength of the so-called “pull”-factors in our cases has been illustrated by the active recruitment of migrant labour conducted by the embassies of the Gulf states. Special envoys, who came from the Gulf states in search of labour, were even allowed to operate through UNRWA offices, which thus actively facilitated Palestinian labour migration. In addition to relatively high salaries, and easy access to the Gulf labour market, the “push”-factors at home came into play, or put differently, in the exiled existence in the West Bank and Gaza. Among the issues that can

be classified under that heading our respondents included poverty in the refugee camps and insecurity due to the occupation. Some of the early migrants lacked the option of returning to their previous homes after the occupation, and were thus forced to find an alternative place to settle in.

We have seen several examples of labour migrants who moved at the request of the family. In two cases, the migrant was directly sent by their parents in order to save money for the family, thus lending support to the contention that Palestinian labour migration should be seen as a household strategy rather than as an individual one.

Finally, we have observed that it is not arbitrary as to which members of a family migrate. This fact is related to the point made above, namely, that because the family tends to act as a unit when it comes to migration decisions, it is the family member with the best chances of obtaining a well-paid job who is sent abroad. Those with most education or special skills are seen by the family as the most suitable migrants with prospects of economic success, which in turn will mean remittances sent back home. This conclusion is supported by other studies which also point to the selective out-migration from the Occupied Territories; those with education, training, and some resources are the first to leave (Kimmerling and Migdal 1994:201; Heiberg and Øvansen 1993:24).

Adaptation to exclusion

Students of pan-Arab nationalism have raised the question of whether the huge labour migration between Arab states would contribute to inter-Arab integration. Georges Sabagh underlines that while migrants are incorporated into the economic sphere of the Gulf societies, they are excluded from the social structure, and that separation – not integration – is the goal of the policy of the Gulf states.

All the Gulf states pursue a clear policy of segregation between expatriates and local citizens. Non-nationals are in general not allowed to own real estate, stocks, or private shops. Expatriates who run private businesses register their assets in the name of national partners for an annual fee.

Immigration has been strictly regulated, and residence visas for foreigners have been directly conditional on to their employment contracts. Minimum salaries have been required to allow migrants to bring their spouses, and huge wage differentials between nationals and non-nationals are institutionalised. The employer's right to hire and fire became a political prerogative for the state to retain or expel a worker from the country. Employers usually keep the worker's passport upon arrival, and return it only when the contract expires, as a mean of controlling the

movements of their employees. The departure of the migrant is often guaranteed by the employer vis a vis the state.

Naturalisation of migrants has only happened exceptionally. The legal framework of the labour migrants' stay is very clear: They are there to work or to join a family-member who works, and are supposed to return as soon as the work contract is over. That means that even those foreigners who have lived in a Gulf country for decades will have to leave the country when they reach the age of retirement. Children of migrants also have to leave the Gulf when they become grown up, even if they have been born and brought up there. Only by finding their own employment and sponsorship will they be allowed to stay.

Giacomo Luciani has observed that the settlement of migrants in a host society often goes through three phases. The first is what he calls a "sojourning phase", which is characterised by males who migrate without dependants. The second is a "transition phase", in which the single migrant secures a permanent residence and obtains more stable better paid jobs. He calls the last phase the "settlement phase" where the male migrants bring their wives and children; they start considering themselves as residents of the host country and they have widespread contacts beyond the immigrant enclave.

Indicators of integration of a migrant population in the host society can be measured by a set of cultural, social, economic and political variables. Basic cultural factors are language and religion, which the Palestinian migrants share with the Gulf natives. Important economic factors are participation in the labour force, occupational mobility, earnings, access to economic advancement and opportunity, access to public or private social services. Political influence and attitudes belong to the political sphere of integration (Luciani 1990: 168). Here, the *social* aspect of integration will be emphasised more than the above mentioned factors. This will be focused upon by analysing friendship ties between migrants and members of the host society, as well as the attitudes of migrants to the host society and any perceived discrimination of migrants by host government and local citizens.

The sponsorship system

The relation between expatriates and native citizens of the Gulf states is institutionalized by the sponsorship system. The only way to obtain a residence permit for a migrant is to be invited and accepted by a *kafeel* – normally translated as "sponsor" in English – who will be the legal link between the migrant and the government. The *kafeel* will usually be the employer, and can be a private citizen or an institution. The *kafeel*-system has important implications for the relations between foreigners and locals, not only in the economic sphere of life. One striking feature of the *kafeel*-migrant relation is the complete dependency. The migrant needs the

approval of the sponsor for any changes in his legal status; it is up to the sponsor to accept or refuse if the migrant wishes to transfer to another job, and it is the sponsor who decides the length of stay, as he has to approve any extension of the migrant's work contract and residence permit. Parallel with a general lack of legal rights for the expatriates in the judicial apparatus, the sponsorship system have consequences for the social relationship between natives and foreigners, and for the two groups' perception of self and others.

This is illustrated in some of the following cases where the interviewees complain about discrimination from the authorities or the native population. The cases reveal that Palestinians live a very segregated life. They rarely have social contact with locals, they stick together with relatives or other Palestinians, or alternatively with expatriates from other Arab countries.

Coping with segregation

The migrant in the following case copes with the segregated society in the UAE by not trying to integrate but rather by creating his own social enclave:

Shafiq, a 42 year old accountant, is satisfied with life in UAE. He arrived there in 1977 on a visitor's visa and stayed with some of his many relatives while searching for work. After he found a job as an accountant in a government department he rented a flat together with a Palestinian friend he knew from Gaza. Two years later he returned to Bureij Camp in Gaza to take his wife and children to Abu Dhabi. Today all his family still lives in the Emirates; the oldest daughter works as a teacher and is married to a Palestinian; one son is studying car electronics; four children are at government school, and the two youngest daughters are below school age still at home with their mother who does not have any paid work.

Financially, Shafiq is happy with the situation. The accountant's salary of 2500 Dirham (\$ 650) is enough to cover the family's expenses for food, clothes, a ten year old car, electricity, telephone and health insurance. As a government employee Shafiq has a free flat, and the children's transportation to school is also covered by the government. But Shafiq's official salary is not enough to send any remittances back to his parents in Bureij, or to save money for the house he is planning to build in Gaza. To manage this, Shafiq has another income source: he has bought some concert hi-fi equipment which he rents out for weddings and other parties. The earnings from this business is about the same as his salary. According to Shafiq many of his friends also earn extra money through private activities in addition to their official job. It is not allowed to have extra work over and above one's official job, but Shafiq has not experienced that the authorities make any efforts to stop illegal working.

His work is only six hours a day, six days a week, so he has enough time to run his private business after working hours.

Shafiq has not much contact with the native population in Abu Dhabi, but does not complain about that. He has one brother, one sister and many other relatives in Abu Dhabi, with whom Shafiq and his family meet regularly. As long as he has these close ties with his relatives, he says it is not a problem that he is not much together with locals. The only local he sees regularly is his office manager, who is a good democratic boss, according to Shafiq. He likes his work in a nice, air-conditioned office with Egyptians, Sudanese, Jordanians and Syrians as colleagues.

Shafiq will not say that he has established deep roots in the Emirates after 18 years there. "I long to return to family and friends in Gaza, and we are planning for this. But for my children this is different. Most of them were born there, and for them Abu Dhabi is the place they feel at home in", he says. His 18 year old son, who is present at the interview, can confirm that he wants to stay in the Emirates: "I will stay in Abu Dhabi, even if my parents return to Bureij. I can find a job in Abu Dhabi, when I have finished my education in car electronics. All my friends are there", he says. In his class at the government school, there were 35 pupils among them were 12-13 Palestinians and 5-6 locals. He mixed mostly with the Palestinians, but he also had local friends.

This case shows a relatively well settled migrant family in the UAE. They followed a common pattern of a step-by-step settlement strategy among labour migrants: First, the husband travelled alone and secured a job. Then he checked out the possibilities of staying for a longer period with the rest of the family. After a couple of years, when he felt that the situation was stable enough, he brought his wife and children and established a more permanent home. In spite of the first migrant generation's intentions of leaving the Gulf country, we see that the second generation in this family hope to be able to stay. Socially, it seems like Shafiq's family reacts to the segregated life in the UAE by keeping close ties with their own relatives and Palestinian friends. In that way they constitute their own community of Palestinian expatriates in the Emirates.

In some cases the relations between family members are not only important for social life or as a network facilitating migration and job finding. It can happen that the family itself constitutes the basis for commercial activity in the recipient country. When Rashid in the following case went to the UAE in 1988 he joined his four brothers and his father in the family's small car workshop:

Repairing cars has been the means of living for decades for Rashid's family; his father had already been running a garage and trading in second hand cars in Gaza before Rashid was born in 1969 and Later his older brothers established a car workshop in the Dubai emirate of the UAE. It was Rashid's oldest brother who first went to Dubai – with the help of their uncle, who was a successful businessman there. The next to follow was Rashid's father, who – also with the help of the aunt's husband – found a sponsor who became their partner and the formal owner of the garage he established. Three more brothers had joined the business before Rashid. His father gave the responsibility of the business to the oldest one before he returned to Gaza to take care of his old garage in Gaza.

For the first three years in Dubai, Rashid and two of his brothers were single, while his two oldest brothers were married and had brought their wives and children to Dubai. When Rashid told his mother during a summer visit in Jabalia Camp in the Gaza Strip that he felt ready for marriage, she only needed days before she had arranged meetings for two of her unmarried sons with two sisters of her oldest son's wife. They were refugees from the Khan Yonis Camp in Gaza. The two couples held their weddings in Gaza the same summer, before they all moved to Dubai where they now share a flat.

The business is not running as well these days as before. The expenses of living in Dubai have increased markedly in the last few years. Because the amount of work has decreased, two of Rashid's brothers have returned to Jabalia, where they have established another workshop, and have specialised in trading spare parts from stolen Israeli cars. Thus, Rashid's family members constitute the work force of two garages in Gaza and one in Dubai. One practical aspect of this way of organising a "family chain" of garages is the mobility of the staff; the workers can move to the place where the economic outcome is highest. The two brothers left Dubai because the profit was not high enough, after the local sponsor and owner had got his \$ 1,000 a month. If the work improves in Dubai, they will come back. This depends on the salary: Just now Rashid earns 2,000 Dirhams monthly in Dubai, compared with his brothers in Gaza who make around NIS 1,000 each.

Rashid says that he has no local friends after seven years in Dubai, only other Palestinians, and some Syrians and Lebanese. He has only contact with one UAE citizen, namely his sponsor and owner of the garage. The sponsor does not work regularly in the garage, only passing by once or twice a week to see how the work is going.

In this case the family network facilitated both the migration, accommodation and employment for Rashid, the migrant. It seems to be an advantage for this family that they have the same job as migrants as they do at home, because they then can return more easily to their normal activity at home, if they lose their employment in the host country. In other cases it was not the family which was the core of an enterprise, but just a group of Palestinians – often from the same area, or some who for other reasons knew each other already. In this way smaller and larger companies dominated by Palestinians were established throughout the Gulf region:

Hassan, an accountant from “Camp Number One” outside Nablus in the West Bank has worked in two places since he migrated to Saudi Arabia in 1979. The first was with a goldsmith who was the husband of his niece. He invited Hassan to Riyadh to work in his goldsmith workshop which he had established with the co-operation of a local Saudi citizen who was registered as the legal owner of the enterprise. Three years later Hassan was asked by a friend from his student days at UNRWA’s Kalandiya Vocational Training Centre in Ramallah whether he wanted to join a company selling seeds and pesticides. Since then Hassan has worked for this agricultural company, which was established 30 years ago by a Palestinian who still is the manager. The staff has always been mostly Palestinians; today, 18 of the 19 employees are Palestinian, the remaining one Egyptian. According to Hassan, the whole agricultural sector in Saudi Arabia is dominated by Palestinians: “90 % of agricultural companies like ours are Palestinian”, he estimates. In addition to this job, he also earns money by selling clothes on his own. The two jobs have made Hassan to a well-off migrant; his yearly salary from the company is 80,000 Riyals (plus three months salary for flat expenses and tickets every year for Hassan, wife and two of the children), while his own clothes-sale activity makes around 30,000 Riyals.

Hassan spends much of his free time with his colleagues: “It is very important for me that I have good relations with the Palestinians I work with, because I have no contact whatsoever with Saudis. Only once I was in a Saudi home – and that was to visit a companion who later cheated me by setting our seed store on fire to get the insurance compensation”, Hassan recalls.

Also when it comes to finding a dwelling, Hassan has relied on Palestinian friends. For the first five years in Riyadh he shared a flat with three friends from the same refugee camp outside Nablus. During the summer vacation in 1984 he married a woman he knew from his neighbourhood in the refugee camp. He brought her to Saudi Arabia and established a home for the new family.

It seems as though one strategy of coping with the segregated life imposed by the host country is to form strong ties within the Palestinian expatriate community. In this way, some of the feelings and consequences of being excluded from certain spheres of social life are compensated for. Thus the existence of a network of friends and relatives becomes vital for the migrants' adaptation – both to the social and occupational life. Rami, in the following case, knew nobody when he came to Saudi Arabia, but he managed to build up a network of friends through his Palestinian colleagues:

Thirty three year old Rami from the New Askar refugee camp, Nablus, has worked as a clerk in a Saudi cement-producing company in the town of Abkek since 1982. He happened to go to Saudi Arabia through an advertisement in a Jordanian newspaper after his many relatives in Kuwait failed to help him to get that country. In Saudi he had no relatives and knew nobody there at the beginning. It was the company which provided housing; he shared a flat with four other Palestinians, one of whom was a colleague. During the first seven years in Saudi Arabia he was a single man and his social life was mostly limited to his house-mates and Palestinian colleagues at work. In 1989 he went to Amman married his cousin, and brought her back to Saudi Arabia. The couple found a flat for themselves in a building with mostly Saudis. When the neighbouring flat became vacant, Rami informed a newly arrived Palestinian family about it and managed thus to secure "good" neighbours. "Social life is quite boring in Saudi", Rami says. "You don't go out to eat, you visit people in their homes. If you don't have relatives and good friends there, you become very isolated. The locals do not want too close contact with you. But it has happened during the Eid holiday at the end of the Ramadan that a Saudi colleague has invited me and other Palestinians to a party or reception. I would classify my relations with these Saudis as good and formal rather than warm or friendly", he says.

Rami is not satisfied with his work. For 13 years he has had the same job; he has been a typist – for a manager he does not like. He had been looking for a new job for a long time when in 1994 he got an offer of another job with a higher salary than his current 3500 Rials a month (plus three months salary for flat expenses and one ticket back home every summer). However, his sponsor and employer refused to agree to Rami's transfer to another sponsor. "My boss told me that either you stay with me, or you go home. It is like slavery", complains Rami. If he quits his job without a letter of release from his old sponsor, he will have to leave the country and stay abroad for two years before he can return and sign a contract with another sponsor.

Occupational mobility

One measure of economic integration is occupational mobility and access to economic advancement and opportunity. The case of Rami above is an example of a migrant with very limited options; he is stuck with his job in the sense that he can choose between staying with his unsatisfactory job or leaving the country, but he has no alternatives in between. He has no possibility of obtaining another position in Saudi Arabia, because it is the Saudis, rather than he himself, who decide his position. Rami's network of friends and influential people is very limited. His lack of good contacts who could have influenced his sponsor to accept his transfer to another job, might be one reasonable explanation of why he did not succeed in changing his position.

When Rami's situation is compared to that of the previous case, Hassan, we can provide some indication of the importance of a good network. The two migrants had both been educated at UNRWA, the well-respected Kalandiya Vocational Training Centre in Ramallah. While Rami was stuck with his low paid job as a clerk, Hassan managed to improve his position, with the help of his friends. The economic consequence of this was substantial: Hassan's total yearly income was 110,000 Riyal, against Rami's 42,000 Riyal.

This is not to claim that Hassan's and Rami's positions and degree of economic success were due to their social network alone. Personal skills and initiative can of course not be ignored. But the comparison leaves no doubt that Hassan's social network of helped him to gain access to certain opportunities, while the lack of a similar network turned out to be a serious obstacle in Rami's career.

Let us go back to Mustafa, the accountant, from the last chapter. He fled to Jordan after the Six-Day-War and went on to Bahrain where his sister lived. We mentioned that he enjoyed an impressive career during the following two decades. Let us continue his story after he came to Bahrain:

Mustafa's sister had already found a job for him when he arrived in Bahrain at the end of 1967; he started working as a chief accountant in the international electronics company, Phillips. It was also his sister who found a flat for him through a landlord she knew. For the first four years he worked with Phillips, then he worked as a commercial teacher for two years; three years with the Arab Bank – first as an accountant, then as manager for contracting companies; eight years contract account manager at Gulf Air Head Office; one year as budget officer for Arab Iron and Steel Company and finally five years with Al-Baraka Islamic Bank. His career also included two years of business and administration studies at the University of Beverly Hills, USA, where he obtained a Ph.D. in Islamic banking. In 1989 he returned to Amman, where after four years in a Jordanian company, he established

his private consultancy centre. Mustafa is today a well respected business man, and has received an offer to organise a chain of supermarkets and bakeries in the UAE by a company there.

Mustafa's numerous changes of jobs throughout his career were sometimes due to his own wishes. For instance when he quit his job as an accountant at Phillips and started working as a teacher. The reason was that the Ministry of Education offered him a higher salary than he had from Phillips. His sponsor, with whom he had good relations agreed to release him from the contract, making it possible for Mustafa to transfer his sponsorship to the Ministry of Education. However, when he changed job he was usually removed because a Bahrainian wanted his job. "There was an officially declared policy of "Bahrainisation" in the labour market", Mustafa explains. "Whenever there was a Bahrainian citizen available with qualifications for a position occupied by an expatriate, the employer would let him replace the foreigner. The government and the employers were open about their goal of increasing the share of locals in the labour market; I would get notice three months in advance, and during that time I train my successor before I left my office", Mustafa says.

What is remarkable is that Mustafa managed to advance throughout his career in spite of the fact that he repeatedly was obliged to vacate his position for a local citizen in accordance with the policy of systematic "Bahrainisation". With respect to occupational mobility he coped with the situation in a successful way and managed to move upwards socially, rather than downwards when he had to change his job. It is also noteworthy that he never had to leave the country in order to establish a new contract with a new sponsor. Often, when a contract is finished, the migrant will have to leave the country in order to apply for another job. The only way for a migrant to remain in the country after he has quit a job is to obtain a letter of release from the sponsor, which means that the sponsor agrees to a "local transfer" of responsibility for the employee to another sponsor. This letter of release is not always easy to get from the sponsor. By maintaining good relations with his sponsors – and probably also because he was lucky – Mustafa never was denied a "local transfer" by any of his sponsors.

Discrimination

Complaints about discrimination from the local people or the host governments are widespread among Palestinian expatriates. The complaints are both about generally humiliating attitudes and more directly discriminatory treatment.

The treatment by the sponsor is clearly a main point of criticism from the Palestinian expatriates. As we have seen, the migrants are quite dependent on the good-will of the sponsor. If the migrant does not succeed in establishing a positive

relationship with his sponsor, he has good reasons for fearing that problems will lie ahead during his stay. Sometimes this problem develops into a harsh conflict also involving family members of the migrant, because when one migrant facilitates for others in his family, it will often be with the help of the same sponsor. Then the whole family will be totally dependent on one single local citizen, and in cases of conflict with him, all family members might be threatened with having to leave.

This happened to a Palestinian mechanic working in a car workshop in Riyadh. The sponsor sold the workshop, but refused to give up the sponsorship of the mechanic, who wanted to establish his own garage with the help of another local contact. When the Palestinian insisted on changing sponsor, the sponsor threatened to deport the mechanic's two brothers who were also working for the same sponsor. In the end the mechanic had to accept that he would have his end-of-service-payment reduced by 10,000 Riyal as the only way of being released from the sponsor. In addition, the sponsor charged the mechanic extra fees for the papers he needed for the registration of the transfer. At least the mechanic succeeded in changing his sponsorship without causing any problems for his brothers. Neither was his next sponsor-relationship without conflict. He came to an agreement with a Saudi contractor, who was willing to facilitate the mechanic establishing and operating his own workshop without much interference from the sponsor. The deal, which was only made orally, according to the mechanic, was that the sponsor would not have any share of the profits, but he would have all his bulldozers and trucks maintained without charge at the workshop. Later on, the sponsor changed his mind about the arrangements; in addition to having his equipment and vehicles repaired for nothing, he suddenly also demanded 50 percent of the profits. "I had no choice but to accept whatever he demanded. If I refused his conditions, he could just ask me to leave the country. In this situation it was even not possible to leave the sponsor and stay illegally, because the sponsor kept my passport", the mechanic says. The mechanic followed orders from the sponsor and started paying him 5,000 of the 10,000 Riyal which was the monthly profit of the workshop.

At the social level complaints of discriminatory attitudes among local people in general affect the well-being of expatriates to the extent that it can influence their decision whether to stay or to leave the host country:

Samir, a medical doctor, who came to Saudi Arabia in 1992 as the *mohram* (companion) of his aunt tells that Saudi patients often do not show him any respect as a doctor. "The Saudis regard me only as a servant and they often address me in an impolite way, for example "you boy". Many do not accept my medical prescriptions and they try to give me orders about what sort of medication they want to have prescribed. Such attitudes from the locals are not acceptable to me, and they are one important reason for my looking for a possibility to return to Gaza", Dr. Samir explains. His aunt, who has been 15 years in Saudi Arabia, stresses that locals whom

you have regularly contact with, such as Saudi colleagues in the school where she works, behave friendly, while outside the school the atmosphere is terrible.

Jilal, another Palestinian teacher with 17 years experience in Saudi Arabia, explains that all foreigners will have to get used to the habit of locals walking to the front of any queue expecting to be served first. "At school, even the Saudi children abuse Palestinian children; they shout at the Palestinians that they steal money from the Saudis. They must have learned these attitudes from their parents", he believes. At work he is angry at the huge differentials in salaries between local and Palestinian teachers. While his salary was 3,000 Riyals, a local teacher in the same job would earn 10,000 Riyals. In addition, local teachers will have other privileges and will be treated better than foreign employees by the headmaster. Jilal has also experienced being fired from his job and removed to another school in a distant, rural village because a local teacher wanted his job. The practice of removing migrant workers whenever there is a local available for a job occupied by a foreigner is a main point of anger, repeatedly mentioned among expatriates.

The expatriates often express deep scepticism about the objectivity of the legal apparatus whenever they get into a conflict with a local citizen. Both when it comes to cases of criminal acts or just differences in interpretations of agreements in civil or economic matters, there is a general lack of trust among Palestinian migrants in whatever protection is offered them by any state official such as bureaucrats, police or judges. This scepticism is illustrated by the common attitude among Palestinian expatriates that when a traffic accident occurs involving a citizen and a foreigner, the police will not act neutrally, and the responsibility will always be placed on the latter. One respondent had his scepticism confirmed when he was involved in a car accident with a Saudi in Riyadh. According to his own version of what happened, the Saudi driver hit the Palestinian's car from behind, and it was thus obviously fully the Saudi's fault. "When the police came to the site, they did not even listen to my explanations; they simply arrested me and kept me in prison for three days. They refused to let me call my wife from the prison, and they did not write any report of my arrest", the Palestinian complains angrily. "As always, the Saudis support each other against foreigners. The Saudi driver had managed to get a false witness to support his version; the "witness" was another Saudi driver who had not even seen what had happened because he arrived at the spot after the accident", says the Palestinian driver who in the end had to pay the repairs to the Saudi's car.

Nevertheless, there are also examples of expatriate Palestinians who have experienced support from locals in a conflict situation with a citizen. In a previously mentioned case, Hassan, the Palestinian accountant, experienced being exposed to a case of fraud, when his Saudi companion set their store on fire in order to obtain the compensation paid by the insurance company. He received 113,000 Riyals from the insurance company, and fled to Lebanon with the money. Later he was taken

to the court sentenced to one year in prison. His family apologised to Hassan for this crime, and they paid him back 50,000 Riyals as compensation for the damage. Hassan says he thinks this family behaved in a respectable manner way when they paid him compensation, even though he remarks that the compensation did not cover all his losses.

This family's decision to pay says something about the limits of acceptable behaviour for a local citizen in the relation to a Palestinian expatriate. Or rather, it says something about where this limit is *not to be formal*; if Hassan's partner's attempted swindle had been accepted or ignored by his family it would have illustrated a difference in attitude towards non-nationals, because such a crime would for most certainly not have been acceptable, had the counterpart been a Saudi national.

In another case, a Palestinian working in a garage felt forced to leave the country for reasons of personal security after he became involved in a conflict with a Kuwaiti customer, even though he received full support both from the Kuwaiti police and in court. The customer, who was a soldier in the Kuwaiti Army, became so angry when his car did not start after it had been repaired that he attacked the Palestinian employee physically and stole his car. The police arrested the dissatisfied customer, who was sentenced to one month in prison. The Palestinian did not feel safe, though, especially not after the Kuwaiti owner of the garage warned him that the Kuwaiti soldier would kill the Palestinian once he had been released from prison. This was during the heated atmosphere in the aftermath of the Gulf War in 1991, and the Palestinian found it wise to leave the country after 31 years as a migrant worker there.

Kuwait before the Gulf War: Integrated segregation

In spite of the widespread dissatisfaction among Palestinian expatriates about the host society's policy of segregation and the discrimination shown by people and the authorities in the whole Gulf region, there seems to have been important differences between the Gulf countries. The Palestinian migrant colony in Kuwait showed – until the Gulf War – certain characteristics, which distinguished it from the Palestinian communities in rest of the Gulf. Kuwait hosted the biggest and longest-lasting Palestinian expatriate community in the Gulf region. Before the Gulf War it was also characterised by the existence of well-organised Palestinian associations in which Palestinians participated in a broad scale. While Palestinian organisations were not permitted in other Gulf states, the Kuwaiti authorities followed a quite liberal policy. Associations, constituted by Palestinians from the same village or from the same *hamula* – the clan, as well as PLO-related bodies such as the General Union of Palestinian Workers, and the General Union of Palestinian Women opened

branches in Kuwait City. These organisations were of crucial importance as social meeting places for the Palestinian colony of migrants. The liberal policy of the Kuwaiti government, might be an explanation of why many of the founding members of the main faction within the PLO, al-Fatah, had already been residing in Kuwait from the 1950's.

The case of Kuwait illustrates both how well settled an expatriate community can be and the fragility of the same community.

Fuad, a 41 years old Palestinian refugee, was well settled with his wife and three children in Kuwait City before the Gulf crisis in 1990. He came alone to Kuwait from Khan Younis refugee camp in 1971 and stayed for the first years with his brother, who was living already there. He was satisfied with his job as a land surveyor in the Kuwaiti defence ministry. Socially, he did not move much outside the Palestinian community; he had two brothers and one sister living there, and lots of relatives and friends from Beit Daras, his village of origin. Whenever there was a special occasion among the people of Beit Daras, there would be a gathering or a feast in the "Beit Daras Society". "All my village mates were gathered when there I had my own wedding in the Beit Daras Society, he remembers. He married a Palestinian girl whom he met in Kuwait in 1979. Again when one of his relatives had died, there would be a gathering in the society. He has only good memories about that period: "At that time I wanted to stay in Kuwait forever", he claims. "Kuwait was the best country in the Gulf. As Palestinians we were allowed to live our own lives; my family lived in the Khitar area of Kuwait city, an area dominated by Palestinians. My two oldest children went to school and made friends there." He says that his wife, who is a non-refugee, felt she belonged in Kuwait because she was only one year old when her family arrived. Fuad does not complain about discrimination during that period. "Discrimination became a problem only after the Gulf War", he says. Questioned about his relations with locals, he answers that they were polite, but not very personal. He never entered the house of a Kuwaiti citizen, and no Kuwaiti ever visited Fuad's home during his 21 years in the country.

Fuad's experience demonstrates very well how a migrant can be fully integrated within his own expatriate community, while totally segregated from the social sphere of the host country. The Palestinians in Kuwait managed to recreate some of the social relationship of their place of origin. This method of coping with exile situation has been used by Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon are often organised according to the inhabitants' geographical background, with people from different villages dominating different parts of a camp. In Jordan the existence of numerous societies based on the members' family

or village background plays a central role for Palestinians in keeping their national identity alive. The circumstances for developing these types of cultural associations were better in Kuwait than in any other of the Gulf countries. One reason is that the Kuwaiti authorities were more liberal towards the Palestinians and developed closer relations with the PLO than most other governments in the region. During periods of instability in the Middle East, the PLO co-operated with the Kuwaiti government in preventing radical Palestinian elements from infiltrating the Palestinian expatriate community in Kuwait. Another obvious reason is the huge size of the Palestinian community in Kuwait, concentrated in some parts of the capital, so making it easier to create a sort of “New Palestine” there than in, for instance, Saudi Arabia where the Palestinians were fewer and more spread all over the country.

The existence of strong organised ties within the Palestinian community in Kuwait does not mean that Palestinians were more isolated from the host society there than they were in other Gulf countries. The opinion of those interviewees who have experience of different Gulf countries seems to be that the relations between Palestinians and locals were rather better than worse in Kuwait compared with the rest of the Gulf.

The first respondent who was mentioned, Khaled, the shoe-shiner from Nablus who came to Kuwait in 1962, is someone who developed close friendship ties with some of his local neighbours. His social life was similar to the other stories we have heard: He secured a job as a clerk in the Health Ministry, his employer for the next 27 years. Three years after he arrived, he married his uncles’ daughter whom he met in Kuwait. The wedding party was held in his village association, the “Jammassin Society”. The couple had six children who grew up and went to school in Kuwait. As most with others, the family mixed mainly with their relatives and other Palestinians, but Khaled got to know one Kuwaiti neighbour, with whom he developed a personal friendship. In his own words, this neighbour became a “better friend than his own brother”. Khaled kept in touch with this friend after he and his family fled Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation in 1990. When Khaled’s sick wife died a year later, the Kuwaiti neighbour proved his friendship by sending 600 Kuwaiti Dinars to Khaled.

But close friendship ties between Palestinians and Kuwaitis as in this example, seem to be the exception rather than the rule. Those Palestinians who had local friends had the quality of the relations put to a test with the Gulf War. One respondent told that he had assisted a Kuwaiti friend by hiding him in his house while the Iraqi soldiers were rounding up locals in the neighbourhood. When the Palestinian left the country after the war, the Kuwaiti promised to help him to return when the situation had become more settled. But up till now, he has not heard anything from this friend, and he does not hide his disappointment.

Gulf War: The turning point

The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait of August 2, 1990, and the following Gulf War was a turning point for Palestinian migration to the whole Gulf region, though the consequences were by far most dramatic in Kuwait. The crises led to the exodus of a large proportion of the Palestinian migrant population in the Gulf. In Kuwait it is estimated that up to 90 percent of the Palestinian population left because of the war, though the figures are disputed.

Khaled, in the case above, decided to flee Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation. Others, like Fuad, the land surveyor remained, hoping that the situation would be normalised in due course. Fuad was abroad at the time of the Iraqi invasion, on his yearly summer visit to Gaza. When news of the Iraqi invasion reached him, he decided to return at once to Kuwait, as he himself stressed to prevent accusations that he did not wish to stand side by side with Kuwait during the occupation. But after the war he lost both his job in the Defence Ministry and his visa – as did nearly all Palestinian employees in the public sector – and was forced to leave the country.

Another family who remained for some months after the war experienced being met with an extremely hostile attitude from Kuwaitis. They say for instance that in the supermarkets they were refused the chance to buy food because they were Palestinian; so they had to ask a Lebanese neighbour to do the shopping.

Human rights organisations have reported about torture and killing of Palestinians in Kuwaiti prisons in the aftermath of the Gulf War. One Palestinian teacher tells the story of his:

“First, I was arrested by the Kuwaiti police in order to force my brother, who was wanted, to come to the police station. When he showed up, they arrested him, and released me. Two weeks later, I and my family were asked to come to a hospital to see my brother who was sick, as they said. At the hospital we were handed the dead body of my brother with a medical certificate saying he had died of a heart attack. But his body was completely damaged from severe torture, such as from burn wounds and holes from drill”, the teacher explains.

In spite of this, the teacher stayed one more year illegally, still hoping the situation would improve, before he gave up and left with his family.

According to a representative of UNHCR in Kuwait (interviewed in person in June), many of the remaining Palestinians in Kuwait are refugees without proper passports and are denied entry to most countries. Most of these people who stay illegally in Kuwait are bearers of Egyptian travel documents. Another group of Palestinians behind is those who had specially good connections with Kuwaitis, who could arrange for their stay in the normal way.

In the rest of the GCC countries, the situation also became radically harsher for Palestinian migrants after the war, even though not as dramatic as in Kuwait. Common problems mentioned by respondents who remained in these countries include loss of jobs, difficulties in obtaining permission to bring their spouse, more negative attitudes in general, and reduced earnings from their work.

One construction worker from Askar refugee camp in Nablus, who migrated to Saudi Arabia as late as 1985, explains that the atmosphere changed totally after the Gulf war in that the poor communication between Palestinians and locals that already existed, suddenly stopped completely. “It even happened that locals spat at us in the streets”, he says. Furthermore, all his Palestinian colleagues were fired. He used to work with seven Palestinians in a company of 30 employees. Today he is the only Palestinian remaining on the staff, while all his country-men are replaced with Egyptians. He repeats a popular accusation among Palestinian migrants when he claims that Saudi Arabia rewarded Egypt for its participation in the international coalition against Iraq by transferring jobs from Palestinian to Egyptian workers. Questioned about the reason why he has not been fired like his colleagues, he answers that he has been shown some sympathy because he has two children who suffer from a chronic disease for which they receive free treatment at a Saudi hospital.

The widow Amina (from the last chapter), who had problems in obtaining a visa for her nephew to accompany her as a *mohram*, says that not all Palestinians have been fired formally. Many have been indirectly pressured to leave the country because of the frequent transfers of Palestinians to less attractive jobs. She has now been asked to leave her post, and move to a rural village where she has been offered another job as a teacher. If that is her only option, she would rather stay in Gaza. She does not want to transfer her own children from the school they are in to this village. Furthermore, she complains, the salaries have not increased for the last four years, while her expenses have definitely increased indeed. As she now is only earning sufficient for her family’s consumption – nothing is saved any more – she says she has not many good reasons left for continuing her migrant’s life.

Conclusion

Palestinians in the Gulf states show a low degree of integration into the local society. As with labour migrants of other nationalities in the Gulf, they are incorporated into the economy of the host country but to a large extent excluded from the social and political spheres of society. Complaints about systematic discrimination from governmental institutions and humiliating attitudes from local inhabitants are com-

mon. Criticism against the power and conduct of the local sponsor is especially widespread among the respondents.

The respondents reveal a pattern of compensating for this exclusion by establishing a social network among their own kin. In places where there are many Palestinians they tend to form a social community. Relatives and friends from the same village or refugee camp seem to constitute the core of the social networks within the Palestinian migrant's colony.

The respondents established a kind of semi-settled life in the Gulf step by step: The first to migrate were usually males arriving without dependants. After a few years, during which the single migrants secured themselves a permanent residency permit, they returned to bring their wives and children – or to marry – and then establish a home with the family in the Gulf. The pattern of bringing dependants indicates a wish to stay at least for a relatively long period if not for as long as possible.

The social organisation based on family ties and interactions between people of common geographical background have implications not only for the private social sphere in the migrants' life. Access to social networks is one of the main facilitators of economic opportunities for the migrants. From the outset, the visa arrangement and the connection to a sponsor is often organised through relatives already living in the recipient country. Relatives will also often offer accommodation to newcomers for a period after arrival. Furthermore, the immigrant worker's access to different employment options, depends upon the quality of his social network, once he has established himself in the Gulf country.

The respondents have shown various degrees of occupational mobility and access to economic advancement. Those who have managed to move upwards in social status have been those with a broad social network. Similarly, those who have failed in their attempts to change job and improve their economic situation, have lacked such a network. One reason for the economic value of social contacts is that many firms are dominated by and run by Palestinians, even though the formal director and owner will always be a local citizen. Job offers in such firms will often be channelled through personal contacts. In some smaller enterprises the family itself constitutes the basis for the workforce.

The Gulf country in which Palestinians had established the deepest roots until 1990 was Kuwait. Here the Palestinian presence was characterised by a high degree of active participation in cultural associations and a certain level of political freedom. The Gulf War put an end to this epoch with the expulsion of the vast majority of the Palestinian expatriates. In the rest of the Gulf the war also resulted in strained relations between Palestinians and locals, increased problems with employment and residence permits, and more perceived discrimination of Palestinians. The Palestinian experience of Kuwait illustrates clearly both how well

established an expatriate community can be without being integrated in the local environment and at the same time the fragility of this same community when its members are permanently deprived of many legal rights and citizenship in the host country.

Keeping ties with home

“Who will assist me when I need help later, if I do not send remittances?”
(Palestinian migrant worker in the UAE)

One crucial issue which is important to understand if one wants to grasp the nature of Palestinian migration to the Gulf is the interaction between the migrant and his previous home in the West Bank or Gaza. To what extent do the migrants maintain their ties with their family, relatives and friends in the village, town or camp from which they emigrated? What are the social and economic aspects of the existing relationship? What are the expectations from their kin back home? Whom do single male migrants marry? And, not least do they plan to return to their previous homes, or do they have other migratory aspirations?

The respondents' answers to these questions produce a clear pattern among the interviewees. maintain contact with the family they left, through regular visits during holidays. It is also common to follow the traditional pattern of finding a marriage partner among relatives or people from the same village or camp. The economic aspect of the ties between migrants and their families is substantial, as a large proportion of the salaries are sent back home as remittances. Furthermore, the migrants are well aware of that they cannot stay in the Gulf permanently. Thus, they make very concrete plans with the practical preparations made step by step, for returning when enough money has been saved to build a house and establish a home in the West Bank or Gaza.

Parallel ties: visits, marriages and remittances

Regular visits are an important way for labour migrant workers to keep family ties alive during the years or decades abroad. According to the respondents, most Palestinians who have the chance in practical terms, visit their family yearly or every second year. Interestingly, the policy of the Gulf states encourages and facilitates the maintenance of these family relations through generous arrangements of free tickets every year for migrants working in the public sector to visit their homes

during the long summer holiday. Many private companies also offer their expatriate employees free tickets every year as part of their contracts.

The conduct of marriage is a second indicator of the extent to which Palestinians keep to their social traditions when they live in migrant communities. It is a striking pattern among those respondents who migrated as single men to find brides through traditional channels; quite a few of them married a cousin during a summer visit home, whilst others found a bride among their relatives in the Gulf. Of those who married non-relatives, most still found a wife who came from their village or camp. This is, of course, not to estimate how common the different categories of marriage are – the nature of the sample does not make that possible. What is interesting, though, is that these life histories do not indicate that Palestinian migrants give up their traditional social sphere based on close family relations.

A third indicator of the migrant/family relation is the type of economic bonds which exist between the two. We have already seen that a migrant is often assisted by his family in migrating; it was not unusual for the migrant's brothers to have paid for his education, or his father paid the ticket and thus directly providing him the necessary resources for being able to migrate. The substantial amount of remittances the Palestinian labour migrants send back home can be interpreted as a natural continuation of these economic bonds. A few respondents, those with the lowest salaries, did not send any money to their families. These more or less exceptional cases apart, all the migrants interviewed had supported their families at home during the period of migration.

The respondents answers concerning economic matters suggest that a migrant's personal finances can be divided into three parts: Firstly, the expenditures on his own household in the Gulf, including rent for a flat, food, clothes, car, etc; secondly, savings which lay the basis for his future when he returns or settles in a third country. and thirdly, the remittances which he sends back home, and possibly also to other relatives. The balance between these three parts of a private budget may vary widely among migrants.

We have already seen that the Palestinians who succeeded in migrating to the Gulf came from various socio-economic backgrounds, with different levels of education, and from families of disparate degrees of economic strength; they included illiterate land workers, construction workers, teachers and doctors. Not unexpectedly, as we saw in the last chapter, their performance and degree of success seem to be linked to their background. The remittances that the migrants send home can be seen as a continuation of this line, or rather, the link that completes an economic circle connecting the migrants' economic background with their performance as migrants, which in turn influences the amount of remittances sent back to the starting point, their families. The remittances are sometimes used to facilitate

migration for others in the household, thus starting another round of what can be call an economic circle of migration.

Success and failure

In the following cases we will focus on the characteristics of the social and economic interactions between the migrants and their previous homes. These interactions will be related to the migrants' performance and degree of economic success as labour migrant workers.

Let us return to the case of Issa, the teacher who migrated to Saudi in 1969 after his father's road-making company was closed down due to difficulties caused by the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and Sinai. During the following decades his outstanding economic success enabled him to pay for the education abroad of his five younger brothers. Now he is checking out the prospects for investing his accumulated capital in Gaza.

Issa worked as a teacher in Saudi Arabia during the first 12 years of his stay. In 1981 he was asked by his cousin (who is also his brother-in-law) to be a partner of his newly established agricultural company selling seeds and pesticides. The business went very well until the beginning of the 1990's when international pressure for market liberalisation negatively affected the Saudi agricultural production. He was a single man when he arrived in 1969, but married his cousin three years later and had seven children, who grew up and went to school there. Last year his wife and children returned to Khan Younis, partly because the children were having some problems in school due to the anti-Palestinian sentiment after the Gulf War, and partly because the business was less profitable than before. Nevertheless, Issa himself is still very much in Saudi, working with the company.

During his 25 years in Saudi Arabia Issa went back nearly every year to Gaza to visit his parents and relatives. When he worked as a teacher, the government covered the expenses of a family visit every summer; later the company paid the airplane tickets for the whole family. Furthermore, in Saudi Arabia he always had relatives around; at times up to 35 of his relatives were living and working there, constituting the base for his and his family's social network.

As we may recall, Issa was asked by his father to seek work abroad because his company had to close down, and because he felt too old to look for a new job. In other words, sending money back home was the main goal behind Issa's migration openly declared from the outset. He fulfilled this task

to such an extent that it exceeded everybody's expectations. During his first three years he sent around half of his salary, because he had few responsibilities as a single man. Yet he saved a part of his income, preparing for marriage. After he married and had children, the remittances decreased because his own consumption increased. When he started working at his cousin's company in 1981 his income rose considerably, as did the remittances. Issa, who during his studies had been supported by his father and his older brother, now became the main income source for six younger brothers during their studies abroad; one in Egypt, one in Germany and four in Romania. Two studied medicine, the others specialised in civil engineering, mechanical engineering, computer science, and mathematics. Besides the remittances from Issa they also received some support from their oldest brother who has lived in Libya for most of the time. In addition to supporting his closest family Issa also gave some money to other relatives for special occasions. These relatives would normally not ask Issa directly, but give a signal to his father, who in turn recommended who had the greatest needs of help. , Such relatives would normally be rather poor people.

The first major investment for Issa was to buy a piece of land in 1976 outside the Khan Younis camp where he had spent his childhood. He shared the investment with his father and older brother. After another three years of work and more savings there was enough money to build a house on this land, making it possible for Issa's parents to move out of the refugee camp after 30 years as camp residents. The house was more of a collective family project than a gift to Issa's parents who moved into the ground floor, while new storeys were to be built above for Issa and some of his brothers, for the day they would return from their studies or work abroad. Today 17 people live in the house: Issa's family of seven children, one married brother with his family, and one single brother- in addition to their parents.

The story of Issa illustrates very clearly how strong family ties can be kept in spite of decades of separation. Nothing in Issa's behaviour or key decisions during his period of exile indicates that he ever had it in mind to permanently emigrate from his place of birth. The amount of remittances to a wide spectre of recipients, and the high frequency of his visits strengthen this impression. His moves seem to have been taken carefully, step by step: Seven years after he migrated he bought a piece of land outside his refugee camp, and after three additional years he had built a house in co-operation with other family members. The long distance from home did not mean that he had left his previous social and cultural spheres; he held on to the marriage traditions by taking a bride from his own family, and he mixed mostly

within the colony of his own relatives. Even at work he was tied to his family through the joint business venture with his cousin.

Another successful migrant is Qasim from Askar camp in Nablus, West Bank, who went to Saudi Arabia in 1981.

Qasim's education as a land surveyor at a UNRWA Vocational Training Centre enabled him to obtain a well-paid job as a surveyor in a small village municipality in Saudi Arabia, where his cousin had worked before. During the first years of his stay he avoided travelling to the West Bank because of Jordanian attempts to force young Palestinian men in transit through Jordan on their way between the West Bank and the Gulf to do military service. His links with his family in Askar were therefore limited during that period. Even though he saved most of his salary, he always sent remittances, mostly to one brother studying in Jordan, and to his parents in Askar. It was usually his father who would prioritise whom in the family needed the money Qasim sent; he would also ask Qasim to send some extra if there were special needs. So long as Qasim did not travel to Jordan himself, he would send the remittances by cheque to Amman where he had many relatives. Somebody from his family in Askar would then come and collect it.

Qasim was not married when he went to Saudi Arabia, but he received several suggestions from his parents about marrying one of his maternal cousins in Jordan. He refused because Palestinians in Jordan would not normally be granted a residence permit in the West Bank by the Israeli authorities, and he was not interested in settling down in Jordan. When he came back to Askar on a summer visit in 1986, he met a girl – with the help of his mother and sister – whom he married seven days later. His parents had originally hoped he would find a bride from within their own *hamula*, the extended family, but at least they were happy that she was of refugee background. Qasim spent some of his five years' savings on the wedding. In addition, he could afford to buy some 656 sq.m. of land in Nablus at a cost of 8,000 Jordanian Dinars.

The married couple went together to Saudi Arabia where she started working as a teacher. From then onwards, they visited their families in Nablus every summer, and already one year after they had married they started building a house on the piece of land he had bought.

During the ensuing years they saved well; her salary of 2,500 Riyals (USD 715) were in addition to Qasim's 4,000 Riyals (USD 1,150). They also received, as is usual with government employers in Saudi Arabia, three months' salary for the expenses of their flat and free tickets once a year for themselves and up to two children. Their remittances comprised about USD 2,000 a year, when they were saving most of their salaries. Qasim explains that it feels natural for him to send remittances

to his father in Askar, who lives off a salary of some 850 Israeli Shekels a month from his job in the Arab Insurance Company. "It is also ones duty to support a clever brother by securing him an education. One of my brothers got top marks, 91 percent, in secondary school. It is mainly this one's education I have supported, because he was the brightest student in the family", Qasim says. His brother used to study pharmacy in Amman, Jordan, but has now started studying engineering at al-Najah University in Nablus.

Qasim never doubted that he would come back to Nablus. It was a question of *when* more than *if* he should return. "I always thought I would come back here to Nablus", he says, "because, it is very important for us that our children get to know their relatives here. And, none of us like the life in Saudi Arabia; we feel like strangers. Before, the Saudis respected us much, but now they envy us, and say we only want their money. We are looking for work here in Nablus now and will surely settle here as soon as I or my wife find a job. I am actually considering resigning from my job in Saudi Arabia next year to come back for good, even if we have found no work", he says. When they quit their jobs in Saudi Arabia, they will receive a considerable end-of-service-payment which amounts to one month's salary for each year in work. Qasim explains that this bonus will enable them to live from their savings for some time after they return while looking for work. And they will also draw up priorities for their four children's education in the years to come, according to Qasim.

While many respondents claim that increased expenditure since 1990 has made it less attractive to stay in the Gulf countries, Qasim and his wife does not complain. With two salaries they still manage to save much of their income. They are successful migrants in the sense that they will have managed to achieve their aim of moving out of the camp and have contributed more than just symbolically to their family at home. Nevertheless, their support has been much less than in Issa's case, whose business made him able to not only move out of the camp with his own family, but also help his parents and some of his brothers to leave. An important similarity between the two cases, though, is Issa's and Qasim's strong commitment to return to their place of birth. Their investment in land is a typical savings priority for Palestinian migrant workers. Savings are invested mostly in housing, rather than in production in the Palestinian territories (Finance and Development, September 1994, Volume 31, Number 3, pp 4).

Not all migrants were as successful as Issa and Qasim. Let us recall the story of Rami, the clerk, who was dissatisfied with his situation in Saudi Arabia.

Rami had failed to change jobs, due to his sponsor's refusal to release him and was stuck with his unsatisfactory job. His salary of 3,500 Riyals (USD 1,000) plus three months salary for the rent of the flat, does not leave a big surplus in the household's finance. The monthly expenditure for the flat, car, telephone and food

amount to 2,400 Riyals. Before he married Rami sent more than half of his salary to his father who used it for an additional storey to his house, and for the ticket for one of Rami's brothers who travelled to USA on a scholarship. The remittances have been reduced to some 600 Riyals a year since Rami's marriage. Last year, nevertheless, he invited his parents to go on the *haj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca, with himself and his wife. As a practising Muslim he has made it a priority to uphold the Islamic values.

We mentioned that Rami lacked a good social network in Saudi Arabia since he had no relatives there. However, he mentioned the ties with his family at home; during his first years he travelled back to New Askar Camp to see them every summer. He also arranged his marriage through his family; he married his cousin during a visit to his maternal relatives in Amman in 1989, seven years after he went to Saudi Arabia. After the marriage, his visits to the family became less frequent, both because the uprising in the occupied territories, the *Intifada*, made visits more difficult and because he did not wish to spend too much of his savings on travel. While Rami's employer paid for his ticket, he had to pay for his wife's ticket from his own pocket. He has only visited his parents twice with his wife since they married.

Rami and his wife are now in a serious dilemma about their future plans. Both would like to leave Saudi Arabia. He wishes to go back to the West Bank whilst she will accept moving with him to New Askar, although she would prefer they settle in Amman, Jordan, where she has relatives. But today they cannot move to the West Bank because she has no residence rights there, as she is born in Amman. They can apply for family reunification from the Israeli Civil Administration, but in that case Rami will first have to stay for one year in the West Bank, and then he will certainly lose his job in Saudi Arabia. He complains that not even their three children have the right to live in the West Bank, as Israeli law considers the children to be with the mother, not the father. He is also afraid that it might be expensive, because there are rumours to the effect that it is necessary to pay a bribe of some 1,000 Jordanian Dinars to get the family reunification application through the system. The temporary character of Rami's stay in Saudi Arabia is strengthened by his dissatisfaction with the conditions there. He has revealed a strong commitment to his parents and family by sending them remittances to the detriment of his own savings. Furthermore, in spite of his stay abroad, his ties with his family have been fulfilled through his marriage to a cousin. However, this marriage has complicated the possibility of returning to his previous home.

To complete the picture of the different degrees of success among Palestinian labour migrants in the Gulf, let us include the case of Rashid (from Chapter 4) whose economic performance seems to have been less successful:

Rashid, from the family who ran garages both in Jabaliya and the UAE, has obviously a much lesser ability to assist his relatives in the refugee camp than had

the migrants in the three previous cases. According to Rashid, his salary of 2,000 Dirhams neither allow for much savings nor for remittances; his monthly expenses included both renting a flat for 1,000 Dirhams, 500 Dirhams for food, and the remaining 500 for running expenses such as the telephone bill and his car. Rashid explains that he never sent any remittances from the Emirates, but brought some small gifts for his family during this year's visit. His family understands that it is hard for him to send any money with his salary as low as it is. There have been no bad feelings in the family because of his failure to send money. According to Rashid his family in Jabaliya was not in desperate need of support, because his father's business was doing quite well. He says that as long as he makes hardly any savings for his own, he has no good reason for staying in the UAE. He admits that his income has been lower than he had hoped, and he is now thinking of bringing his wife and their one year daughter back to Jabaliya. Employment is not his biggest problem, because he can work in either his brother's or his father's garage. There is, however, a big problem with the accommodation in his family; during this summer 30 people stayed in his parents' small house. If possible, he would rather migrate to the West than return to the Gaza Strip.

Rashid's experience as a migrant has been a disappointment; neither he nor his wife, whom he married in Jabaliya during a summer visit four years after he left for the UAE, enjoy life there. More importantly the work has not produced as much savings as Rashid had hoped. He will not be able to move out of the camp with the help of the end-of-service-payment he will get when he quits his job. The extreme overcrowding in the Rashid's family home in Jabaliya is one reason why he has thought of other alternatives than simply returning to the Gaza Strip. He has investigated the possibilities of migrating to a western country, but with negative results, so far.

Remittances and savings in a collective household economy

All the cases above underline the dominance of the economic aspects of Palestinian migration to the Gulf. Success or not the *aim* of a migrant's journey was undoubtedly first and foremost to save money for personal expenditure in the future and to send remittances to their dependants back home.

It is interesting to observe that savings and remittances are not necessarily two independent items in a migrant's household budget. For those migrants who plan for their return, their own savings might be used together with their remittances in collective family projects, such as we saw in the case of Issa's, when he shared the costs of building a house with his father and brother. This illustrates the common collective orientation in Palestinian household budgets. The collective attitude is revealed in the frequent assertions of migrants that it is a "duty" to send money

to the family. The respondents, when asked about their opinion on migrants who do not send remittances when they can afford it, were generally of the opinion that such behaviour is not acceptable and very bad for the person's reputation and respect among his kin. This attitude implies that the expectations of support among a migrant's dependants can be very high and thus represent a heavy social pressure on the migrant to send remittances.

The expectations of support will rise according to a migrant's degree of success ; while less successful Rashid in his garage in Abu Dhabi is not ashamed of not sending back remittances, this is something that would be out of question for Issa , the rich businessman.

In addition, the range of these economic ties, which remittances represent, varies according to the migrant's abilities. Rami, the clerk, who was mentioned above, sent money only to parents and brothers out of his modest salary. Respondents who supported relatives beyond the immediate family circle, were more well-off like Issa, who gave some help to poorer relatives. Hassan, the accountant sends substantial financial support to two nephews' university studies in Jordan. His brother's two sons receive 1200 Jordanian Dinars every year.

The collective economic orientation of a Palestinian household constitutes the basis for a social security system in which the most basic needs of the poorest ones will be secured through the support of those who have more. And those who share their economic resources are often well aware of the importance of their support for their own financial security in the future. It is probably an awareness of this fact that lies behind the statement of the Palestinian draftsman Jamal in Abu Dhabi: "Who will assist me when I need help in the future, if I do not send remittances now?" Before the Gulf War, he sent some USD 700 monthly to his family living in the Balata refugee camp in Nablus, West Bank. He sent extra funds when his mother became sick; and for the construction of one brother's house, and for another brother's wedding. In spite of planning to move out of the camp after he had bought a flat in Nablus in 1994, Jamal says he will still live much of the time in the camp –in order to avoid cutting ties to his relatives, whose help he might need in the future.

The same collective oriented thinking lies behind the allocations of savings within the nuclear family; they are shared in order to secure a future for the family as a unit. A considerable part of the respondents' savings is used for the education of the children. Because the sons will be responsible for their parents' financial security when they have become old, whilst a daughter will have less financial responsibilities, the son's education is often given priority . Hassan, the accountant, who worked in a Palestinian enterprise in Saudi Arabia articulates this strategy: "I send my sons to private schools and my daughter to a government, because, you know, we are Arabs, and I hope my sons will help me in the future." As he has

to pay for the private school, while the government school is free, this is an financial question for Hassan.

Most respondents give very high priority to the education of their children and keep aside some savings for possible future studies .

Obstacles to visits

The most important way of maintaining the social ties with relatives during a stay in the Gulf is through frequent summer visits. The possibility for the migrants of keeping this contact is made difficult by state regulations which, in some cases, facilitate frequent visits to home and in other cases prevent it. As we have seen, the Gulf countries encourage frequent visits through economic incentives. On the other hand, some Palestinian migrants with Jordanian passports have avoided travelling through Jordan because they are due to do military service there. This caused Qasim, the surveyor working in Saudi Arabia, not to visit his family in Askar, West Bank, for some years. Amina, the widow and her deceased husband, did not visit their families in Gaza for ten years because they were denied visas for both Egypt and Jordan. As holders of Egyptian travel documents Gazans face more restrictions when travelling, than do their kin in the West Bank who have Jordanian passports.

In spite of the widespread practice of employers in the Gulf countries to give the migrants free tickets for travelling home, the visit is still a financial question because of visa fees. Qasim from Askar, West Bank, says he has to pay 400 Jordanian Dinars for visas when his family goes home for the summer holidays.

Conclusion

The Palestinian migrants in the Gulf take good care of relations with their families in the West Bank and Gaza. The ties are kept alive through frequent summer visits, their traditional marriage patterns, and not least by the substantial remittances they send back to their dependants.

Yearly visits home are common among the respondents. This contact is encouraged by the policy of the Gulf states to provide free tickets for expatriates. On the other hand, visiting the Palestinian territories is complicated by Israeli regulations; visitor visas require high fees, and the frequency of visits and length of stay are limited for former residents of the territories. In addition there are the problems migrants face when in transit through the neighbouring countries of Egypt or Jordan. Palestinians from Gaza, carrying only Egyptian travel documents, have sometimes had difficulty in obtaining even transit visas for these countries. Furthermore, conscription into the Jordanian Army has caused Palestinian male migrants with Jordanian citizenship to avoid travelling to Jordan. The migrants' ability to

visit their families at home is thus influenced and limited by several external factors beyond their control. Nevertheless, those who have the option, seem to make frequent visits to the territories a priority.

The ties between the migrants and their kin back home are strengthened by their code of conduct for marriage; there is no indication from our interviews that migrants abandon their traditional channels for finding a spouse during their life of exile. Many of the male respondents found a bride from among their cousins whom they either met in the Gulf or during a visit home. This is an indication that migrants do not leave their social sphere in spite of the geographical distance.

The social ties are strengthened by strong economic bonds. Most migrants send back substantial amounts of money to their families. Usually the recipients are close family members: parents, sisters and brothers. Successful migrants with high salaries might also support other relatives. Only in a few exceptional cases, if income was too low, did the respondents not send back remittances. For some, sending money back home was an openly declared goal expected by the parents from the outset. Remittances are spent on daily consumption needs as well as on long-term investments in improved housing and the education of younger brothers and sisters. These priorities are similar to those of the migrant's own use of savings which remain after remittances and daily expenses have been paid; the purchase of land in the West Bank or Gaza and education for children are two main areas of investment. A migrant's remittances are not always easily to separate from his own savings, because when it comes to major investments the two pools of money are often used together in a joint family project, such as when a house is built for both parents and several of the sons in a family.

The multiple ties of social and economic interactions between the migrant and the rest of the family in the West Bank or Gaza show that migration is not only an individual matter, but rather a strategy of a household for generating income. The strong expectations of sharing his income with others in the household, make remittances to something close to a moral duty for the migrant. This collectively organised household budget represents also a social security system for the contributor; a migrant can rely upon help from household members, should that be necessary in the future.

The desire to return

Studies of general labour migration between Middle East countries, have concluded that the vast majority of migrants want to return to their home countries. Neither they nor the recipient country consider labour immigration as permanent resettlement. The answers obtained from our respondents do not indicate that Palestinian migrants deviate from this pattern. As we saw in the last chapter, Palestinians keep regularly in contact with their families at home. Here we look at how the migrants plan their return, often by making concrete preparations step by step, years before they actually return – if they have the possibility so to do.

Palestinian refugees who migrated from the West Bank or Gaza to the Gulf do not all have the same migration options available today. One main division lies between those who can legally return to the Palestinian territories, and those who are not allowed to return due to Israeli regulations. Israeli conditions for the right of residency stipulate that the person was registered in the Israeli census in the newly occupied territories in 1967, holds an Israeli ID-card, and that he or she has been visiting the territories regularly, at least every six years, since then. This means that a large proportion of the migrants in the Gulf is not allowed to return to their previous homes in the now self-ruled areas by the Israeli authorities. Some had already migrated to the Gulf and many worked or studied in Cairo or Amman, and were therefore not present when the census was conducted. Many of the Gulf-migrants in this category are now awaiting a reply to their applications for family reunification. For West Bank residents with a Jordanian passport Jordan is the closest migration alternative. Others are have no place to go after their stay in the Gulf. In this category we find many from Gaza with Egyptian travel documents who are not accepted as immigrants either by Egypt nor Jordan. One solution for those who lack residence permits from Israel, is to visit the territories on a normal visitor visa and stay illegally afterwards hoping that the Palestinian Authority will not be concerned about whether they hold valid Israeli residence permits or not. Another option, not available to most Palestinians, is migrating to a western country. Several respondents had investigated the possibility of obtaining immigration visas for countries in Europe, North America or Australia, mostly with disappointing results.

The benefits and costs of returning

The decision of the migrant to return is influenced by push- pull factors, similar to those that influenced their conclusion to migrate in the first place. A comparison between social, economic and political conditions in the Gulf, in the Palestinian territories or in other alternative places, will form the process behind that decision. Economic considerations are one important aspect, as financial reasons usually lies

behind migration in the first place. As we have seen, the general impression from the respondents is that the financial benefits of working in the Gulf have decreased since 1990 because salaries have been frozen, while expenditure has increased. Many of the respondents say that the size of their savings and remittances has been reduced to such a low level that it is not worth staying in the Gulf any more. General dissatisfaction with the social life due to the strict policy of segregation between citizens and expatriates is another factor many respondents mention. When economic conditions deteriorate at the same time as the political and social climate for Palestinian expatriates becomes harsher, the wish to give up the migrant's life in the Gulf is strengthened even further.

This situation has led many migrants to spend their summer holidays preparing for coming back for good, or at least investigating the possibilities of returning. Samir, the medical doctor, who complained about discrimination in Saudi Arabia, left his CV with the Palestinian Health Ministry, and has worked as a volunteer at a hospital in Gaza during his summer holidays, hoping to get a foot inside the door. As soon as he gets a job in Gaza, he will leave Saudi Arabia. He explains that besides the low salary and the discrimination in Saudi Arabia, the peace process and Palestinian self-rule are further important reasons for his wish to come home. If he gets no work in Gaza, he will go to Saudi Arabia, and from there try to emigrate to Canada or Sweden, he says. His aunt, Amina, the teacher for whom Samir is the *mohram*, is also looking for a means of livelihood in Gaza. If she finds no other job, she knows she can work in her brother's sewing workshop, an alternative which is quite low-paid. Because Amina migrated in 1966 to Libya, she has no residence permit for Gaza. This summer she came on a one month visitor visa, but says she is ready to stay illegally if she is removed from her job in Saudi Arabia, as she fears. "I have experienced that the migrant life is not good, and I wish my children to grow up among their relatives here in Jabaliya Camp. I will advise them to study abroad, but not to emigrate", the widow says, and adds that she can financially support their education from her accumulated savings. She believes that the Palestinian police will not interfere because she lacks a valid Israeli residence permit.

While low and medium paid workers look for employment, successful businessmen among the respondents look for ways to invest their capital. We have mentioned Mustafa, the businessman, (Chapter 4 and 5), who established his own consultancy centre in Amman after returning from Bahrain in 1989. He is now considering opening a branch of a consultancy centre in Gaza. Some Palestinian friends in the UAE are interested in co-operating with him on investments in Gaza. He has approached the Palestinian Authority, where he received a list of regulations for investments in the self-rule areas. Mustafa is hesitant of investing capital: "I need more stability. Israel is creating obstacles for export and import to the Palestinian areas. And I must have easier access to move and travel freely. Furthermore, the

Palestinian Authority should act as a better facilitator of inward investments, for example giving guarantees for invested capital, and there should be a system of insurance”, he says. Another businessman who has been mentioned before is Issa, who ran an agricultural company in Saudi Arabia. He has been encouraged by the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture to invest his capital from Saudi in Gaza. His conclusion so far, however, is that conditions in Gaza are too risky for investment. According to Issa the main obstacles are the Israeli taxes and the frequent border closures which make any import/export activity too precarious, especially for agricultural products.

Securing a base at home

It is remarkable how many of the respondents, in different situations, with different lengths of experience of the Gulf, and with different degrees of economic success, now say they are considering to come back within a year or two. This does not necessarily mean that there has been a sudden shift from previous trends.. Because of the high level of uncertainty related to the migrant life, it seems likely the migrants will always keep an eye on the option of return. This is supported by observations that many migrants buy land in the Palestinian territories – or alternatively in Jordan – and starting to build a house years before they actually plan to return. By buying land at home, or in Jordan, a migrant secures a “base” to which he or she can return whenever they want to – or have to – leave the Gulf. This appears to be a common, reasonable strategy for coping with the temporary character of the migrant life. Qasim, the surveyor, in the last chapter was one of those who had created such a base at home already by buying a small piece of land in Nablus, when he married in 1986. He had started to build a house on the land already the year after, in spite of could the likelihood of being able to stay in Saudi Arabia for the foreseeable future. The most plausible explanation for such a pattern among the respondents of buying land at an early stage in their migrant period is the need to establish a secure base for the future. Purely economic reasons also support the decision to buyland. Purchasing land is considered to be a very safe investment because prices have risen steadily for decades, both in the Palestinian territories and Jordan. Some respondents bought more land than they needed, in order to keep one part for themselves and sell the rest for a large profit after a few years. Qasim has reason to be happy with his investment; the piece he bought for 8,000 Jordanian Dinars in 1986, can today be sold for some 25,000 Dinars, according to his estimates. However, he will not sell any of his 656 sq.m. because he is now preparing to settle there with his family. He has worked on his house every summer, and it is nearly ready now. Both he and his wife look for work in the Nablus area during their summer visits at home. As he explained, he is so eager to move in, that he and his

wife might quit their jobs and return before they have even found employment in Nablus in spite of the fact that they still can save well in Saudi.

Even respondents who are not very enthusiastic about living in the West Bank follow this strategy of securing a base: Jamal the draftsman bought a flat in Nablus during his summer visit in 1994 without actually wanting to return. He says he will stay in Qatar, where he works, as long as possible. One reason for not coming back to Nablus is that he feels the security situation will be unacceptable for the near future. His contract in Qatar is to be renewed every year, and he might very well have to leave his post suddenly. In spite of the fact that the West Bank is obviously a second choice for Jamal, he realizes that probably one day he will need a place to settle down there.

The value of having a piece of land or a house is best illustrated by those who did *not* secure their own “base” somewhere outside the Gulf.

West Bank native Kamal, who had been threatened by a Kuwaiti soldier after the Gulf war, left most of his property behind when he fled the country. He estimates the value of his losses, including furniture and three good cars, at some 27,000 Kuwaiti Dinars (USD 81,000). Because he was denied residency in the West Bank he settled with wife and five children in Mafraq, Jordan where he had two brothers who helped him. Kamal was not a refugee when he migrated to work in Kuwait from his village of Annabta in the West Bank in 1960. But the Six-Day-War made it impossible for him to return because he was not present during the Israeli census in 1967. His wife, also from Annabta, and their children joined Kamal in Kuwait just after the war. As Kamal had no property in Jordan, he had to rent a flat for his family in 1991. After one year he had to move to a smaller, more simple flat because he could not afford the rent in the first place. He is unemployed, and his only income source now is some remittances from a son who has remained in Kuwait. Kamal is now trying to arrange a family reunification through his brothers in Annabta where he actually owns 20 dunums of land together with his five brothers. But his case is weak, as his closest relatives are only brothers, which hardly fulfils the Israeli criteria for reunification. He has asked his son in Kuwait to try to get him back there by finding some simple work for him, but till now without results. He says he would prefer to settle in his old home in Annabta rather than return to Kuwait at the age of 67; he still believes everything will be better than in his poor life in Jordan now.

The sudden end of his stay, was a catastrophe for Kamal. Under normal conditions he would have managed to bring more of his belongings out of Kuwait when he had decided to leave. With his savings and a considerable end-of-service-payment, which he did not get from the hotel where he worked most of the time, he would have managed to establish a nice home in Jordan – if not in Annabta. But

because he had no land in Jordan, the Gulf war left him like a shipwrecked man, stranded with two empty hands.

A stay in the Gulf is for most migrants, as we have seen, based on fragile conditions, and few know when they might be forced to leave for economic, political or personal reasons. A piece of land, at home or at a place where they have relatives, represents a security for the future; an easier start to post-migrant life.

Family reunification as an entrance ticket

Some respondents lack the residence permit for the West Bank or Gaza due to the Israeli restrictions mentioned earlier and can only visit their relatives for a shorter period. The most common way of obtaining the permit is to apply for family reunification. One case mentioned before was Rami who was in a dilemma about whether he should stay in Askar in order to apply for residence permit through family reunification for his wife – and thereby lose his job in Saudi Arabia or go back to Saudi – and keep his job but lose the hope for family reunification. Let us recall the story of Riyadh, the mechanic whose first sponsor threatened him with deporting his two brothers.

Because of what he calls harassment from his second sponsor, who demanded all his vehicles be repaired for free and suddenly also wanted half of the profit of Riyadh's garage, Riyadh gave up his migrant life in Saudi Arabia in 1987. During his last two years he had made no savings, and the remittances he sent to his mother in Askar Camp, West Bank, before she died, were taken from previous savings. He travelled back to Askar where he hoped to be able to settle with his wife and their three children. Riyadh had a valid residence permit for himself because he was present in the West Bank during the Israeli census of 1967 and had visited the territory regularly since he migrated in 1976. But his wife, a cousin whom he married in Saudi Arabia two years after he arrived there, had grown up in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and was denied a residence permit, as was the oldest of their three sons. According to Riyadh, the Israeli regulations at that time ruled that children under the age of five would be with their father, while children over five were to be with the mother. In 1987 his wife was allowed to accompany Riyadh to the West Bank, but only on a one month visitor's permit. Riyadh's application for family reunification was rejected by the Israeli authorities, so he felt obliged to take his family to Jordan, where all the family members were allowed to stay. It was not possible for him to go back to Saudi Arabia, due to the bad relationship with his sponsor, so he settled in Jordan. Riyadh had always maintained contact with his relatives in Jordan and he had already, bought two dunum

of land in Khaldie outside Amman in 1978. After the Israeli's refusal of family reunification he started building a house on the piece of land. The rest of his savings was used to buy an old Mercedes with which he started working as a taxi-driver. He continued to apply for family reunification; seven times he went to Askar to arrange it, every time with the same negative result. Each application cost him 80 JD in fees. Altogether he estimates that the costs for these attempts, travel expenses and payment for agents included, amounted to some 2,000 Jordanian Dinars.

In August 1995 Riyad's family finally received a positive reply for reunification. His wife and five children came from Jordan in September to start a new life in Askar. There are still, some problems remaining to be solved; his house in Khaldie is now empty and must be sold. His car also has to be sold because he is not allowed to bring it to the West Bank. To arrange for the sale of the house and the car he needs to go to Jordan, but due to Israeli regulations, he is not permitted to leave the West Bank for one year after the family reunification. If he leaves the territory, the reunification will be void. He is now awaiting an answer from the Israeli civil administration to a request to be allowed to go to Jordan to arrange these practical matters. If it is denied, he will have to ask his cousin in Amman to sell the house. Rigid Jordanian law makes it impossible to rent out the house for only one year without at the same time giving the tenants rights to stay there longer. Riyad is upset because of the situation: "This is the opposite of family reunification. They put pressure on me to leave and thereby cancelled the reunification", he complains. He plans to buy some land in Nablus, but has to wait until he has sold the house in Jordan.

For the time being, Riyad and his family share a house in Askar Camp with four other brothers, three of whom are married with children. Altogether there are 22 people living in four small apartments. He explains that he always planned to come back to Nablus because he wanted to be closer to his relatives. So long as he was making no savings as a taxi-driver in Amman, there was no reason to stay there. He has not yet made up his mind what he will make a living from in Askar, but he has several alternatives. He might work as an illegal taxi-driver, as his brother does. Then he will first have to take driving lessons because the Israeli administration does not recognize his driving license from Saudi Arabia. He is also looking for a place in the camp where he can open a small shop. A third alternative is to start poultry production. It is difficult to make use of his skills as a diesel mechanic because it is too expensive for him to start a new garage, and the salary from working for others is too low for him.

Riyad's marriage to his cousin from Jordan caused exactly the problem which another respondent, Qasim, avoided by refusing his parents' suggestion of marriage to one of his cousins living in Amman. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Riyad followed the pattern of establishing a "base" outside the Gulf at an early stage, even if he was excluded from settling with his family in the West Bank, by buying land in Jordan when he married nine years before he finally decided to leave Saudi Arabia. Only once his application for family reunification was rejected the first time, he started building a house on his land in Jordan. His dilemma after the family was granted reunification is that he will have to give up what he has in Jordan before he knows what his savings and the money he will get from selling his house, can buy in the West Bank.

Some respondents have been careful to keep their residence rights by returning often to the Occupied Territories. One respondent, an unskilled worker in Kuwait, said that his wife travelled from Kuwait to Askar after every birth in order to have their children registered there to ensure that they would have the right of residence.

Conclusion

Most of the respondents express a desire to go back to the West Bank or Gaza, and many suppose that they will return within a couple of years. This is not in itself proof that they actually are going to do so. The temporary nature of their settlement in the Gulf might influence the migrants to make short-time plans, and the common idea of "returning next year" might be a static permanent plan which is postponed each time there is a chance to prolong their stay in the host country.

The respondents' statements concerning wish to return, though, correspond well with their actual preparations for the future. We find that the migrants to a large extent spend their savings in the West Bank and Gaza Strip rather than in the host country in the Gulf. A common object for investment is land in the West Bank or Gaza, later on followed up by the construction of a house. These moves are usually taken step by step, years before the migrant actually returns. This strategy of securing a "base" at home while working abroad, has made the migrant relatively well prepared for the day of return – whether it happens to be by choice or caused by other reasons.

Recent political and economic developments in the Middle East have affected the Palestinian expatriates' reflections on the question of how long to stay in the Gulf. The Gulf War had consequences not only for those Palestinians who lost their jobs and were obliged to leave. Those who remained perceived increased hostile sentiments among the local population and experienced stricter regulations from the government. When these conditions are taken into consideration – in addition

to the general decrease in the economic benefits from working in the Gulf countries – there is reason to believe that the migrants have stronger incentives to leave the Gulf now than before. The developments in the West Bank and Gaza are pulling in the same direction; the peace process and the establishment of self-ruled Palestinian areas, with elected Palestinian institutions, is a radical change from the state of insecurity under the Israeli occupation and the *Intifada* in the territories. In spite of widespread scepticism towards the peace process, most respondents say the self rule arrangements have increased their desire to return. However, many of them complain that the economic prospects for coming back have not been easy to follow, and say they will not return before they know they will have an acceptable job there. Several of the respondents had made concrete efforts to find a job during their summer vacation at home.

A major obstacle for returning to the West Bank and Gaza Strip for a large proportion of the migrants are Israeli regulations. Many of those Palestinians who have been denied residence rights by the Israeli authorities are now trying to organise a family reunification in order to settle there. Others have expressed the intention of staying illegally (according to the Israeli rules) after their visitor's permits expire.

Peoples' intentions and plans are complicated subjects to study. What seems clear about Palestinian migrants in the Gulf is that they follow developments in the Occupied Territories closely and are continuously considering the pro's and con's of returning compared with prolonging their life as migrant workers in the Gulf.

Conclusion

This study has focused upon how labour migration to the Gulf can function as a strategy for coping among Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Through in-depth interviews with 32 Palestinian heads of household, who work or have worked in the Gulf area, we have obtained some glimpses into the migrant life and its role for the Palestinian household. Our ambition has not been to explain all the reasons behind the whole phenomenon of Palestinian migration to the Gulf as such, but rather to shed some light on the refugees' own priorities and choices within the options they have had to hand, within the limitations set by political and economic conditions. The abstracts of some of the respondents' life histories in this report cover the reasons for migrating; how they got to the Gulf; the migrant's level of integration into the host society; their ties with their families at home while working abroad, and their future migration plans.

The Palestinian workers migrant in the Gulf do not constitute one homogenous group; they come from very different socio-economic strata of the population, from illiterate land workers to medical doctors; they are men and women; they have shown different degree of success as migrants, and they had just as various reasons for migrating as well as they have different aspirations for returning or for future migration. In spite of this broad diversity, we have found some patterns in the priorities behind key decisions in the different stages of migration.

The main reason behind the migration of most of the respondents was economic; nearly all of them moved in order to find work and earn money. Some left a life of poverty and unemployment, others quit their jobs in the West Bank and Gaza in order to find employment with higher economic benefits in the Gulf. Economic “pull-factors” in the Gulf, due to the considerably higher salaries there than in the West Bank and Gaza, have thus obviously played a major role. However, some respondents moved primarily because of security reasons due to the Israeli occupation. Fear of prosecution and lack of security in the Occupied Territories combined with good economic prospects in the Gulf have certainly resulted in a strengthened desire for the option of migration among the population in the territories. Others again were more or less obliged to end up in the Gulf because they were denied permission to return to the Occupied Territories by the Israeli authorities. In cases where previous inhabitants from the West Bank and Gaza were refused the chance to come back after working in neighbouring Arab countries, the Gulf countries were sometimes the only available migration option.

The migrants have disclosed a broad range of means of getting to the Gulf. The most common formal way has been to apply for work and visas through the embassies of the Gulf states, mainly in Amman. Special envoys of these states came to the embassies during summer time in order to recruit employees. Some of these envoys also operated from UNRWA offices, which means that UNRWA was involved in facilitating Palestinian out-migration from the territories. Family network has also been a common channel for getting to the Gulf. There is a pattern among the respondents of assisting other family members in finding a job, getting a visa, and with other practical arrangements. Besides these legal means of entry, there are illegal methods of getting into the Gulf; some cross the borders without any permission, others arrive with short-term visitor’s visas and remain illegally after the visas have expired.

We have observed that in several cases the respondent acted on behalf of his household rather than as an independent individual when he/she migrated. It is not uncommon for one of the sons in a family to be asked by this father to go to the Gulf in order to earn money for the family. Unsurprisingly, therefore, it does not appear to be accidental which members of a given family migrate. Usually, those who migrate are the ones who are considered by the family to have the greatest

chances of succeeding as migrants, that is those with higher education or other special skills.

In spite of the temporary character of their stay in the Gulf, many Palestinians established quite a 'settled' life there, step by step. The typical migrant seems to have been a man in his 20's or 30's, migrating first without dependants, and with few ideas about how long he would stay in the new host country. After having secured himself the prospects of a prolonged stay through a relatively stable job, he would return to the West bank and Gaza to fetch his wife and children – or, alternatively, if he was single, to find a bride to marry and then establish a home for the whole family in the Gulf country.

The migrant life in the Gulf is characterised by a high degree of separation between migrants and local citizens due to the official policy of non-integration conducted by the governments of the Gulf states. The migrant population constitutes a crucial component in the economies of the Gulf countries and is thus deeply incorporated into the economic spheres of life, while being excluded from the social arenas of the same societies. The Palestinian migrants tend to compensate for this exclusion by establishing their own social network of relatives, friends and other Palestinian nationals. Such networks are built up gradually through chain migration as each migrant with time usually will assist near relatives to migrate to the same area. Besides its obvious social function, this network is also of economic importance; respondents with a good network have usually developed a more successful career than those who lacked close private connections. In some cases business activity was organised directly by a family whose network would be the main channel for recruiting employees.

The most advanced and well established Palestinian colony in the Gulf was that in Kuwait where Palestinians had a rich cultural life and enjoyed the right to form their own associations based on their members' village and/or family origin. This organised Palestinian migrant society was uprooted by the Gulf crisis of 1990/91, which was a turning point for the presence of Palestinian migrants throughout the Gulf region. The exodus of Palestinians from Kuwait illustrated clearly how fragile a migrant population with very limited legal rights can be due to political upheavals in the host society.

It is a striking pattern among the respondents that they have maintained very close ties with their families back home during their stay abroad. Most of them visit their relatives in the Occupied Territories regularly – provided the various legal regulations of Israel and the neighbouring Arab states allow them to enter the territories. It has also been observed from the interviews that the migrants use their traditional channels for find a spouse. The custom of marriage between cousins is widely practised among migrants; some find their spouse from their family network with-

in the host country, while others make the contact during a summer visit to the Palestinian territories. Furthermore, the economic aspects of the migrants' family ties are important, as nearly all the respondents have sent a considerable part of their salaries as remittances to their parents or other close family members. The system of sending remittances demonstrate how one single migrant can affect the economic life of a large household. This fact illustrates how migration can be defined as a strategy for coping in a Palestinian refugee family even if only one member who migrates.

A collectively organised household economy represents the backbone of the social security system in the Palestinian household. Consequently, sending remittances is also a way for the migrant to secure his own future because helping others at one stage will hopefully lead them to support the migrant in the future, should that be necessary.

Both the close social ties and the economic bonds point towards our last concluding remark: Most migrants plan to return. Their firm statements of a wish to returning to their previous homes in the West Bank and Gaza – for as long as they cannot go back to their places of origin inside Israel – are supported by concrete preparations.. Savings from the Gulf are commonly invested in land and houses in the territories, often many years before the migrant family actually returns. It seems to be a typical strategy for coping with the temporary nature of their stay in the Gulf to secure a “base” at home at an early stage, because the need to return might appear suddenly and be caused by reasons beyond the control of the migrant himself. Respondents who followed this strategy appeared to cope with expulsion from the Gulf in 1990/91 far better than those who had not prepared a place for settlement in advance.

Recent economic and political developments in the Middle East have increased the desire to return. Because firstly the economic benefits from working in the Gulf have decreased during the last five years and secondly, the respondents complain about more hostile attitudes and discrimination in the Gulf after the Gulf War. Thirdly, the peace process between the PLO and Israel, with the establishment of self-ruled Palestinian areas in the West Bank and Gaza, has led to optimism and at least some enthusiasm about the future of Palestine among the migrants who carefully follow developments from the Gulf. Many of the respondents were actively looking for employment in the Territories during their summer vacation, but uncertainty about economic prospects and the peace process have made many reluctant to come back.

For those who have decided that they want to return, Israeli regulations denying many of the current labour migrants residence permits are a major obstacle for coming back for good. Many of the respondents are trying now to organise their

return through applications to the Israeli authorities for family reunification. Others, who entered the territories on short term visitors permits, say they plan to remain illegally, hoping that the Palestinian authorities will accept their presence even without Israeli approval.

3 The Trek Back Home: Palestinians Returning Home and their Problems of Adaptation

Elia Zureik¹

While accounts of the Palestinian refugee experience in 1948 and 1967 are substantial by now, a multilingual bibliography on Palestinian refugees of close to 400 references in Arabic, English, Hebrew and French (Endresen and Zureik 1996), most of which were published in the last five years, shows that there are very few studies of Palestinian returnees, and of the problems they encounter in adjusting to their return home. This is all the more peculiar, since it is estimated that around 30,000 people have returned to the West Bank and Gaza after the Gulf War, and an equally large number of families returned with members of the newly established Palestinian police force. Once the peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians enter their final status phase and the refugee issue assumes a central place in the discussion, it is expected that more returnees will make their way back to the Palestinian territories. For more than a year now, Palestinians, Israelis, Jordanians and Egyptians have been discussing through a Quadripartite Committee the modalities governing the return of those displaced during the 1967 war. Thus, the need to understand what happens to the returnees is not only a matter of theoretical and academic interest, but also part of a need to deal with refugee adaptation on a practical level, as was recognised at the December 1996 meeting of the Refugee Working Group (RWG) in Geneva, Switzerland.

The present chapter reports the results of a small-scale exploratory study detailing the experience of 42 individuals, mainly spouses, the majority of whom returned to the West Bank between 1985 and 1994. The results are expected to shed light on the experience of Palestinian returnees and their mode of adaptation.

¹ The author wishes to thank Mr. Amer Nur, a researcher at the Arab Studies Society in Jerusalem, who was in charge of the data collection. In addition, Mr. Nur participated fully in designing the questionnaire which was used in the interviews. Any shortcoming in the study are the author's sole responsibility.

Theoretical Considerations

The literature on refugees tends to dwell more upon the circumstances of refugee experience in the host society than upon their experience as returnees (Majodina 1995:213). In discussing the former, researchers have singled out the following attributes of successful refugee integration. These include “cultural compatibility between the refugees and the host society; population policies in the host country (policies which actively support immigration of refugees); and finally, the social receptiveness of the host societies, namely, the extent to which they are hospitable to the displaced person.” (Kliot and Mansfield 1994:332). Moreover, others have thought to view refugee adaptation as a function of economic and social competition between refugees and those in their surrounding communities, whether in the host societies or in their original homeland.

The experience of various refugee organisations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, confirms that of the three main avenues open for assisting refugee adaptation, i.e., voluntary repatriation, integration in host countries, and resettlement in third countries, repatriation remains the most effective means. (Warner 1994:160). In reaching this conclusion, writers have invoked the powerful pull of primordial ties (kinship, community, and land) which keep memories of the homeland alive, and prepare the returnee to cope with renewed belonging to the community from which he/she has been severed. In the words of the UNHRC,

The hope of return, shared by hosts and refugees alike, is a fundamental element in a refugee situation... It has conditioned the political, humanitarian and educational activities of the refugees themselves. It has created that refugee mentality which has tended to perpetuate the refugee problem and to create some of its chief elements, but, at the same time, has paradoxically simplified the problem. It has preserved among refugees a self-respect and has conferred on them a capacity to endure almost intolerable conditions, without which they might have become a mass of human wreckage for the redemption of which no plans could have been made. (cited in Warner 1994:169)

Not all writers concur with this depiction of the refugee experience. Warner, for example, puts forth a case which challenges this “idealised” and “nostalgic” image of voluntary repatriation home. Over time, he claims, dispersal distorts the meaning of community and with it memory of the homeland. Thus the “politics of space,” which embodies so much of the communitarian argument in favour of attachment to the land, is transformed in a post-modern world where space becomes elusive and is not necessarily associated with any fixed locale, notably the refugee’s original home. Referring approvingly to Emanuel Marx’s work (1990), Warner singles out

“social networks” as central elements in the spatial decentering of the refugee experience. More specifically, refugee life is thus understood in terms of the relationship between the refugee’s social network as it relates to other such networks, which transcend the refugee’s own home community. This is particularly true with second and third generation refugees, where the meaning of home has changed drastically over time. Moreover, return must be examined, not only from the point of view of the returnees, but also from the point of view of those who remained. If the refugee community has been reconstructed in its places of dispersal, the community back home from which the refugees originally came and to which he/she is returning, has also been transformed.

It must be pointed out, however, that spatial decentering and its concomitant creation of “imagined communities” do not necessarily mean, from the point of view of their impact on the refugees themselves, that the communities of origin are now less significant. Being imagined does not necessarily make them less real. In his influential book, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson argues that what makes nationalism, which is the cornerstone of the political community par excellence, and with it the nation, a potent force, is the ability of its members to construct in their imagination a picture of their political community, and to establish a bond with individuals whom they have not seen, and are unlikely to ever see in their lifetime. It is the “deep horizontal comradeship” which levels many social and class distinctions among members of the community and “make[s] it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to die, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.” (1994:7)

Although there is a tendency to think of refugees as hapless individuals, and to a large extent they are, it is equally important not to succumb to a passive view of the human agency. Drawing upon Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory, Anthony Richmond (1994) argues that it is important to credit human agency with the ability to navigate through difficult circumstances, to construct its own social world, and make a difference to the course of historical events even though this process of social construction takes place within certain constraints. In the logic of structuration theory, it is the ability of the refugee and immigrant to utilise those constraining factors and turn them into enabling circumstances. Cuny and his colleagues describe the experience of African and Asian refugees before and after the return home in the following words: “One of the more interesting common denominators found in the case studies is the formation of politically organised, cohesive communities by uprooted peoples. Rounded up by the host government and relocated to the refugee camps, refugees are placed in unaccustomed communal situations that may change their way of life and crowd them in among strangers. In these circumstances refugees show an impressive ability to organize and cohere as a new community with its own mores and values.” (in Warner 1994:165)

Literature Overview

The studies we have on Palestinian refugee communities, whether in the host countries or in their homeland (the West Bank and Gaza), demonstrate the powerful influence of the so-called imagined community on sustaining Palestinian identity and attachment to the homeland. The series of studies carried out by Rosemary Sayigh (1977) on the Palestinian community in Lebanon's refugee camps demonstrate vividly the transmission of identity from one generation to the next in a community which is well into its third generation, and how this identification played an important role in mobilizing the refugee community to cope with adverse conditions.

As mentioned at the outset, there are very few studies which analyse patterns of adaptation of Palestinian returnees. We have selected to summarise below four such studies, not all of which deal with Palestinian returnees to the homeland. A recent and interesting study of Palestinian refugees was carried out by Fafo (Gilen et al. 1994), in which six refugee camps were studied in detail: the Askar camp in the West Bank near the town of Nablus; two in Jordan, the Wihdat camp near Amman and the Baqa'a camp located north-west of Amman, and the Rashidiyya camp in the south of Lebanon. In addition to the four camps, researchers interviewed a limited number of Palestinian refugees who are not camp dwellers and live in Amman, Jordan.

Being a qualitative research, this study gives us a feel for the everyday experiences of Palestinians and how they cope with their lives under adverse and varied conditions. The focus of the study is on the methods of economic, cultural, political and residential adaptation and possible integration of Palestinian refugees into the surrounding communities. This is not a study of returnees, although its findings have relevance for the study at hand. Drawing upon the work of anthropologists, the authors distinguish between four types of adaptation: assimilation, segregation, incorporation, and migration. Summarised in point form, it can be stated that, first, patterns of adaptations are correlated with background characteristics, i.e., educated vs. non-educated, and town dwellers vs. villagers. For example, well-to-do Palestinian refugees in Jordan, while retaining their Palestinian identity, found it easier to be assimilated among members of their host community with similar high socio economic status compared to refugees with village and peasant backgrounds who felt marginalised. Second, the process of social construction of communities, the "imagined communities" in Benedict Anderson's sense, was an important feature of camp life. People tend to identify themselves in the camps on the basis of the towns and villages from which they came prior to their exodus. The spatial layout and the camps' neighbourhoods carry the names of the refugees' places of origin. Third, unlike refugees in other countries, Palestinians shared with the surrounding host communities the language, culture and religion. Yet, these cultural

affinities were not by themselves sufficient to ensure successful adaptation. The policies of the host societies play a major role in shaping the contours of adaptation. Fourth, compared to camp dwellers, non-camp dwellers tend to engage more in the underground and informal type of economy. Most of the camp dwellers belong to the lower socio economic groupings in relation to the host communities. Fifth, partial assimilation, or incorporation, is typical of the Wihdat camp in Jordan and that of the Askar camp in the West Bank, while the Rashidiyya camp in Lebanon is presented as an example of extreme segregation from the neighbouring host community. Total or partial migration, i.e., the uprooting of refugee families to third countries, has been a typical feature of Palestinian life in exile, irrespective of the refugee vs. non-refugee distinction. It must be said in this context that skilled and educated Palestinian refugees found it easier to attain citizenship and geographic mobility than other, less qualified refugees. Sixth, the study points out that camp vs. non-camp distinction is not conceptually legitimate any more due to convergence in the life styles between the two; if anything, camps “segregate” their residents from the “host” society.

This conclusion resonates with that of the World Bank (1993), the study commissioned by the European Union and carried out by Bristol and Oxford Universities (IPS 1994), and of course it mirrors the approach adopted by the RWG in its deliberations in the context of the Multilateral talks of the Middle East peace process. While the study acknowledged the unique contribution of the camps in sustaining Palestinian identity, and showed how the camps remained the most salient symbol of Palestinian landlessness and exile, on the whole, camp refugees felt abandoned and their ultimate fate regarding the right of return to lie in the hands of outside actors. Finally, observations were made with regard to the differential treatment in university education (of middle class Palestinians) and employment (of manual Palestinian workers) in Jordan and Lebanon. It is worth pointing out in this context that research on the Palestinians in Kuwait prior to their exodus from the Gulf found similar results.

In a second study aimed at describing the characteristics of Palestinian returnees to the occupied territories after the Gulf War, Nour (1994) distributed a questionnaire containing 92 questions to a sample of 795 returnees: 557 from the West Bank and 238 from Gaza. Sixty-two per cent of the Gaza returnees and 86% of the West Bank returnees came from Kuwait. The rest returned from other Gulf countries, notably Saudi Arabia. More than one-half of the entire sample of returnees had spent 13 years or more in the Gulf prior to returning to the territories. Around one-quarter had been living for more than thirty years in the Gulf. The majority, 78%, stated availability of work as the main reason for going to the Gulf. Slightly more than half of the sample gave reasons for wanting to stay in the Gulf. Overwhelmingly, these reasons revolved around lack of economic security in the occupied

territories and availability of jobs in the Gulf. Between 80% and 90% of the respondents were married, and around three-quarters said that their family members resided mainly in the host country, compared to one-fifth who named the territories. It is significant that Gazan returnees had a higher level of educational and occupational attainment (67% were doctors, engineers, nurses and teachers) than West Bank returnees (32%). This could be the outcome of official Egyptian policy towards the refugees during Naseer's time, when they enjoyed equal access to universities and educational institutions.

The impact of the Gulf War is clearly demonstrated by the data of the study. Government policies, employment opportunities, treatment by the public and employers deteriorated significantly in recent times. It is important to note that the decline in the good fortune of the Palestinians in the Gulf started in 1980, a decade before the Gulf War. In the early 1970's between 80% and 90% rated their conditions as good in the Gulf. By 1980, this positive rating had declined to between 65% and 75%. The Occupied Territories were the main beneficiary of investment by Palestinians in the Gulf, extending to around two thirds of the sample. This is in addition to direct remittances made by 80% of the returnees to family members living in the territories. Not all returnees brought their dependants with them. Around 30% left their dependants in Kuwait. The main reason given for this among West Bank returnees was lack of finances (45%), and among Gazans it was lack of residency permit (38%). Husbands were the target for refusal of residency permits (67% for Gaza and 38% for the West Bank), followed by denial of residency permit to children (40% for the West Bank and 20% Gaza).

As expected, the employment opportunities were limited upon returning to the territories. Work in agriculture, construction and the service sector accounted for more than 80% of West Bank returnees. For Gazans, because land is scarce, 70% worked in the service sector alone. The living conditions upon returning contrasted drastically with those in Kuwait. Fifty-five per cent of West Bank returnees reported lack of sewage, compared to 81% for Gaza. When asked to compare the types of consumer items they owned in the Gulf and the ones they owned in the occupied territories, a lop-sided picture emerges. Eighty-five per cent or more of the returnees reported that they owned a washing machine, video, colour TV, refrigerator, and private car, when in Kuwait. Upon returning to the homeland, fewer reported owning a refrigerator, around 55%, and very few owning a car, 7% to 13%, and so on.

The longer the returnee spent time abroad, the more difficult adaptation at home turned out to be. In the West Bank, city dwellers were more successful in adapting, followed by village dwellers, and the least successful were camp residents, where overcrowding and unemployment were severe. In Gaza, regardless of the place of residence, the rate of adaptation is much lower than the West Bank. Adaptation

is also a function of employment/unemployment. The overwhelming majority of those who reported lack of adaptation or not yet having adapted were unemployed (from 80% to 100%). Of those who reported movement towards adaptation, between one half (Gaza) and two-thirds (West Bank) were employed.

A study of 207 Palestinian and Jordanian returnees to Jordan was carried out by Ahmed and William-Ahmed (1993), in order to assess the economic impact of the Gulf crisis. The background information on the sample shows the following. Eighty per cent had been employed in the Gulf (mainly Kuwait) for more than 16 years; two-thirds were employed in the public sector and 23% in the private sector; forty-four per cent had education below high school level, 17% were high school graduates and the rest had either completed their college education or had some post-secondary schooling.

Whereas close to two-thirds had an annual income of 5,000 JD while working in Kuwait, only 12% maintained this income after their return to Jordan. One of the direct consequences of the Gulf crises is the decline in remittances sent to family members back home. For example, before the crisis, 36% had indicated that they sent home between 600 to 1,000 JD during the previous year; after the crisis only 23% were able to make such a contribution. Among those who contributed 2,000 JD or more, the proportion declined from 11% to slightly less than four per cent. Most of the investments subsequent to the war went into home purchasing, from 2.4 per cent who said they owned a home before the crisis, to 43.5% who said they owned a home after the crisis.

Employment prospects for the future were bleak. Fifty-four per cent of the sample expected that they would remain unemployed for more than a year after the war, and 28% expected to be unemployed for more than two years, and another 36% put their faith in God and destiny. Thirty-five per cent felt pessimistic in one form or another about their "economic future" compared to close to two-thirds who were either uncertain or felt pessimistic. When asked to indicate preference for a future place of employment, one-third indicated they would prefer to return to the Gulf, and one-fifth would go to the Palestinian territories, and 15% to the US. Two-thirds of those who wished to go to the West Bank and Gaza were previous employees of the public sector in the Gulf. Of the 26 individuals who worked in professional occupations, only two preferred to go to the territories. Even though it is difficult to generalise from the last finding, it does point to the need to mount serious efforts at recruiting highly qualified expatriates.

A substantially larger survey of 100,000 returnees to Jordan, which was commissioned by the Jordanian government, confirmed the overall picture sketched above (NCERD 1991). Eighty per cent of the returnees came from Kuwait, and they included in excess of 16,000 families. The survey showed that as of April 1991, only 20% of more than 19,000 previously employed returnees were able to find jobs.

In contrasting previous and present patterns of employment, it is revealed that in the absence of jobs commensurate with the returnees' qualifications, more were employed in sales and services (from 11% in previous employment to 21% in current employment), and substantially more entered the armed forces (13%, compared to less than one per cent previously). One-third of the returnees were subsisting below the poverty line, with an income of less than 150 JD per month for each family. When asked to name the problems they faced the returnees mentioned unemployment (47%), finance (21%), and residence (11%).

Methodology and Sample

We use the label returnee in this study, rather than voluntary or involuntary migrant (refugee), to indicate that while the decision to come back home is a voluntary one, the process of return itself is governed by external political, social and administrative constraints in which the refugee has little say in determining. I refer here to the evolving rules which regulate the entry of Palestinian returnees to the West Bank and Gaza. These rules, which primarily pertain to family reunification, are still in the process of being negotiated and finalised between the Palestinians and Israelis.

As will be apparent in the course of this study, the return home is not just a matter of executing voluntarily one's decision to join the community at will. It is a decision which is contingent, in addition to the external factors mentioned above, on family circumstances, be its size, age of the returnee, economic well-being, network of social support, and so on.

The field work for the exploratory study was carried out in the summer of 1995, and the sample was purposefully selected to represent returnees from various walks of life, both men and women, and residents of towns, villages and refugee camps located in the northern, middle and southern part of the West Bank. While attempts were made to have equal number of men and women returnees in the sample, the final distribution contained more women than men: 22 compared to 20. For the women, seven were town dwellers, seven came from villages, and the remaining eight from refugee camps. For the male returnees, seven each came from towns and villages, and the remaining six were selected from refugee camps.

This is not an anthropological study which utilises in-depth interviews of a qualitative nature. Rather, it is based on fairly structured interviews by means of a questionnaire with some open-ended questions. The interviews were administered face-to-face, and usually took place in the home of the respondent. Female interviewers were present when women returnees were interviewed. The questionnaire sought information in four main areas: (1) background of the returnee; (2) displacement history; (3) the experience of return; and (4) patterns of adjustment.

The presentation of the findings will rely on a combination of numerical analysis, supplemented with profile construction of the returnees based on the questionnaire data. We have selected to profile seven case studies. These case studies have been selected to reflect varied, and hopefully typical, experiences of the individual returnees in the sample. The study concludes with a list of recommendations bearing upon facilitating the returnees' adaptation.

Findings

Profile of the Returnee

Data related to age, family and household size, as well as educational and occupational attainment show the following: (1) on average, the female returnee is 15 years younger than her male counterpart, which reflects the nature of family reunification, namely that the overwhelming majority of women return to the West Bank in order to marry or in their capacities as wives — hence their younger age profile; (2) there is little difference between average family size and household size, which is due to two factors: the majority of siblings continue to reside outside the Occupied Territories and some family members live in separate households upon marriage; (3) half of the sample of the male and two-thirds of the women returnees are secondary and post-secondary school graduates; of the male respondents, around one-half work as business owners and in professional and white collar jobs; of the women, two are in professional occupations and the rest are housewives. Although, compared to male, participation rate in the labour force for Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza is generally low (around 16%) the sample of returnees shows almost total absence of women from the labour force, in spite of their relatively high educational attainment. This has to do, among other things, with the lack of work and residency permits, unavailability of jobs, the difficulty, of some at least, to adjust to life in the West Bank, and the fact that many of the women returnees are still in the child-bearing age. It is worth pointing out that compared to the population of the West Bank, the returnees are overrepresented at the high end of the educational and occupational spectrum.

Displacement History

Places of Birth and Residence

The questionnaire recorded information about the returnee's birthplace, the spouse's, and the returnee's parents. Of the male returnees, three-quarters (15) were born in the West Bank, three in what is now Israel, and one in each of Jordan and Saudi Arabia. For the female returnees, around 40% (9) were born in Jordan, 30% (7) in the West Bank, 20% (4) in Kuwait, and one returnee was born in Saudi Arabia and the other in Lebanon. All the spouses of female returnees were born in the West Bank, compared to 70% (15) of the male returnees' spouses.

The three first-generation, 1948 male returnees who were born in what is now Israel (two in Haifa and one in Lydda) are older than the average age of male returnee in the sample by about 10 years (56.3: 45.5 years). Two of the spouses of these returnees are first generation 1948 refugees, and one is a second-generation 1948 refugee. The average age of the three spouses is also higher than that of the female spouses in the sample by about eight years (44.6: 36.32 years). There are six first and second-generation 1948 male returnees and their spouses who live in refugee camps in the West Bank and whose parents or themselves originated from what is now Israel (Jaffa, Haifa, Lydda, Naqura, Jerusalem, and Bersheeba). Two of these first generation 1948 refugees live in refugee camps, and four second generation male refugees and their spouses live in refugee camps. The eight second-generation female returnees and their spouses who reside in refugee camps also had parents who originated in what is now Israel. In other words, both men and women returnees who live in refugee camps had either one or two parents become refugees as a result of the 1948 war. What this shows is that camp residency is mainly associated with the 1948 exodus.

Marriage Patterns

Invariably, female returnees marry individuals from the same town, village or refugee camp where their parents used to live prior to their exodus, or from the place in which they settled immediately thereafter. What is apparent here is the remarkable continuity in marriage patterns, according to which couples marry partners from the same locality in pre-1948 Palestine where the parents came from; yet very few, if any, of the second-generation refugees had seen or been to the places where their parents or the parents' of their spouses came from. This is not a new discovery, but adds further dimension to what researchers found in studies of the camps in Lebanon (Sayigh 1977). A similar finding has been recorded in a study of the camps in Syria ('Atiyyeh 1993), in which the camps were described as self-contained settlements with their own internal social structure and stratification system. The geographic

locations of the camps in Syria reflect in large measure the experience of the refugees prior to their exodus. For example, those who came from urban centres in the West Bank and Gaza such as Tiberias and Safad, settled near urban locations such as Damascus or Aleppo, and sought work in those cities. Those who came from rural areas settled in camps that are in close proximity to agricultural work and farming. It should be noted that the spatial layout of a camp and the social relations among the refugees tended to reflect the social structure of pre-1948 Palestine. Our findings show that this social structure is maintained through marriage relations, even when the partners in marriage are second-generation refugees and are separated from each other by distance and political circumstances.

Circumstances of Exodus

The interview schedule sought to document the date(s) and circumstances surrounding the exodus from the West Bank and Gaza in 1948, and from the occupied territories in 1967. Of the women returnees' parents, eight (36%) left due to the 1967 war, mainly to Jordan. Three (14%) of the parents left between 1956 and 1958 to seek work in the Arab countries, where they ended up in Kuwait. In four cases (18%), the family of the returnee left in 1948, one family went to Lebanon where one returnee was born in Tel Al-Zatar refugee camp, and the remaining three went to Jordan. Four cases (18%) are referred to as "late comers," i.e., individuals who happened to be outside the territories when the 1967 war broke out and were not permitted to return after the end of the war. One female returnee was deported in 1989 to Jordan, another left the West Bank in 1968 in search of work, one was a Jordanian citizen to begin with, and the remaining returnee left before 1967 but did not give a reason for her departure. The average number of times the returnee or her parental family was displaced is around one.

Among male returnees, the pattern is similar to that shown for females, with two exceptions. First, almost twice (35%) as many of the males were "late comers"; second, the average number of displacements for the male returnee and his parents is twice that recorded for the female returnee or her parents.

Family Reunification

According to Israeli practice, family reunification decisions are determined in the first instance by humanitarian criteria and on a case-by-case basis. The purpose is not to facilitate the return of the 1948 refugees, whether those who were displaced once or twice - the second time as a result of the 1967 war, - or the return en masse of the 1967 displaced. Thus, the focus is on individual returnees and members of their immediate, nuclear family, who were displaced during the 1967 war. So far,

residents of East Jerusalem have been excluded from the process of family reunification.

Until very recently, and before progress was made in the Middle East peace talks, the criteria and procedures for family reunification were not widely disseminated. Moreover, there are no precise data on who actually returned to the West Bank under the umbrella of family reunification, although we know from the most recent report of the French Shepherd on family reunification to the RWG that between the beginning of January and the end of November 1995, 4,690 people were admitted under family reunification, two-thirds of whom went to the West Bank. This is less by 1,000 individuals, compared to the 1994 figures. Most of the returnees in our sample returned to the West Bank prior to the latest clarifications of procedures. Technically it takes one year for an application to be processed under the family reunification scheme, from the time the permission for return is granted to the time the returnee is given an identification card in which he/she is registered as a West Bank resident. The accepted procedure is for a family member, usually husband or wife (in few cases another member of the immediate family, such as a sibling or offspring), to apply for the spouse's return. Because of the time consuming nature of the process, the high rates of rejection, and at times the monetary cost involved in processing the application with the assistance of intermediaries, some potential returnees enter the West Bank with visitors' permit, and extend their stay to apply for family reunification. This process, which was adopted by some of the returnees in our sample, meant, from the point of view of the occupation authorities, an illegal stay with a possible outcome of rejection of the application, deportation, and the payment of a fine. Progress made in the Quadripartite Committee has ameliorated the difficulties of illegal residents. They can now qualify for registration as residents.

What is apparent from the data about the place of residence of the immediate and extended family members of the respondent is that only 20 per cent of the male returnees' parents live in the West Bank, and the number of siblings who live outside the West Bank is three times the number of those who live in the West Bank. The results are more stark with regard to the female returnees. None of the 22 female returnees have parents who live in the West Bank, and of a total of 116 siblings, only 8 (7%) of the brothers and sisters live in the West Bank. As we shall see below, this form of family separation has consequences for the patterns of adjustment of the returnees, particularly among the women in the sample.

The data for this sample show that, on the average, three applications for family reunification were made before the applicant could return. Considering the date of the initial application for family reunification, it took on average, 4 years for a male applicant to return home, and a year more for women returnees. The range of the waiting time varied from a minimum of one month to a maximum of 15 years. The number of applications ranged from one attempt to as high as 28

applications before the applicant was granted family reunification. Invariably, the sponsor for a female returnee would be the husband, and for a male the wife, although in the latter case members of the immediate family such as father or mother acted as sponsors in a few of the cases.

The Return Home

Reasons for Returning

Marriage is the main reason behind the return of women (68%). For men, the Gulf War and its associated impact on family life accounted for 8 individuals (40%) who decided to return, marriage was cited by five respondents (20%), joining the wife and other family members, such as parents, accounted for three additional male returnees (15%), and searching for work was mentioned by two returnees.

Sources of Social Support

Various sources were utilised in facilitating the returnee's adaptation and the start of a new life. Returnees were asked to indicate in as many answers as possible the various means of contact they used to reach relatives (visits, letters, or telephone conversations) in the West Bank, the type of help offered to them (material, monetary, moral, and joint business venture) and the sources of offers of help (extended or immediate family). Among the male returnees, nearly all maintained contact through visits (70%), letters (25%), and telephone (20%). Only in three cases, were there no contacts with relations whatsoever. When asked to name the type of help offered, the most frequent help mentioned was moral support (45%), and monetary and material help, particularly in securing housing (45%). Eight respondents indicated that no support of any kind was offered to them. Siblings were mentioned most often as a source of support (40%), followed by the extended family (35%). In six cases (30%), the male returnees said that no one offered them help.

For women returnees, the most frequent source of help came from the husband's family (59%) and the husband (23%). Three returnees said that no one helped them upon returning. The type of help offered consisted mainly of moral support (68%), followed by monetary help (27%), and finally material support (14%). In three instances the respondent replied that no help at all was offered. Contact with relatives was maintained by visits (64%), followed by telephone conversations (50%), and finally letter writing (14%).

Economic Experience

When asked to contrast the work experience prior to and after the return, it emerges that the majority of women did not work prior to their return, except in four cases, where three of them worked as teachers and the fourth as a physician. They were all satisfied with their income from previous work.

Of the 20 men in the sample, 16 (80%) rated the income from their previous work as average to good or excellent. Only three rated it as poor. In an attempt to get at the work experience subsequent to the return, the questionnaire probed into (1) whether individuals found work upon returning and how long it took them to find work, (2) if the work suited the qualifications of the returnee, (3) and the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with current income. Twelve (60%) found work upon returning, two (10%) respondents were employed irregularly, and six (30%) reported they were unemployed. For the 18 respondents who sought work, including those who succeeded and those who did not succeed in finding work, the search time ranged from a few days to as long as 15 years, with the average time per job search reaching 3 years. One-third of the male returnees rated their work as commensurate with their occupational and educational qualifications, and an additional 15% rated it as "somewhat suitable", and a further 20% said their jobs did not correspond to their qualifications. The remaining respondents (30%) were split evenly between those who were either unemployed or chose not to answer. Forty per cent expressed satisfaction with their current income, 10% were satisfied to some extent, and 20% were dissatisfied. Add to this another 20% who were unemployed and 10% who did not answer the question.

On balance, it thus appears that, compared to the work experience prior to returning, unemployment is more prevalent among the returnees, fewer of them tend to find work which is suitable to their qualifications, and for those who did find work half as many (40%:80%) expressed satisfaction with their income.

In pursuing other economic aspects of the returnee's experience, respondents were asked to indicate if they had established any form of economic ties with the West Bank prior to their return, and if they did, to describe the nature of the relationship, and whether they had made specific arrangements in preparation for their return. The overriding finding here is that economic activity is contingent on the presence of family members inside the territories. In the case of women, none had established any form of economic relationship prior to their return. This is due to the fact that their parents and other members of the immediate family reside outside the West Bank, and that very few of these women had worked. In four cases, the female returnees mentioned that some preparation had taken place such as building a house or expanding the one already owned by the husband. Among male returnees, the picture is somewhat different. Since most of these returnees have been working outside the territories, 50% indicated that through remittances to family

members, savings, and in particular building houses, they have managed to establish economic ties with the West Bank all along. However, in those instances where the male returnee's parents and brothers happened to reside outside the territories, in all likelihood the returnee had no economic ties with the West Bank. In very few cases did the returnees mention business investments.

Patterns of Adjustment

Expectations

The returnees were given a battery of questions in order to gauge their general reactions to the new environment, the extent to which they were satisfied with the political situation on the West Bank, and whether they subjectively felt they had adjusted to life upon their return. When asked, "Did you find what you had expected upon returning to the homeland?" 50% of the men said no, another 15% said "somewhat," and 30% answered in the affirmative, with one respondent abstaining. Similarly, 50% of the women said they did not find what they expected, and another 45% expressed satisfaction with what they found. Among both men and women, the reasons given for their disappointment had to do with their difficulty in getting a residency permit, finding work, and the continued absence of close family members from the West Bank. The latter reason was mentioned more often by women returnees than men, and understandably so since, as we have seen above, most of their close relatives and immediate family members remain outside the West Bank. Among those who reported adjustment, the main reasons given revolved around "finally returning to the homeland," "establishing family security," and "finding economic security."

Two observations are worth mentioning in this regard. First, women returnees are the least adjusted in the sample, and as noted above this reflects a sense of loneliness due to the fact that most of the female returnees were born outside the West Bank and their immediate family members remain outside as well. Second, in several cases where the respondent reported lack of adjustment it related to the children who returned with their mothers and were finding it difficult to adjust to their new surroundings. In one case, a female returnee gave a philosophical answer to the question of adaptation by saying that "life circumstances compel one to adjust," and another wrote her inability to adjust was due to her being "new to the country; never been here before." Two male returnees who reported problems of adjustment wrote that "outside [the West Bank] the people were closer; here the economy is bad," and another singled out "family disorganisation inside the camp, and bad economic situation."

The Political World

Adjustment and adaptation are not only a function of material well being but are also related to one's sense of political belonging. Three questions addressed directly reactions of the returnees to the political climate in the West Bank. The first question probed if the return home was prompted by political conditions on the West Bank, followed by a question on satisfaction with the political climate of the West Bank, and finally the respondent was asked to compare personal political activity in the *al-ghurba* to that after the return.

Of the female returnees, only one respondent credited the political climate in the West Bank with her return. The rest were adamant in saying no. To the follow-up question about satisfaction with political conditions, 32% said yes, 14% gave qualified endorsement, 23% said no, and the rest either refused to answer or gave other responses. The men were more negative in their assessment of the political conditions. Seventy-five per cent said that their return had nothing to do with politics on the West Bank, 10% said yes it did, and a minority of 15% refused to answer. 50% disapproved of the direction politics in the West Bank is taking, 30% approved of it, although some of the latter tempered their approval with qualified statements, and the remaining respondents either refused to answer or gave other responses. In spite of all this, when asked "whether the return was a blessing or a curse," the majority of both men (73%) and women (69%) said it was a blessing. The minority of respondents who saw their return as a curse, referred to bad economic conditions, lack of housing, and sour relations with relatives.

The interview schedule concluded by asking the returnee to look into the future and indicate if he/she "thought of emigrating one more time, and why?" The overwhelming majority of both male and female returnees answered no to the question. In the three cases where male returnees answered in the affirmative, their reasons had to do mainly with finding work. Places of emigration that were mentioned by the few included Canada, Australia, Latin America, and Jordan. Similarly, two female respondents expressed the desire to emigrate to the Gulf or Jordan in search of employment and for socio-psychological reasons, and one woman returnee wrote "I would like to visit Kuwait, my birthplace," but not in order to live there.

Summary Profiles of Selected Returnees

In this part of the study, we undertake a textual interpretation of the data in order to draw a composite profile of what we consider to be typical cases representing individual returnees from different backgrounds, and manifesting different styles of adaptation. These seven interpretations are intended to complement the numerical

analysis presented above. They capture the nuances of the returnee's experience in terms of hope, aspiration and disappointment. The themes that run through these case studies reflect the resilience of the returnees, all of whom in one form or another experienced refugeehood, yet are willing to accept the reality of the return to the homeland, even if the homeland is not what they had imagined it to be in their memory. They are thus capable of switching from the ideal to the real, and channelling their energies in order to cope with the day-to-day challenges of the present. In this sense, the returnees are genuinely constructing their social world, even though the process of construction does not take place in their place of choosing, or in the manner in which they would have preferred it to be.

Male Returnees

Case No. 1:

The returnee is 61 years of age with grade seven education and resides in a village located in the northern West Bank. When the 1967 War broke out, the respondent was working in Kuwait where he continued to reside until the Gulf war. Originally he and his wife came from a West Bank village near Tulkarem. The main reason he returned to the West Bank was because of the Gulf War which had a traumatic effect on him, causing health problems and speech impediment. He married in 1960 and has eight children. Two of the children live with him in the same household, and the rest live in the United States. He first applied for family reunification in 1988 and got it, but was unable to return for fear that he would lose his job in Kuwait. He applied again in 1994 and eventually got it through the efforts of clan members who acted as intermediaries on his behalf. His sisters who live in the West Bank were instrumental in securing the residency permit for him, with the help of the head of the village council who belonged to the same clan. His family reunification application was turned down twice, before the village council was approached for intervention. Prior to returning he was employed as an electrical inspector in Kuwait, with a very comfortable salary. Now the respondent is unemployed, in large measure due to his health condition. He is able to make ends meet because of the assistance provided by his children who live in the United States.

The respondent managed to maintain economic links with the West Bank while in Kuwait by sending remittances to his family. Also, prior to his departure to Kuwait before 1967, he owned a house in the West Bank which remained vacant until his return.

The reason he came back to the West Bank is his longing for the homeland, and although he is not a political person, he feels unhappy with what he sees "because there is nothing in it [peace agreement] for the Palestinian people."

He is a person who considers himself to have adjusted fairly well since returning to the West Bank. This is also true for his wife, but less so for his children. Was he “satisfied with what he saw, upon his return?” “No,” because he “expected more in terms of peace and security.” The greatest amount of help came to him from his family members, some from neighbours, and the civil administration whom he acknowledges quite highly in facilitating his return.

Case No. 2:

The respondent, who is 42 years old and cannot read or write, left in 1967 for Amman for personal reasons and in search of work. He left from the refugee camp Aqabat Jabar near Jericho, where he was born. The respondent’s wife was also a camp dweller from Dheisheh near Bethlehem. The parents of both husband and wife came from near Jaffa in Israel. Upon returning, the respondent and his wife settled in Dheisheh camp. The couple are in their early forties and have five children. He owns the dwelling in which the family lives.

The respondent obtained his family reunification permit in 1977, and has been living in the refugee camp for the last 17 years. He left for Amman, when his father divorced his mother. He went to Amman to live with his uncle, but due to bad socio-economic circumstances, he asked his brother to initiate a family reunification application for him to return to the West Bank. He applied twice for his permit, the first time it was rejected but accepted the second time.

Before his return he worked as a labourer. Overall he was unhappy while in Amman due to family circumstances there. He did not make any special economic or housing arrangements for his return, and had no economic ties with the West Bank (investments, saving). Upon returning, he was able to find work as a labourer. The respondent abstained from evaluating the political situation on the West Bank, and he was not involved in politics prior to returning. He considers himself to have adjusted, which is due to him settling with his own family. He received most of the help from friends and neighbours.

While he is happy overall with his family situation, he is unhappy at being unable to secure a permit to work in Israel. The divorce of his parents played havoc with his life.

Except for one brother and an uncle, all his relations are outside the West Bank. He was sponsored by his brother, who acted on behalf of his return.

Case No. 3:

The respondent is 50 years old and lives in the same town in which he, his parents and his wife were all born. Both he and his wife are high school graduates. He has a white-collar job in the private sector. Two of his four children are married, and the rest live with him in the same household in a privately owned home.

The 1967 war broke out while he was visiting Kuwait, and he could not return to the West Bank. Economic and psychological conditions deteriorated after the Gulf War, which compelled him to return to the West Bank.

He has received all sorts of assistance from his relatives since coming back.

After the Gulf War he decided to return because of the measures adopted then by the civil administration. He renovated his home and repaired it. He tried four times to apply for family reunification, but was turned down. The first time was in 1978. He finally got it in 1980. His wife sponsored his application for family reunification. He notes that it was very difficult for him on several occasions. Sometimes he would stay illegally in the West Bank, after his visit permit had expired. He was fined on one occasion 500 NIS. In Kuwait he had a white-collar job which paid well, and psychologically he felt quite good.

It took him two years after returning to find work. He does not consider the work to be commensurate with his qualifications. The income does not meet his needs, which obliged him to draw on his savings, and compelled his son to work.

He does not approve of the political situation on the West Bank, and although he was interested in politics prior to his return, this has all changed; he is now totally removed from political events on the West Bank.

He does not think that he and his family have fully adjusted. On a scale of 10 points, he considers himself to be on point six of adjustment; so is his wife and the rest of his family. He does not believe that it is possible to achieve 100% adjustment. He says that people resented him coming back. "In Kuwait people were closer to each other. Here the economy is bad." The greatest amount of help he received was from the family followed by the city council.

Husband and Wife

Case No. 4:

This case summarises two separate interviews of a husband and his wife. The husband is a 40 year-old physician who lives near Bethlehem. His wife, 38 years old, is also a doctor. They have three children, and live in a rented house. The husband left the West Bank for Lebanon in 1971 in order to study and did not come back regularly to renew his residency permit, and eventually lost it. He asked his father to apply for his return because he was "bored" being away from home. It took two attempts at the application and two years waiting before he obtained permission to return.

Before returning home, he worked in internal medicine and described his previous job as "excellent." He used to send money to his ailing father regularly. However, since coming back in 1994 he has been looking for work and for eight

months he has been unsuccessful because he has not obtained his residency permit to enable him to work in a hospital. In the meantime the family has been forced to borrow money from commercial lending organisations to meet their needs.

He cited the peace process as the main reason behind his return, but he thinks that a great deal more has to be done before he can say that the conditions on the West Bank are good. Although he was active in politics when he was a university student, he has decided not take part in politics upon returning.

He considers himself to have adjusted to life in the West Bank. However, this is not true for his wife and his children. In terms of the adjustment scale, his wife gets 1 out of 10 and his children receive a score of 5. It is interesting to note that his wife rated his own score and those of the children as one 1 out of 10, which, more than anything, reflects the wife's lack of adjustment to her new surroundings.

The couple met while studying in Lebanon. The wife's family, which comes from Haifa, sought refuge in Lebanon as a result of the 1948 war. The wife, who is 38 years old, feels very bitter and dissatisfied with her career prospects and her family situation, even though she was finally able to find work as a physician with voluntary organisations. She is unhappy with what she considers to be a series of political "compromises" offered by the Palestinians in the negotiations. Had it not been for the pressure from her husband's family, she would have not returned to the West Bank under these circumstances. She was active in politics prior to returning and considers herself to be a nationalist.

For her, returning home is both a curse and a blessing. A curse because of the economic situation, bad relations she has with her husband's family, and her inability to adjust to the mores of the society where she lives; a blessing for finally being in the homeland. She misses her family, which is still in Lebanon. One of her brothers died in the fighting in Lebanon, and two of her remaining brothers suffer from emotional trauma due to the war. In spite of all of this, she was adamant about wanting to stay in the West Bank, and has no intention of ever emigrating.

Female Returnees

Case No. 5:

The respondent is a female returnee, aged 35, who was born in Saudi Arabia. Her husband is 44 years old and was born in a major West Bank town. Originally, the respondent's mother came from Jerusalem and her father from Hebron. The respondent is a university graduate, who is not currently employed. The husband has earned a Ph.D. and teaches in his hometown. The size of the household is ten. Originally they lived in a house owned by her father in-law; now they live in their own house which they started building while in Saudi Arabia.

Her family emigrated to Amman from Hebron before 1967. While she has uncles and aunts in the West Bank, as well as a grandfather and grandmother, her immediate family (parents, brothers and sisters) live outside the West Bank. She comes from a family with four brothers and four sisters. Upon returning to the West Bank, the assistance given by relations was in the form of moral support. The means of contact with family members was mainly through visits.

The respondent has been trying to return to the West Bank since her marriage in Saudi Arabia (where her husband used to work) in 1980. She did not work prior to returning home. An application on her behalf for family reunification was submitted once by the husband, and within a year the respondent was able to obtain permission to return.

The income from her husband's work covers family expenses.

Her reason for coming back had nothing to do with the political climate of the West Bank, with which she is unhappy. Her husband, she claims, was harassed by the occupation authorities on numerous occasions on account of his political views.

Not having seen the country before, she found it difficult at the beginning to adjust, but later on she began to feel comfortable. She ranks herself and the children as having adjusted less than the husband.

Since returning to the West Bank she has missed seeing her immediate family most of whom reside outside the area. She visits her family once every two years. In adjusting to the West Bank, the respondent credited the city council, friends, neighbours, and the civil administration, and less so her extended family.

Case No. 6:

The respondent is 34 years old, the same age as her husband. She was born in Amman; the husband was born in a village near Bethlehem, where the family lives now. They were married in 1984, and have four children (3 daughters and one son). They have been living in the current house for almost seven years, i.e., since returning to the West Bank. They own their house. When they first returned, they stayed with the father-in-law. The wife has a diploma in Arabic language, while the husband has a BA in commerce and accounting. The wife works as a teacher and the husband as an accountant.

The first exodus of the respondent's family took place in 1956, when her parents emigrated to Kuwait, via Jordan. Her parents live outside the West Bank, as well as two of her brothers and a sister. Four brothers and five sisters continue to live on the West bank. Methods of contact with relatives consist of visits and letters. c. The help offered to her and her husband was in the form of gifts and moral support. She met her husband in college, presumably Amman. She returned by means of her husband's application for family reunification. Her husband applied once,

and after six months she was able to join him in the West Bank. There were no problems involved in obtaining family reunification.

The respondent worked as a teacher prior to returning and she sees no difference between her employment conditions outside the West Bank and inside it. She is happy with teaching after returning, although she spent three years looking for work. Her income and that of her husband cover their needs.

She did not participate in politics while in Jordan “because,” according to her, “Palestinians are not allowed to be active politically.” She agrees with the political situation in the West Bank only “50%”, and complained that, because of his views, her husband was harassed by the occupation authorities.

She considers that she and her entire family have totally adjusted to life in the West Bank. Most of the help came from family members, neighbours and friends. Some assistance was given by the civil administration. She considers coming home to be a blessing. Relations with her family have weakened because her parents and siblings remain outside. She does not think of emigrating in the future. The greatest problem faced by her upon returning was to obtain an identity card to enable her to work.

Case No. 7:

The respondent’s family lives in Dhaisheh refugee camp. She is 30 years old, and her husband is 33. The respondent has grade six education, and the husband completed first-year secondary school. They have five children who live with them in the same house which is owned by UNRWA. Since returning to the West Bank, the respondent first lived with her in-laws in a house which is also owned by UNRWA.

The respondent’s own family became refugees as a result of the 1948 war. Originally they came from Lydda, and settled in a refugee camp on the West Bank. As a result of the 1967 war, her family fled again, this time to Jordan, where the rest of the family remains. She maintains contact with her parents and siblings.

Most of the help she received upon returning to the West Bank came from her husband’s family in the form of moral support. She was able to return on account of her marriage. It took her five months to obtain a visitor’s permit, and a year to receive her family reunification approval after she had been turned down once. She returned to the West Bank in 1982.

Her husband works as a labourer, and she was obliged to work in order to help the family. They were in financial difficulties, which forced them to borrow money and to sell her jewellery.

She is unhappy with the political situation on the West Bank, particularly since her husband is unable to obtain a permit to work in Israel, and is unable to find steady work nearby. She considers herself and the family as having adjusted

pretty well to life on the West Bank in spite of the hard economic times the family went through. People who helped her most are family members, friends, neighbours and UNRWA. She considers coming back to the West Bank as a blessing, in spite of the fact that her husband was shot once by the occupation authorities. It is unthinkable, she says, to contemplate emigrating from the West Bank one more time.

Conclusions

Several conclusions and recommendations emerge from this pilot study. On the whole the returnees, both men and women, appear to be qualified in terms of their educational and occupational background. Among the males in the sample, 50% are secondary and post-secondary school graduates, and among the women the proportion is higher; it reaches two-thirds of the sample. Yet, the opportunity to find work which reflects these qualifications and previous work experience is rather limited. And when work is secured, the income, on average, is about half of what these male returnees used to earn before returning home. The economic problems faced by women returnees in the sample are much more serious. Very few of them are employed at a time when their skills and qualifications are much needed in contributing to their society. While as we noted in the study, the participation rate for women in the labour force in the territories is generally low, special efforts should be made to harness the talent of women in general, including women returnees who appear to be well placed to contribute to building their society.

The experience of the returnees in family reunification has been mixed. For very few, the return has been straightforward. But for the majority, women and men returnees, the long wait, uncertainty for the future, large number of applications submitted as well as rejections received, and the time and energy spent – all contributed to a taxing process. In several cases, the applicant would resort to hiring a lawyer at great expense (in some cases running into the thousands of dollars), in other cases the applicant would turn to human right organisations, both Israeli and Palestinian, to assist in understanding and meeting the bureaucratic requirements of family reunification, and yet in other instances applicants had to mobilise their connections (*wasta*) with the civil administration via the *mukhtars* and others to expedite their applications.

The social and psychological well-being of the returnees, particularly women and children, is negatively affected by the continuing split in the original as well as prospective families of the returnees. It is significant to note that not one of the female returnees had either a father or mother living on the West Bank. The same holds true for the majority of her siblings.

The role of the family appears to be equally important in the economic sphere. It appears that in cases where there were family members living in the West Bank, the returnee made special efforts to send remittances, and transfer money for his own future return to build a house. There were no cases where the returnee thought of the West Bank as a place for investment in economic ventures, an option included in the questionnaire. In all likelihood this is due to perception of uncertainty regarding the future.

Patterns of adjustment reveal that, on the whole, the returnees adjusted to their new surroundings. As expected, the fact that they were finally reunited with their newly established families and in some cases living near the extended family, all played a major role in providing social and psychological comfort to the returnee. The majority described their return as a “blessing” and not a “curse.” However, the majority of both men and women returnees were pessimistic about the political and economic situation in the West Bank. Yet, very few thought of this as a sufficient cause to want to emigrate. The memory of displacement and several uprootings of the returnees and their families of origin remain fresh in their minds.

4 The Organisation of Camp Life: The Palestinian Refugee Camp of Bureij, Gaza

Dag H. Tuastad

“The refugee camps represent the core of the problem, as well as being a symbol of it”, Abu Amer (1989:23) remarks in his study on social conditions in Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza. Similarly McDowell (1989:23) describes refugees as having lived in “permanently temporary” conditions inside camps in habitats defined as emergency shelters for more than 40 years, where the material resources distributed have not kept up with the population increase and pressure, while the political status of the refugees has still not been negotiated. In Gaza, where two-thirds of the population are refugees registered by UNRWA (Heiberg and Øvensen 1994:40), the situation described accounts for more than 55 % of the UNRWA registered refugees who live in UNRWA administered camps (UNRWA 1994a). Due to the size of the camp population it is surprising that not more studies have been conducted on how life is experienced and organised inside these camps. Out of 107 studies on Palestinian refugees in Gaza and the West Bank, we have only been able to identify seven studies based on research in camps in Gaza, none of these aiming at describing the organisation of camp life (Endresen and Zureik 1996).

In 1994 Fafo presented a study “Finding Ways, Palestinian Coping Strategies in Changing Environments”. In Finding Ways we reported on some of the strategies and adaptations that Palestinian refugees have made in the context of a rapidly changing socio-political environment. Based on anthropological field work in Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank we tried to generate a general picture of these coping strategies. This chapter builds on the findings of the previous work. Nevertheless, in this study we have taken a slightly different approach as our aim is to analyse the organisation of life in a refugee camp.

Several studies of the Palestinian social organisation of life have underlined how kinship formed a basic principle for social organisation (Al-Haj 1990, Cohen 1965, Ginat 1987, Granqvist 1935, Rosenfeld 1976, Sayigh 1979, Tuastad 1993). Sayigh describes the nature of villages in pre-48 Palestine, where the majority of the Palestinians lived as peasants, as “a family of families” (Sayigh 1979:21). Genealogies and marriages were essential for the organisation of daily life in the villages.

Genealogies not only were social maps regulating inheritance to land and houses, but also determined political belonging as patrilineal descent groups formed political corporations inside the villages. The hamula was the political corporation of villagers related to each other through patrilineal descent, either through a known patrilineal kinship relation, or through sharing the family name of a common ancestor. Organisation through patrilineal descent was complemented by organisation through marriages. Marriages implied production of social and political relationships between household units inside the hamula, and between household units in different hamulas. If a high number of marriages occurred between households of two hamulas, this could eventually lead to close ties and political alliances between the hamulas in addition to the households involved in the marriage relation.

The village way of organising social life became disrupted by the war between Israel and neighbouring states in 1948. The war split villages as well as hamulas. During their flight in 1948, the refugees became scattered around in various places. Nuclear families were more possible for local populations to absorb, and units more easy to organise for the refugees themselves in the chaotic circumstances following the flight. When the refugees arrived at the camps, sometimes as long as a year after having escaped from their homes, their social networks had been uprooted (Sayigh 1979). Hence, the flight in 1948 meant that the refugees had to start building new networks, or try to re-establish original village ties through mobility and relocation in exile. This study focuses on the organisation of social life in a refugee camp 48 years after the uprooting. From the chaos of the uprooting and arrival of the refugees in the camps, what can we say about the social order which has been produced now?

We are interested in finding distinctive features of how a camp is constructed as a community. In addition to identifying the extent to which the camp forms a cohesive community, we try to analyse how the camp community is integrated into the surrounding Gaza society. What external social relationships are camp residents involved in, and what are the qualities of these relationships?

To answer these questions we focus on the social, political, and economic organisation of a camp in Gaza. Social organisation in this context implies patterns, qualities and extensions of marriage relations and social networks. By political organisation we refer to the organisation of political activities inside the camp, as well as to the integration of camp residents into wider political systems. Economic organisation implies focusing on how income is generated and distributed in the camp, and also on the integration of the camp into wider economic systems.

In this chapter an anthropological approach is used. The main method of data collection has been anthropological fieldwork through participant observation and in-depth interviews during a one month stay in a refugee camp in the summer

1995, as well as observations and interviews in the camp during January 1996. We do not claim representativeness in any quantitative sense. We focus on social phenomena, rules and meanings behind processes, actions and patterns of social relationships, all of which constitute mechanisms of cohesiveness as well as disintegration of a camp community. Through qualitative research our aim is to illuminate processes and social phenomena we regard as important for the daily life of refugees in camps. The camp we have selected to serve as our micro cosmos of Palestinian refugee camps in Gaza is Bureij Camp, one of the four so-called middle camps in Gaza.

Bureij Camp

Bureij Camp was established as Palestinian refugees flooded into Gaza mainly from Jaffa and villages and towns south of Jaffa following the war of 1948. The ground had previously been used by semi pastoral Bedouin tribes for herding as well as for cultivation. In 1920 British military established Bridge Camp there, which in all likelihood became the basis for the current Arabised name of the camp. The British army evacuated the camp in 1947, which since 1950 has been administered by UNRWA. The camp measures 0.48 square kilometres, and is located among citrus groves 13 kilometres south-east of Gaza City, close to the Israeli Netzarim settlement. There are 24,900 registered refugees in the camp under UNRWA's responsibility¹, which means that the population density is around 50,000 per square kilometre, one of the highest, if not the highest, in the world. The camp is divided into 12 "blocks", containing approximately 4000 shelters that are informally considered the property of their residents and are bought and sold as such. Most shelters have only a single floor, but some new buildings have as many as four. All the streets of Bureij are unpaved. Sewers are open.

UNRWA runs three elementary boys' schools, one for girls and three co-eds, as well as one girls' and one boys' preparatory school. Health care facilities run by UNRWA include a polyclinic, a diabetes clinic, a mother and child health clinic, a family clinic, a hypertension-clinic, and a physiotherapy-clinic as well as a dental and maternity ward.

We present below what we consider to be the major aspects of how daily life is organised in this camp.

¹The actual amount of people living in the camp is probably lower than the amount of UNRWA registered refugees with address in the camp, as UNRWA does not register migrations.

Social organisation

To what extent are current aspects of social organisation in Bureij based on reconstructing traditional patterns of social organisation, and to what extent have new organisational forms emerged? To investigate these questions we will analyse patterns of social relations in various social arenas. We arrange these patterns of social relationships according to different categories. We then ask what are the characteristics of the diverse categories of social relationships in which people are involved? To be able to identify patterns of social relationships, these should be related to some social activity. By “arena” we refer to the relevant context of a social phenomenon. Two such arenas are investigated here: the marriage arena and the social network arena.

1. The marriage arena. Who marries whom in the camp (refugee versus non-refugee, lineage versus non-lineage, etc.) is interpreted as an expression of ties of solidarity when the groups intermarry, and patterns of differentiation when marriage takes place outside the group.
2. The social network arena. By understanding access to social networks, their quality and distribution, we will be able to unravel the nature of the social security net which camp residents establish, as well as social integration among camp residents.

While in the marriage arena we investigate various categories of social relationships, in the network arena we are more interested in the role of kinship for the refugees in the camp, since kinship used to be the constituting principle of social networks in pre-1948 Palestine (Sayigh 1979:21, Granqvist 1935, Al-Haj 1987).

Eventually in this section on social organisation we will discuss the cultural significance of the social relationships we have classified, according to cultural values important for the organisation of daily life in the camp.

Marriage and kinship in Bureij

In the villages before the 1948 war marriages were an important mechanism through which contacts and alliances across lineages were established and maintained (Sayigh:1979:21). Inside kinship groups, marriages have been seen as a way of enforcing group solidarity (Barth 1954, Holy 1989, Tuastad 1993:39). The solidarity embedded in marriage makes patterns of marriage relations between social categories expressions of how close various categories of people are to each other. What are the characteristics of marriage relations in Bureij?

Marriage relations in Bureij

“I married three years ago. I told my mother that I wanted to marry. My mother looked in the camp. Then she said that she had found a girl. I went with her to visit them. I thought she looked OK. I said that I wanted her. We went to the Qadi and signed the marriage contract. She is very kind but she is not educated. It is a problem for me.” Husam, teacher in Bureij, 32 years old.

The short marriage biography of Husam is presented here because it reveals two important dimensions of marriage pattern in Bureij. First, it is worth noting that love or personal attraction does not initially govern what finally becomes the marriage relationship. Rather it is the social contacts and preferences of mothers. In Husam’s case, he would like to have a wife that shares his academic interests. Husam’s mother, who actually finds him a wife, does not consider academic interests important. For her, who is available first on the marriage market is important. Second, she chooses according to her own moral preferences. The accumulated effects of the way mothers arrange marriages is the preservation of distinct social identities. This leads us to the second dimension of the marriage biography of Husam. Married couples could be classified according to a wide range of categories, some of which are represented by Husam and his wife. The relation between Husam and his wife is an example of the most common marriage relation in the Bureij camp. In that marriage is expressed the cluster of preferences for marriage to which the inhabitants of Bureij subscribe:

1. A Palestinian should marry a Palestinian;
2. A Muslim should marry a Muslim;
3. A refugee should marry a refugee;
4. A *fellah* (refugee of peasant origin) should marry a *fellah*;
5. A camp resident should marry a camp resident;
6. A marriage should remain within the patrilineal descent group.

As we classify Husam’s marriage according to a range of status sets we also find that these social identities are relevant for various political contexts. Palestinian refugees may be understood as involved in politics at various levels. One context may be inside the camp, where lineage versus lineage may be the relevant context. At another level, *fellah* (peasant) origin, – or the villages of origin for the lineages, may be important for which lineages that became allied. Further, that Palestinians should marry Palestinians is important for the preservation of Palestinian national identity.

Thus, we here hold that marriages are a mechanism through which social and political identities are reproduced. The significance of the various categories of social identities Husam's marriage represents will be discussed below.

Palestinian versus Palestinian

Israeli settlers are the only significant non-Palestinian population in Gaza. They live isolated from the Palestinians. Most non-Palestinian marriage partners are other Arabs whom Palestinian refugees have met during their stay in other host countries. Nevertheless the important trait is that Palestinian refugees in Gaza marry Palestinians.

Muslim versus Muslim

The Bureij camp does not house Christian families; thus, the only inter religious marriages that occur are when Palestinian men abroad marry in the host country and bring their wives (converted if they were Christians) back to the camp. This type of marriage is rare, accounting for only 3 or 4 instances in the camp.

Refugee versus refugee

Although non-refugees (muwatinin, inhabitants) constitute around one third of the population of Gaza, marriages between a refugee and non-refugee are very rare. From our Bureij sample, only 7.6 % are married to non-refugees². Of these 5 % are of other Arab nationalities (mainly Egyptian). Only 1.9 % are married to a non-refugee from Gaza. We have investigated these cases further and found that in none of the 10 instances we examined was the non-refugee from a landowning family.

"In Gaza, refugees always marry refugees. A muwatin (non-refugee) does not marry a refugee. They do not want to marry us because they want to keep their land," a resident in Bureij told us. In the autumn of 1995 the daughter of the Minister of Justice in the Palestinian Authority, who is a Bedouin, married the son of Um Jihad, the Minister of Social Affairs, who is a refugee. Camp residents told us this was the first time ever they had heard of a Bedouin girl marrying a refugee. Marriages between refugees and non-refugees from Gaza seem more likely to occur only when the muwatin (non-refugee) is poor, or if the refugee is unusually wealthy or

²The data consists of genealogical maps of 6 patrilineal lineages. The 'founders' of the lineages are persons, or brother-groups, who escaped from Palestine in 1948. All descendants of the founder(s) are written down on the maps, independent of their current address. The lineages are selected according to size ('small' versus 'big' descent groups), and location (each lineage represents a different block in the camp). For each case on the maps information about address and marriage status is noted. Only information on *madani* and *fellah* marriages have been noted for all the whole maps. (Rather than 'Is this person *fellah* or *madani*'?" the question posed was if any of the spouses of the lineage members were of *madani/fellah* origin). The maps include 538 married persons.

powerful, like Um Jihad's son. Hence class can be seen as a reason for this differentiation between refugees and non-refugees. But, as we shall discuss later, cultural, or "ethnic" factors contributing to the preservation of refugee identity, may be as important as class in the determination of refugees marrying refugees³.

Fellah versus fellah

Fellah means peasant in Arabic, while *madani* means a person of city origin. Before 1948, a major dichotomy in Palestinian social classification was between *fellah* and *madani*. Each category had different cultural connotations; the *fellah* being more primitive in the eyes of the *madani* – the towns being filled with threatening circumstances and bad moral influences according to village lore. Apparently this classification is still valid. In our sample, only one *fellah* has married a madun girl. Out of 78 married persons constituting the *madani* lineage in our sample only two persons have married refugees of peasant origin. Why is it that this dichotomy is still relevant?

Raif is the only man among those interviewed who married a madun girl. How come Raif married a madun girl? Raif explains:

“During the Intifada, PFLP⁴ beat up a shop owner who sold Israeli products. I know the PFLP leaders and told them: why did you beat this man for selling Israeli products, why not the man in the neighbouring shop, why not somebody else from all those who sell Israeli products? One of them answered that they did not do the beating. So I said then, if it was not the PFLP it must have been collaborators because the men who beat him said that they were PFLP. So I wrote on the walls that there are collaborators who are beating people up and saying that they are PFLP. In this way they had to admit that they were the ones who did the beatings, because if they did not admit it they could not continue to encourage people to boycott Israeli products as people would think they were collaborators and attack them. One man from the PFLP then came to me and said that they had done the beatings. Later when the PFLP had a problem with Hamas he also came to me to get help. One night I was sitting with him and other Intifada leaders. I said that I wanted to marry. Then this man, respecting me for all I did during the Intifada, said that he had a sister who was not married. Later I visited him and saw his sister. I liked her. He convinced her family to let her marry

³The concept 'ethnic' refers to how the refugees constitute a segment of the Palestinian nation who due to their exile are very conscious of their origins inside pre-48 Palestine.

⁴The Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine

me. When we married everybody was surprised, how was it possible that a *fellah* married a madun girl?”.

One of the reasons for the distinction between *fellah* and *madani* which is still relevant, may be connected to how city people arriving Gaza had knowledge useful in the diaspora such as education and commercial experience – which were not part of the knowledge needed inside the former villages. It was the people from the Jaffa and other cities who had commercial experience, and the education level in towns was higher than in the villages (Sayigh 1979:52). Thus, a higher proportion of the *madani* people from the cities, people, were recruited to positions in local administration and UNRWA; furthermore, they became the first to engage in commerce, to eventually control the commercial activity in the camp. People of *madani* origin clung to this distinction which meant higher esteem for those lineages of city origin. This way old stereotypes were reproduced and patterns of internal differentiation evolved, resembling class differences, with the *madanin* being of a higher class. A *fellah* marrying a *madani* marries “upwards” in social rank, in the same way as a refugee marrying a muwatin (non-refugee) marries “upwards” in the social hierarchy of Gaza. The politicisation during the Intifada, which made social distinctions less relevant, also explains why Raif married a madun girl. He could do this as a result of the power position which he acquired during the Intifada, in the same way that refugee children of PLO leaders, like the son of Um Jihad, do not meet the same social barriers encountered by camp-refugees from non-refugees.

Camp resident marrying camp resident

Refugees in Bureij who find a partner elsewhere in Gaza marry refugees from camps rather than outside the camps. Only 9 % marry refugees living outside the camps in Gaza. forty-four per cent of the refugees living in Gaza do not live in camps according to the Fafo/PCBS demographic survey published 1995. Why does a higher proportion of the refugees in Bureij not marry refugees outside the camps? As we shall show below, one reason might be that refugees inside the camps find spouses who came from the same villages, thus preferring this category of a marriage partner for political as well as cultural reasons. Finances may also be an explanatory factor. Only the richest camp refugees can afford to establish new homes outside the camps. Hence only the richest refugees move out of the camps. Thus the camps accumulate the poorest segments of the refugee population. For these residents, expenses are lower as long as wives are found among other camp residents, since they tend to be less demanding spouses in terms of housing and material standards.

Marriages within the patrilineal descent group

“I went to a high school in Rafah. At the high school I met this girl. We became friends and we began to love each other. My father has been working in Israel for several years, and we have money. He went to her parents to ask for her hand along with respected people of the Rafah camp whom he knew. Her parents could not refuse. But then later the girl’s father started to demand impossible gifts for her. Finally he said that the engagement was broken. The girl cried, because she loved me and wanted to marry me. But what I now learned from the girl was that her father had promised her to the son of his brother. I went there and asked him why he had not said so in the first place. It ended with a fight between us, and the relationship between our families has been cut off. She is married to her cousin now and has given birth to a boy. She named the boy after me.” Jamal, 23 years, Bureij.

Marriages are arranged and as such are expressions of preferences mothers and heads of households hold, as much as preferences of the actual marriage partners. In our sample, half the married persons have married a patrilineal relative. Both practical and ideological factors can explain the high proportion of intra-lineage marriages. As to practical factors it is easier and more secure for the parents, normally mothers, who arrange marriages, to find marriage partners within the lineage. Being involved in family occasions inside and outside the camp, information on the supply of marriage candidates inside the lineage is provided continuously. Practical problems concerning wedding arrangements, gifts, etc. are less unpredictable as long as one deals with a family and bride/bridegroom one already knows. At the same time, as the case presented above shows, marriages inside lineages also have an ideological dimension as they express solidarity between lineage members. Marriages between relatives have been explained as not only expressing kinship solidarity but also as instrumental in producing solidarity inside kinship groups (Holy 1989, Tuastad 1993). Hence high a proportion of intra-lineage marriages contributes to increasing the internal cohesion and solidarity inside the lineage. 263 out of the 538 married persons in our sample (49 %), were married to a member of their patrilineal descent group. This indicates that lineage is a central social unit for social organisation inside Bureij. Later in this section we will investigate how the lineage members in our sample are distributed inside and outside Gaza, and when discussing political and economic organisation we will focus on the importance of lineages for political organisation and social security.

Distinctive features of the marriage pattern in Bureij

To conclude our discussion on marriage relations in Bureij, we think that two of the most important features concerning social and political implications of the marriage pattern of the refugees are; 1. Refugees marry refugees, refugees do not marry non-refugees (inhabitants). 2. Pre-1948 patterns of marriages are maintained; *fellahin* marry *fellahin*, and the level of intra-lineage marriages is high.

Does the low proportion of marriages between refugee and non-refugee mean that refugees are not socially integrated in Gaza? The cases in our sample indicate that when marriage between non-refugees and refugees occurred, it was either a poor refugee marrying a poor non-refugee, or a rich refugee marrying a land owning non-refugee. Hence the low proportion of non-refugee versus refugee marriages might indicate economic differentiation processes in Gaza. Economic differentiation between refugees versus non-refugees may further strengthen the ethnic differentiation between the two categories of Gaza people. This implies that the sense of common identity shared among refugees and among camp residents is strengthened, and that the differences experienced between the refugees and the inhabitants are explained by refugees as originating from the place of origin of refugees outside Gaza.

The second characteristic feature of marriage relations in Bureij concerns the fact that village patterns of marriage are maintained in the refugee camp. A high level of intra-lineage marriages as well as a low level of marriages between *fellahin* (villagers) and *madanin* (city people), could be an expression of a strong village-origin identity. In our sample as many as two thirds⁵ married a refugee descended from the same village. Whether this is a result of a preference, in the sense that refugees consciously prefer to marry someone from the same village in pre-48 Palestine, or is a result of a lack of new contacts outside the lineages and original villages, the patterns have implications that are important for the reproduction of refugee identity. The traditions, codes of conduct, rituals, dialects, history, local idiosyncratic knowledge, as well as production of myths and legends that are transmitted through generations, locating the refugees in space and time, providing them with roots, are strengthened when both parents originate from the same village. Interpreted this way the high proportion of marriages of partners originating from the same village may imply that memory of the pre-48-war home is kept alive, as home as a social and cultural state is reproduced in new physical environments.

⁵ 356 out of 538 married a refugee descended from the same village in Palestine. Of these, 263 were from the same lineage.

Social networks

In this section we will discuss to what extent the Bureij refugees have access to social networks, and their ability to have close contacts to members of these social networks. This we do through an investigation of the number, distribution of, and access to patrilineal lineage members. Access to lineage members depends on where they live and how the lineage is distributed. Access to a lineage network indicates ability to satisfy social needs only insofar as lineage ties still constitute close, solidaristic relations. This question we will discuss at the end of the section. First, we will explain what we understand the most important kinship terms relevant for refugees in Bureij to be.

What we here refer to as *lineage* is “a patrilineal descent group”. While matrilineal relations in Palestinian tradition are ideologically recognised as equal to patrilineal relations, Palestinian political and social organisation based on kinship relations has been achieved through patrilineal descent. In the villages, large patrilineal descent groups could often descend from mythical ancestors, several hundred years back (Tuastad 1993). These large patrilineal descent groups of people living in the same locations are called *hamulas* [sometimes translated as clan (Antoun 1972:48)]. A *hamula* is larger than what we here have defined as lineage as they are patrilineal descent groups composed of several descent groups whose members know kinship relations inside the descent groups, but not between the descent groups. The descent groups share a name and the idea of a common ancestor, normally the same –as the name of the *hamula*⁶. The refugees normally refer to their patrilineal descent groups as “*aila*, families⁷. The patrilineal descent groups do not constitute *hamulas* as the *hamulas* were disintegrated by the flight in 1948. Now refugees, as descendants of *hamulas*, call the remnants of these large patrilineal descent groups “*aila* (family). Hence they are indicating that the relations inside the descent groups are known, as they normally have not accumulated members for more than three generations.

The lineage composition of Bureij

Bureij is comprised of 24 900 persons constituting 4627 households which means that the average household size is 5.4 persons (UNRWA 1995). The table below is based on the lists of names of all the heads of households present in Bureij that we have received from UNRWA. We want to know the characteristics of the lineage

⁶ *Hamulas* are patrilineal, patrilocal, corporate, endogamous, patronymic associations. *Hamula* means carry, and is probably a reference to a women in her capacity of carrying children (Peters 1960:29, Cohen 1965:2).

⁷ Nevertheless a connotation of ‘*aila*’ is all persons that a person is collateral genealogically related to.

composition in the camp. Do people have large or small lineages? To find out, we have classified all the heads of households who share lineage names into separate patrilineal descent groups to establish the size of the various descent groups. The first column in the table shows the number of households the lineages consist of; the second column shows the number of lineages according to the size provided in the first column, and third column shows the sum of households having the lineage size (number of households) shown in column one.

Table 1 Size of lineages in Bureij

Size (number of households)	Number of different lineages	Number of households with alineage size given in column 1
1	248	248
(2-5)	247	778
(6-10)	109	818
(11-20)	71	1019
(21-50)	33	1038
(51-107)	10	756
Total	718	4627

There are 718 different lineages having their own lineage name in Bureij. This means that the average lineage-size in Bureij is 36 persons or 7 households. There are two lineages in Bureij comprising more than 100 households. We see from the table above that the majority of the persons in Bureij are from lineages comprising more than 10 households. This means that more than half the people in the camp have from 50 to 500 relatives living in the same camp. On the other hand there are 248 lineages which only consist of one household. In the villages in pre-48 Palestine one rarely finds single households. The main reason for the many single households in the camp is, according to sources in Bureij, the flight in 1967. A considerable number of the 1948 refugees fled during the 1967 war, but in many of those lineages that left one household remained to protect the household's property in the camp. After that the Israeli occupation of Gaza prevented the members who escaped from returning.⁸

Distribution of lineage members

We have until now considered the lineage composition of the camp population. In assessing the importance of kinship for access to a social network we were interested

⁸Refugees belonging to the single household category state that their relatives in Jordan are eager to return to Gaza. We did not hear anyone express a wish to move to Jordan.

in finding out how lineages are located within and outside of Gaza. In order to determine that, question were posed to a sample of the household heads.

Table 2 Location of lineage members in Bureij

Place of Residence	Frequency	Percent
Bureij	180	33.1
Other camps in Gaza	84	15.4
Gaza, not camp	81	14.9
Israel	14	2.6
West Bank	3	0.6
Saudi Arabia	42	7.7
Other Gulf state	4	0.7
Jordan	72	13.2
Egypt	14	2.6
Libya	37	6.8
Other Arab State	2	0.4
Europe/America/Australia	11	2.0
Total	544	100

The table shows that 1/3 of the lineage members in our sample live in the same camp, while 37 % of the lineage members in our sample live outside Gaza. For those lineage members in our sample living in Gaza more than ¾ live in refugee camps (264 out of 345). The congestion of refugees in camps, as well as high proportion of lineage members living in camps, provide further evidence of differentiation processes leading camp refugees to develop collective identities. Camp refugees are differentiated as a group. They behave as a group practising endogamous marriages, and historically they share identity through being uprooted from the same locations. These are traits that make camp refugees similar to ethnic groups. Ethnicity has to do with subjectively experienced cultural differences (Barth 1969). The access to lineage networks inside the camp means that Bureij refugees have many close social relations. Are these social relations experienced by camp residents as relations that are culturally distinct from social relations with non-camp and non-refugee people?

The style of social life

The refugees in the Bureij camp use the UNRWA distinction of “blocks” to refer to where they are living in the camp. The camp is divided into 12 such blocks, or neighbourhoods. In one of these blocks Marwan lives with his mother, wife and

three children, and a brother with his wife and children. He comes from Beit Tima, a village which he says had about 2000 inhabitants prior to 1948, most of the villagers being members of one of the four *hamulas* there. During the war in 1948 the inhabitants fled, and most of them eventually ended up in Gaza. Marwan is from the Hassan Mahmud descent line of the *hamula*. The *hamula* was split in 1948. According to Marwan, members of the other descent lines are spread all over Gaza and they do not have regular contact. Lineages are now organised according to who arrived with whom in Gaza. As for Marwan's descent line seven brothergroups escaped to Gaza in 1948. Arriving in Gaza they first were scattered over five different camps. Eventually they all gathered in two camps; five of the brothers with descendants in Jabalya, and two in Bureij. As the third and fourth refugee generations are born, the Hassan Mahmud descent line now includes 111 married persons. 62 per cent of Marwan's lineage live in Jabaliya, and 20 per cent in Bureij. The *mukhtar*, the political and administrative representative of the lineage, lives in Jabalya. Marwan's mother lives part of the year with relatives in Jabaliya, especially during "occasions" (marriages, funerals, *haj* (pilgrimage) returns, etc) when she goes to assist other lineage members. Marwan visits lineage members in Jabaliya weekly during the summer period. In the evenings Marwan spends time in the camp chatting with his friends, sitting out in the street. People come and go. During the evening groups of 20 – 30 men sit down to chat, including young and old relatives, neighbours and friends from other parts of the camp. Nearly every person passing by in the street is known to the people sitting outside the houses and always greet "*salam 'alaikom*", "peace be upon you" as they pass, while the crowd greet "*ifaddal*", welcome to sit down. If someone passes without greeting, or if it happens that someone who passes is not known to the crowd, this is commented upon and questioned. All over Bureij groups of friends and relatives sit out like this in the summer evenings. "We were dreaming of sitting like this during the Intifada", says Marwan, referring to the close social ties between people living in the same neighbourhoods. Social life in Bureij society is characterised by people having many close social contacts, as well as strong social control.

In the same neighbourhood as Marwan's, Husam lives with his closest lineage members. In his former village of Kaukaba about 700 persons constituted Husam's *hamula*, separated into five descent lines. In 1948 most of the *hamula* members first came to Gaza where they became scattered around in various camps. Now, about half the members of Husam's descent line of 131 married persons live outside Gaza, 43 % live in Jordan. These became second time refugees as a result of the 1967 war. Husam's father and uncles have visited relatives in Jordan, and vice versa. The relatives in Jordan mainly live in refugee camps established after the 1967 war. At night the household members are separated in 5 rooms; Husam with his wife and 3 children in one room, one brother with wife in one, and two unmarried brothers,

three unmarried sisters and parents in the remaining rooms. The married sons and their father work, the sons give about half their salary to their father every month. In the evenings Husam frequently visits his uncle who live in the same block and who is the *mukhtar* of his lineage. The *mukhtar* has a *diwan*, a guest house. During the summer, this guest house consists of mattresses arranged in a circle in the open space of the household compound and between the rooms used by his extended family. During the winter, one room makes up the diwan, with mattresses spread around the fireplace where the *qahwa sada*, coffee without sugar, as well as the guests are kept warm. A constant stream of visitors come to the *diwan* for a chat, advice, a discussion, or simply to socialise from about five in the afternoon until nine or ten in the evening. The women are never visible. The *diwan* is arranged so that visitors can enter the compound and the diwan without seeing the women's place, separated in another corner of the compound, where the women sit, only occasionally bringing tea to the men, by leaving the pot behind a curtain for the men to serve their guests.

Marwan, Husam and the *mukhtar* are all members of extended families (three generations in same household). Members of extended families living in household compounds may be seen as collectivities where members share responsibilities. This means that in addition to sharing material resources members also share moral responsibilities and obligations. Among these obligations is to behave in ways which contribute to increasing the social esteem of the household members where should comply with defined rules for conduct. One expression of those kinds of rules are rules governing female behaviour. The homes of Marwan, Husam and the *mukhtar* have separated areas or operational zones for males and females. Women should not appear in public when households receive visitors in order to symbolise that the honour, *al 'ard*, of the households is maintained and not threatened. Socialisation into this rule for behaviour starts when girls are young. At school boys and girls are separated. In the camp relatives "guard" other members. One implication of this is that the camp is considered a "safe place" where household members are unlikely to be exposed to moral dangers. Rules for female behaviour are only one dimension of what we might call a shared understanding in Bureij of a code of conduct. This code includes other elements: how to treat visitors, how to participate in special occasions, how to share political responsibilities, fulfil obligations to visit, etc. As we will show when discussing economic organisation in the Bureij camp, principles of shared obligations and responsibilities inside households composed of extended families are central to how economic resources are allocated and distributed inside the camp. The obligations and responsibilities of lineage members, forming an informal system of social security, might also be interpreted as an expression of a cultural code shared in Bureij. To the extent that this code is regarded as important and complied with by residents in Bureij, it contributes to constituting the camp

as a moral community, as a social system characterised by strong social cohesion and conformity.

Conclusion

Although Gaza may be socially segmented, with camps forming cultural as well as economic segments, internal differentiation in the camps also prevails. The reproduction of social distance between *madani* (city origin) versus *fellah* (village origin) may indicate economic and social differentiation processes going on inside the camp as well as outside it. While a general pattern may be that a refugee making a lot of money would move from the camp, the “middle class” social stratum stays in the camp. These include teachers, civil servants etc. who make the camps heterogeneous living areas, and as such more complex communities. As a community, Bureij constitutes a kind of microcosm of Gaza, embedding both economic, social and, as we shall see below, political complexity.

Camp residents are not excluded from the social arenas outside the camps that they rarely venture to visit. They have the same access to labour markets and social services as non-camp residents and non-refugees. As two-thirds of the population in Gaza are UNRWA registered refugees, and as a majority of these live in camps, rather than asking whether access to other social arenas than the camps exists, one might ask whether needs or preferences for such relations exist. From one angle, social organisation in Bureij could be seen as reflecting the fact that camp residents constitute a segment of the Gaza population who do not own any means of production in Gaza, and that they have adapted socially to this situation through building on ties of solidarity between members of patrilineal kinship groups. Another, non-contrary interpretation is that camp refugees, by remaining in camps, and by predominantly marrying descendants from the same village of origin, are consciously preserving their status and identities as refugees.

Bureij is a locality where physical boundaries match social ones. The camp is a reference point for social orientation and social networks. What makes Bureij as a camp distinct from other living areas in Gaza is its distinct symbolic duality. Because camps are persistent social systems structuring collective experiences, memories and belonging, they symbolise at the same time a political status of temporality. From the perspective of refugee social organisation, what contributes to this sense of temporality is the lack of social integration with non-refugees and little contact with non-camp residents as well as access and contact with family networks mainly inside camps. That as many as 2/3 of our sample from Bureij were married to someone originating from the same village further indicates a distinct kind of refugee social orientation.

Political organisation in Bureij

As refugees the inhabitants of Bureij have an interest in any final status agreement which safeguards their status and political rights. As residents in Gaza they have had an interest in terminating the Israeli occupation, influencing the direction of political developments in the Palestinian entity. As camp residents, the refugees have local specific interests, for instance to improve and develop the infrastructure of the camp. As lineage and household members, they are interested in improving the living conditions as well as ensuring that their family name remains respected. How have these interests at various levels been transformed into political action and organisation?

Arriving in Gaza following the uprooting, the refugees became “clients”, and submitted themselves to the services of UNRWA. Their political interests were more oriented towards military operations against Israel than improving conditions locally (Shimoni 1987:193, Sayigh 1979:100). Nevertheless, informal leadership by community leaders had to develop in order to represent the refugees vis-à-vis UNRWA, as well as the Egyptian and Israeli authorities. In this section we are concerned with the various processes involved in how the camp people have come to organise themselves politically. We will continue to investigate the role of kinship in the camp, in particular the role of lineages in the development of camp leaderships, and the impacts which kinship institutions had on political orientations in the camp. We will also compare the role of lineages in relationship to political parties and factions, and investigate whether their roles in the camp indicate that faction and lineage represent mutually excluding forms of political organisation forms. Finally, we will discuss the extent to which political organisation and the political experiences of the camp people have contributed to structure the camp as a community.

The chapter has been organised in line with three political phases: 1. Political organisation in the camp before the Intifada. 2. Political organisation during the Intifada. 3. Political organisation after the Intifada, including the period immediately following elections for a Palestinian legislative council. However, a brief introduction to the recent political history of Gaza will first be given.

The political history of Gaza

Prior to 1948, Gaza was part of Palestine under the British Mandate. Gaza Town was the largest town exclusively Arab in Palestine. After the 1948-war Egypt took control and claimed administrative responsibility over Gaza, but did not put forward any territorial claim to Gaza. Egypt saw Gaza as a strictly temporary place for the refugees, and as such did not start development projects there. Such projects were considered to be contrary to the Palestinian right of return as they encouraged

resettlement of the refugees in Gaza. Following Nasser's coup in Egypt in 1952, Pan-Arabism found fertile ground in Gaza, particularly the camps, which provided grounds for guerrilla activities against Israel, after the latter's occupation of Gaza in 1956. When Israel withdrew one year later, Gaza was returned to Egyptian military administration which now included the presence of a UN Emergency Force. The resumption of attacks on Israeli targets by Palestinian guerrillas in Gaza was, according to Shimoni (1987:193), a reason for the Israeli occupation of Gaza in 1967, leaving Gaza under Israeli military control and governance. Sabotage and armed struggle against the Israeli occupation was specifically high during the first years after 1967. As the PLO moved headquarters during the seventies from Jordan to Lebanon, and later in 1982 to Tunis, unrest in Gaza was much reduced (Shimoni 1987:194). As Gazan belief in military victory of the PLO faded, the Intifada erupted in Gaza in 1987. In 1995, with the implementation of the Declaration of Principles agreement between the PLO and Israel, Gaza became an autonomous Palestinian area.

Pre-Intifada political organisation: kinship

Two dimensions of political organisation can be observed in Bureij: first, organisation through lineages and kinship institutions; second, through factions. The prevalence of each form corresponds to phases in the political history of Gaza. Before the Intifada lineage organisation prevailed in the camp, while factions governed the camp during the Intifada. In this section we will discuss lineage organisation.

Israel did not permit any formal political organisation based on elected representation in Gaza during the occupation. Up until 1981 Gaza was administered by a Military Administration, and from 1981 by a Civil Administration subject to the Israeli Defence Forces and the Israeli Ministry of Defence. The British Emergency Regulations of 1945, international law, as well as military regulations were applied in Gaza during the Israeli occupation⁹. Membership of the PLO was illegal. One effect of the system of administration was that one of the few options left to Palestinians was a system of political and social organisation based on kinship and in particular the descent groups. Two distinctive features of lineage organisation are the *mukhtar* system and the system of *sulha* committees.

⁹While Israel prided herself on what she considered an eminently humane occupation regime compared with any similar occupation in modern history – no death sentences, a very sparing use of administrative detention, Palestinians saw it differently: trial by military courts, detention without trial, demolition of houses, deportations, harsh interrogations including charges of torture, denial of the freedom of association, construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied land, stymied industrial growth while the Palestinian labour force was channelled into serving as a reservoir for hired labour in Israel (Shimoni 1987:242).

The *mukhtar* system

The institution of *mukhtar* was introduced by the Ottoman rulers in Palestine in the middle of the 19th century as the Ottomans were in need for local persons to be responsible for tax collection, army conscription and preservation of order. Each administrative district, normally a village, was to have a *mukhtar* responsible for the district. As members and leaders of the *hamulas* (“clans”) of the villages realised the political importance of the *mukhtar* position, they started to appoint their own *mukhtars*. Thus the villages during the British Mandate had several *mukhtars*, each representing his *hamula* (Tuastad 1993:81, Al Haj 1990:2). The institution of *mukhtar* has been maintained by the refugees in Gaza. In every Gazan camp the residents either have a *mukhtar* in their own patrilineal descent group or, if their lineage is too small, they are affiliated with a patrilineal descent group that has a *mukhtar*. Occasions such as weddings, births and deaths, (legal) identification and disputes are mediated through the *mukhtar* who is responsible for the person in question. Similar to the Ottomans, Israel appointed one of the *mukhtars* in each camp to be responsible for the camp as a kind of Mayor. This way the camps had several *mukhtars* during the occupation, one of whom was responsible for the whole camp. Administrative measures from the Israeli military rulers and communication between camp residents and the Israelis were passed on through the *mukhtar* responsible for the camp, who then would further pass on relevant information to the *mukhtar* responsible for the case/person in question. Besides being the communication channel between residents and the Israeli Civil Administration, the Israeli appointed *mukhtars* in areas like Bureij enjoyed some special benefits such as a telephone and access to information on, for instance, land for sale, new building projects, jobs etc. As Israel appointed *mukhtars* according to its own interests rather than the preferences of camp residents, appointed *mukhtars* could easily be suspected of abusing their positions and of being collaborators. “A *mukhtar* should take care of the social problems of his lineage, not be involved in politics,” says Masoud from Bureij who has not accepted an offer to be the *mukhtar* of his own patrilineal descent group. Masoud is sceptical of the *mukhtar*’s position because of the collaboration accusations levelled against some *mukhtars*, including the local one, during the occupation. On the other hand, Masoud has participated in *sulha* committees in the camp. The *sulha* committees are local committees which work to solve conflicts and disputes between people. This means that Masoud is not sceptical of the involvement of kinship institutions in local politics per se; he regards *sulha* committees as part of the apparatus of local political organisation.

Sulha committees

Sulha means reconciliation. A *sulha*-committee (*lajnat islah*) is a committee containing respected community leaders who at times of conflict negotiate and adjudicate between the parties in conflict. They base their judgements on cultural tradition and interpretations of the Koran. For instance, the compensation for killing a person is, according to the Koran, 20 camels, which now equals 60 000 US Dollars, to be paid by the offender(s). A conflict in a refugee camp involving a killing presented to a *sulha* committee could end with the *sulha* committee asking the offender to pay 60 000 US Dollars. Other conflicts could be settled without one party paying the other compensation. *Sulha* is to be marked by a ceremony where the parties sign the *sulha* agreement in the presence of the *sulha* committee.

During the period of Fafó's summer field work in 1995, an incident occurred between two lineages that eventually led to action from a local *sulha* committee. A member of a small lineage worked for the preventive security branch of the PA police. In the same neighbourhood (block) lived Nadir, a suspected drug dealer, who was notorious for his contacts with the Palestinian underworld and had been beaten during the Intifada. As Nadir was on his way home, the Palestinian policeman watched him. This provoked him, and he approached the policeman and asked why he was staring at him. The policeman denied that he was staring, but Nadir eventually hit him. Two of the policeman's brothers soon arrived on the scene, and they beat Nadir severely. Soon members of Nadir's lineage arrived, and the parties fought with sticks and threw stones at each other until intervention by neighbours and passers-by eventually led to the escape of the policeman's party, as they had become outnumbered by Nadir's lineage. The same evening members of Nadir's lineage entered the houses of the policeman and his brothers, not finding any of them but their wives. They then smashed furniture and beat the women before they returned. Camp residents despise entering into houses and beating women. Some said that because Nadir's lineage had been beaten in feuds before, they now took the opportunity to beat someone weaker than them, – the policeman's lineage only contained three married brothers in the camp. Two months later, the car of one of Nadir's brother of was set on fire. Following this incident a local *sulha* committee was established and the parties accepted a *sulha*, without any party having to compensate the other. Through the attack on the car a balance between the parties was created. The *sulha* committee convinced the parties that no revenge or further escalation would be justified and managed to bring the parties together for reconciliation.

Before the Intifada, order in the camps was maintained through the organisation of lineages and kinship institutions. In case of internal quarrels residents were reluctant to go to the local police who worked for the occupation authorities, thus serving as collaborators in the eyes of most camp residents. This led members of

sulha committees and *mukhtars* to become community leaders, as they became indirectly responsible for the maintenance of order and cohesion in the camp. The *sulha* and *mukhtar* institutions have not been challenged as institutions, although many Israeli-appointed *mukhtars* were accused of being Israeli collaborators. It was how the role as a mediator and contact between camp residents and the Israelis was performed, rather than the position itself, that was criticised. Accusations of collaborating were levelled against *mukhtars* suspected of providing information on clandestine political affiliations and activities inside the camps, rather than as a formal link between the camp and the occupiers. During the Israeli occupation of the Gaza strip, Israel operated the camps as administrative units, having one *mukhtar* responsible for each camp, as we have already mentioned. Israel indirectly contributed thereby to structuring the camps as political units. As the Intifada erupted, political organisation in the camp changed and became factionalised. Despite this change of internal organisation among the Palestinians, Israeli responses to Palestinian activities were to make groups, for instance the whole camp, responsible for individual actions. As an example, among Israeli responses to riots and attacks on soldiers originating from inside the camps were the random demolition of houses inside the camps and the imposition of a curfew on the whole camp (Schiff 1989:148). It is plausible that the countermeasures strengthened the camps as political units. Israel defined the camp as a territorial unit when collective punishments were enforced. It is through collective punishments that collective experiences and a common political history are created. *Sulha* committees also operate through making collectivities (descent groups) responsible for individual actions. Israeli measures, as well as the work of *sulha* committees, thus contribute to reproduce the same code of conduct in the camp, that of collective responsibilities.

In addition to its contribution in putting an end to the Israeli occupation, the Intifada strengthened camp identities and restructured the camps as localities of autonomous political and social systems. We shall return to this discussion after analyzing political organisation in Bureij during the Intifada.

The Intifada; organisation through factions

The Intifada was a watershed in the history of Gaza. No one could escape the confrontations nor the effect of the measures imposed by Israel. As the Intifada endured, organisation of the uprising as well as of camp life through Intifada groups connected to political factions developed. Seven factions had active groups in Bureij during the Intifada, five of which were members of the PLO; Fatah, PFLP, DFLP,

Peoples Party, and the Arab Liberation Front¹⁰. The two other factions were the Islamic groups Hamas and Jihad. The Intifada groups who were connected to various political factions were in various degrees self-proclaimed representatives of the camp factions. Each group is said to have had from four to ten members. Jihad, PFLP, DFLP, PP and ALF had only one to two groups each. Eight Intifada groups were affiliated to Hamas, while around 30 such Intifada groups were affiliated to Fatah. This reflects the leading position and the support for Fatah in Bureij during the occupation – if all the Intifada groups in the other factions united they would still only be half the size of the Intifada groups in the camp affiliated to Fatah. The factions in the camp did not organise themselves into in a permanent central committee, as reported elsewhere (Schiff 1989:188). The level of central co-ordination inside the factions varied. Raif, a leader of a Fatah group in Bureij, established before the Intifada, had direct contact with the PLO in exile and organised activity as part of a co-ordinated strategy. Not all the Fatah groups in the camp were under the command of this leader. Being established on an ad hoc basis and, becoming affiliated to Fatah for pragmatic reasons as well as because their members' political sympathies, did not mean that these other groups enjoyed the same power as the "recognised" Fatah groups. Other factions, being smaller, could undertake more

¹⁰ FATAH is the largest and dominant constituent group in the PLO. It was established in the late 1950s and is considered the most moderate inside the PLO, with strong Islamic links. Yassir Arafat has been the leader of Fatah since the faction began guerilla operations in 1965. It approves of the bilateral peace process between Israel and the PLO.

PFLP, THE POPULAR FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE, led by George Habash and based in Syria, was founded in 1969. Its ideology combines a militant nationalism with a neo-Marxist-Maoist bent. It opposes the bilateral peace process.

DFLP, THE DEMOCRATIC FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE, headed by Naif Hawathmehand based in Syria, split away from PFLP in 1969. More doctrinaire and Marxist-Maoist in its ideology than the PFLP, has not supported and conducted military operations against third parties as has the PFLP. It opposes the bilateral peace process.

THE ARAB LIBERATION FRONT was founded in 1969 by the Iraqi Bath party and is under control of Iraq. It has been loyal to Arafat.

THE PEOPLES PARTY, the Communist Party, has not participated in guerrilla operations. It approves of the bilateral peace process but is not part of the PA. It has a strong presence inside trade unions and NGOs in OT.

HAMAS, the largest Islamic faction, is an offshoot of The Muslim Brotherhood. Its military wing has conducted bombing operations inside Israel as part of it's opposition to the bilateral peace process.

JIHAD, second largest Islamic faction, is similar to Hamas in political and military orientation and record, with closer links to Iran.

unified actions but were torn by strife (see below). Nevertheless, the main power struggle in Bureij during the Intifada was between Hamas and Fatah. After the peace process started in Madrid 1991 the conflict between these factions intensified. A Fatah leader of the Intifada relates:

“When Haidar went to Madrid, we wanted to celebrate. We drove through the camp with megaphones and distributed leaflets, had our jeep decorated with olive leaves, and encouraged shop owners and residents to decorate and celebrate the event¹¹. The same day Hamas spread leaflets for a strike in the camp to protest against the peace process. We then changed the content in our leaflets, and our messages to the shop owners. We said that this should be democratic, those who supported the peace process should open their shops, and those against it could have them closed. The day the negotiations in Madrid began, most of the shops were decorated. Members of Hamas attacked shops with Molotov cocktails. One shop belonging to a Fatah member was burned down. Until then we had had a reconciliatory attitude towards Hamas. This we just did not accept. We had to show our strength. We started to chase the Hamas people. We beat up those who did not escape. We forced closed shops to open. Some set up a reconciliation committee and approached me, wanting me to accept a cease fire. I knew then that the only thing we had to do to avoid being humiliated by Hamas was to humiliate them. We gathered people in the streets and I delivered a speech. I started by tearing the *hudni* paper [cease-fire paper] apart in front of the people. I said that we had asked the people to do what they wanted, and that Hamas then forced people to follow them. As we are one people, this was not acceptable. They used power, so we had to use power. I said that we would impose a curfew on all Hamas people in the camp, and those not obeying the curfews would be beaten or killed. This curfew lasted for three days. Those not staying indoors were beaten. Two Hamas shops were burned. Then Hamas wrote a leaflet saying that they were sorry for what had happened. We accepted a truce. We won the respect of the people.” B. leader of Fatah committee in Bureij during the Intifada.

The power the factions generated from organising the uprising eventually included the power to authorise as well as administer government in the camp. Rules for daily life in the camp, from schooling to economic activity (such as strikes, and the opening hours of shops as well as what products to sell), rules for a code of conduct – how to organise weddings as well as what to wear, – were developed by the various

¹¹ The multilateral peace process started in Madrid 1991; Haidar Abdul Shafi from Gaza was leader of the Palestinian delegation.

factions. The same factions that authorised the rules also punished non-compliance. But as the two major political factions disagreed on a number of central political questions, confrontation between them was hard to avoid. As the government of the camp was under hard external pressure, tough measures were taken to implement policies. The leaders of the factions risked being murdered or arrested if their identities became revealed; known leaders soon became fugitives. The less covert the leaders appeared, the more vulnerable they were. But since at the time the political organisation to a large extent was covert using masked men, there was danger of not co-ordinating with the leadership as well as of misusing of power. Towards the end of the Intifada one major problem in the camp was that people did not know where the orders came from. Suspicion spread that Intifada groups could be infiltrated by collaborators working for Israel, acting as masked men. Such suspected infiltration led to increasingly harsher punishment of those who were believed to be collaborators. As external and internal pressures became stronger, and it became harder to obtain a proper overview of the situation, the risk of punishing innocent persons also increased. This added to an already strongly felt fear and general insecurity in the camps.

In Bureij, nearly every household had members active in the uprising. During the continuous curfews imposed on the camp, electricity was cut off, and only in special cases were camp residents allowed to leave or enter the camp – food supply was thus restricted, and high school students were barred from taking their matriculation exams, while Israeli tax collectors broke into houses and forced residents to give away whatever savings they had (Schiff 1989:148). The human rights group Al Haq found that 95 out of 100 households in Bureij had a member arrested during the Intifada¹². Among the 585 Gazans killed by IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) in Gaza during the uprising, 29 were killed in the Bureij camp.¹³ While one third of the Gaza population live in camps, half of the Intifada's victims fell there¹⁴. Between 13 and 24 camp residents who were killed in Bureij were suspected of being collaborators¹⁵. One Israeli soldier was killed in the camp. The houses of 23 refugee

¹² A fieldworker from Al Haq chose one street in the camp and asked every household until 100 households were surveyed, if any of the household members had been arrested during the Intifada. Some 80 000 Palestinians were held in Israeli detention between 1988 and 1994 (Brynen 1995:43).

¹³ Data are from the files of Al Haq which investigated each documented case.

¹⁴ 256 out of 505 victims from Gaza who died inside Gaza, died in camps. Based on a list of names, location, date, reason for death and guilt, obtained from Al Haq.

¹⁵ We got the names of 13 persons killed as collaborators, 8 by Fatah, 3 by Hamas, one by Jihad and one by PFLP. Other local sources claim that up to 24 suspected collaborators were killed.

camp households, totalling 129 persons, as well as 21 shops in the camp, were destroyed as collective punishment for the death of this soldier¹⁶.

A radical increase in requests to leave the camp is probably related to the insecurity and hardships during the Intifada. Before the Intifada, 500–700 households annually requested permission from the Israeli Civil Administration to leave Gaza refugee camps. In contrast, during the first one and a half years of the Intifada 17 000 were asked to be relocated to areas in Gaza outside camps¹⁷. Although most requests to leave appear to have been denied, some mobility out of the camps did take place. People accused of collaborating with Israel, and the few non-active households had especially good reasons for leaving the camps since these were the centres of the heaviest confrontations between Palestinian youth and Israeli soldiers during the Intifada while the activists remained in the camps, while those who were considered passive left, and thus the camps further strengthened their position as radical strongholds.

As the hardships of a six-year state of emergency eventually came to an end with the signing of the Declaration of Principles in Oslo, the political conditions contributing to the push to leave the camps also changed. What is then the nature of the political organisation, and what are the cleavages differentiating the various groups after autonomy was established in Gaza?

Post-Intifada political organisation

Post-Intifada political organisation in Bureij can be divided into two stages. First, in the vacuum between the signing of the Declaration of Principles and the arrival of the PA internal fighting between factions intensified. This seems to have been followed by the re-establishment of political positions corresponding to the old lineage leadership, but now wearing new factional dress.

In spring 1994 a conflict developed between two factions, PFLP and The Arab Liberation Front (ALF), which escalated into a war that spread over Gaza. Basim, leader of the PFLP faction during the Intifada, relates how the conflict started;

“Khaled was my neighbour. He is from a small lineage. After he became leader of ALF in the camp he thought he had become something big. One day I beat him after we started quarrelling. This led him to go down to Block Two where all his people live. They went together and beat up a member of the

¹⁶ The Israeli soldier drove into the camp by mistake. His car was stoned, and he was burnt to death.

¹⁷ Jerusalem Post 6, July 1989.

PFLP living in that neighbourhood. ALF is actually nothing in the camp, they only thought they were something because they received protection from Fatah. We know every ALF man in the camp, and knew who had done the beating. The next day people from our group went to the home of every man who had participated in the beatings. We forced them into cars and took them to Nuseirat¹⁸. There we punished them¹⁹. In the evening we marched through Bureij to celebrate. When Khaled heard that we were celebrating he rushed to the demonstration carrying his machine gun. When he arrived he started to fire wildly into the crowd. Then he escaped.” Basim, leader of PFLP committee in Bureij during the Intifada.

Twelve people were wounded, and two died from the shootings. After this a war broke out between PFLP and ALF in Gaza. Political leaders from all over Gaza came to the camp to bring about a truce. Eventually the parties agreed to a truce. but even if the faction conflict had been settled, the lineage-based conflict was not. Neither of the two dead men had been members of PFLP; both had been onlookers, one of them was killed buying *felafel* at the shop near the demonstration. In the aftermath of the killings their lineages started to threaten revenge against Khaled and his family. When the PLO arrived in Gaza after the killing, Khaled found a position in the Preventive Security of the PA and thus has been given the authority to carry a gun. There has been one assassination attempt on him which camp residents claim was performed by members of one of the dead victim’s lineage, or a result of not having had their *sulha*. The family conflict had been transformed into a factional conflict only to be transformed back again into a lineage conflict.

Nevertheless institutions and mechanisms derived from lineage politics had been vital in solving factional conflicts; it was through negotiation by a *sulha* committee with notables from Gaza that the factional conflict between PFLP and the ALF was eventually settled. The dynamics leading to the escalation of the conflict between the PFLP and the ALF seemed to be behind the conscious attempt of Khaled and Basim at exercising control in the camp. Knowledge of this dynamic is a political resource, which can be used to manipulate factional leaders in order to gain or maintain political control. This holds true in other incidents of factional disputes in the camp.

During the Intifada, 15 year old Ahmed K. was shot dead in Bureij. The person who shot him escaped after the killing. Ahmed K. had been a member of one of the PFLP groups in the camp, but some people from Hamas had claimed

¹⁸ The neighbouring camp to Bureij.

¹⁹ Two from ALF were shot in the legs, the others were beaten.

that he was a collaborator or belonged to a family containing collaborators. The idea that he had been a collaborator was not widely accepted in Bureij. Fatah and PFLP arranged a demonstration after the killing to protest against it. People in the camp suspected a Hamas military leader to have executed the boy. The brother of this leader had been killed 20 years earlier by the father of the murdered boy. Now, it was said, the Hamas leader had the power and opportunity to exact revenge then the Hamas leader was arrested by the Israelis. Raif, a leader of Fatah in Bureij, claims that this leader admitted to other Fatah prisoners during his prison term that he had killed the boy. Then, after the signing of the Declaration of Principles, the old conflict during the Intifada between Hamas and Fatah in the camp continued although the Intifada had ended. The PFLP shared with Hamas its opposition to the peace agreement and the peace process. In Bureij as in other places in Gaza and the West Bank, the formation of a rejectionist front was discussed where the factions opposing the peace process could join forces against the peace process and Fatah control. According to Raif this co-operation among the opposition groups in Bureij was stopped by the Fatah members who demanded that the PFLP leaders respond to charges regarding the killing of the PFLP boy during the Intifada:

“We asked the PFLP leaders, “how, agreement?”, how could they have an agreement with Hamas? Should they accept that one of their members had been killed [by Hamas]?, [should they] reach an alliance with those who had deliberately killed one of their members? What kind of party is that? After we had pressed them, there was no co-operation between Hamas and PFLP in Bureij. ’Raif, leader of the Fatah committee during the Intifada.”

Raif related how their Fatah group had a conscious policy of opposing the two biggest opposition groups in the camp so as to ally themselves with the small factions and encourage internal conflict among the other factions, thus weakening competition from other factions. Raif also recalled how Fatah people participated in the demonstrations of both factions during the struggle between the ALF and the PFLP, thus escalating the intensity of the conflicts to eventually weakening both parties.

To understand camp politics and conflicts, as represented in the conflicts between the above factions, it is illuminating to relate the politics and conflicts to the dynamics of lineage organisation. Conflict has been focused on here. This does not imply that everyday life in Bureij is tormented by incessant internal strife. We have focused on some cases involving conflict in order to be able to understand the mechanisms which work when no elected or legitimate formalised authority exists to enforce law and order. An interpretation of the above cases leads us to believe that, in the absence of any legitimate judicial system, social cohesion and normative control among Palestinian refugees had to be obtained through submission to customary laws and shared cultural values for social behaviour. These customary

laws and shared cultural norms are embedded in social organisation through patrilineal descent groups. The influence of the principle of collective responsibility between the group members inside these patrilineal groups is manifested in factional politics – as long as collective economic responsibilities and collective social identities are maintained inside lineages, political identities do not get individualised. This led to the escalation of the conflict involving all the factions of the PFLP and ALF, rather than only two individuals, Khaled and Basim. The conflict between Basim and Khaled started as a conflict between neighbours from different lineages, with Basim feeling humiliated by Khaled's appearance. As the two persons fought there was a danger that lineage members would come to rescue their relative and that the personal antagonism would escalate into a conflict between lineages, as we saw above. But as Khaled and Basim were faction leaders, the rules of lineage conflict were transferred to a factional level. As in feuds where the definition of collective responsibilities legitimates revenge on any member of the other lineage, even though the persons punished may have not participated initially in the conflict, members of Khalid's and Basim's factions, rather than entire lineages became the primary antagonists.

After the Intifada: the re-establishment of lineages

The conflict between Hamas and PFLP is interpreted in Bureij as an attempt to let factional politics provide an alibi for an old lineage conflict. This lends further credence to our observation that the role of a political actor as a faction member is often indistinguishable from the same person's lineage identity. Participation in and identification with factions may even result from decisions taken inside lineages. A member of the small FIDA²⁰, party told us that he became a member of FIDA as a result of his lineage changing their factional orientation. His father, three of his four uncles, all five brothers, and eleven of his twelve cousins "converted" at the same lineage gathering from DFLP to FIDA. One uncle and his grown up son support Hamas. "I do not have any contact with him", informed Issam, thereby illustrating the social sanctions imposed on not following lineage decisions regarding factional orientation.

The institution and the mechanism used to settle the conflict between factions were the same as in the lineage conflict between Nadir and the policeman described above. Sulha-committees were established and managed to work out reconciliation agreements.

²⁰ FIDA split from DFLP as the faction supported the Madrid peace process, while DFLP and their leader Hawathmeh did not.

After the Intifada ended, factions such as Hamas, PFLP and Fatah established their own *sulha* committees in Bureij²¹. *Mukhtars* became active members or local leaders of factions. Hence kinship institutions became part of the faction-based political system. Before the PA's authority took root, various leaders resorted to re-establishing the old lineage system as a power base in the camps. However, factions remained the main instrument for political organisation – predominantly among Fatah – but the lineage basis operated as a second tier within the system of factional politics in order to buttress power positions of individuals.

Political resources that can be converted into power can be designated as political capital. The more political capital the group has at its disposal, the greater its ability to obtain power in the political arena (or “market” to complete the analogy). Several forms of political capital exist in Bureij. Some are strictly kinship based, such as the position of sheikhs and some *mukhtars*, where the magnitude of political capital corresponds to the size of their lineages, the respect they have won through their knowledge of tradition, their moral, honour, and negotiating skills. Other forms may be strictly based on activity through factions, for example the political records of many young Intifada activists. Combinations of the different forms of political capital increase the size of the political currency – to have a lineage basis, to be active in *sulha* committees as well as having fought against the Israeli occupation and having been active during the Intifada – all adds up to an increase in the magnitude of the available political capital.

The impact of the various forms of political capital could be measured during the Palestinian elections which were held in January 1996. However, before we discuss the elections, we wish to focus on the relationship between Bureij and external political authorities. So far we have discussed political organisation inside the Bureij camp. Below we will focus on the representational aspect of politics, the relationship of refugees living in Bureij vis a vis central political authorities.

²¹ During our discussions concerning social organisation in Bureij we measured the sizes of lineages in a number of households. We found that the average size of lineages in Bureij was seven households. While the average for the lineages of the people in the Fatah *sulha* committee is 38 households,; the average for the members of the PFLP *sulha* committee is 37. The prestige of each committee corresponds to the authority and respect of the persons participating in them. The size of the lineage a person belongs to or represents has traditionally been a factor that increases the person's authority. The lineages of the members of the factions's *sulha* committees are on average five times larger than the average for Bureij Camp. Some of the Intifada activists may therefore be right in complaining that the lineage leaders who were inactive during the Intifada have now become faction leaders in the camp, replacing the intifada's leadership. The participation of *mukhtars* in the faction based *sulha* committees is a further indication of this.

Representation of camp refugees vis-a-vis central authorities

As social order was maintained through kinship institutions and organisation, and as the political involvement of refugees in Bureij became a primary means for resistance and liberation fighters, institutions and political bodies for nation building did not develop inside the camp. Bureij, with its poor material infrastructure, also lacked the political infrastructure for community development and participation. In addition, the allocation of UNRWA resources in the camp was carried out without any institutional representation from the camp residents. Until elections to the Palestinian Council were held in January 1996 no formal or elected representation of the residents had existed at any level in the PA, and neither had any local council. How then were the refugees in Bureij represented? Two incidents concerning the relationship between the camp refugees and the PA indicate ambiguities in the PA's attitude to the representation of camp residents. As the PA established itself in Gaza, representatives from the Planning Ministry were sent to the camps, including Bureij, to organise the setting-up of committees to oversee various aspects of living conditions in the camps: education, health, culture, etc. The committees were meant to provide needs assessments and dialogue between camp residents and the Authorities. The PA representative in Bureij was met with overwhelming enthusiasm. Eight different committees were established, each having up to 16 members. The committees arranged internal meetings in anticipation of a meeting with the PA. But the initiative from the PA was not forthcoming. After several requests from various camps for a meeting with the PA, a message was sent out from the Ministry of Planning stating that the project was cancelled and that the committees should be dissolved. In Bureij the activities of the committees were terminated, while speculation about the reason for their establishment circulated. Some people thought that the central Palestinian politicians in the PA were afraid of the political strength such committees could eventually accumulate. The other incident concerned internal disagreements in different departments of the PA about the organisation of sports activities in the camps. In the refugee camps under the administration of UNRWA, activity centres had been built, and UNRWA administered sport activities in these clubs²². In Gaza UNRWA has administered football and volleyball leagues, the clubs from the camps regularly competing with each other. The PA wished to take over the administration of the sports activities. One of the conflicts between the elites in Palestinian politics has been between PLO members and leaders returning from the Diaspora, and Palestinian leaders who remained within the Palestinian territories. Such a conflict took place inside the PA between the Minister for Youth and Sport recruited locally (from FIDA), and the returning Chairman of the Olympic

²² Most famous is the legendary football club Wihdat in Amman, former champions in Jordan and a symbol of Palestinian nationalism (Tuastad 1996).

Committee who had been the PLO's responsible representative for these affairs in Tunis. During autumn 1994 the Ministry sent out letters to the camps suggesting how the various leagues should now be organised. The Chairman of the Olympic Committee did not accept that the locally recruited Minister should organise these matters, and sent out his own plan for the organisation of sport activities. As this continued with contradictory messages going out to the camps, it became impossible to organise any regular activity. This led the leader of the club in Bureij, together with the board of the club, to take action²³. They contacted other clubs and agreed on how they wanted the sports activities to be organised. They also made a contract about the division of responsibilities between the Ministry and the Olympic Committee. They then invited the parties to a signing ceremony in Bureij. Both the Minister and the Chairman of the Olympic Committee turned up for this ceremony and signed the papers and the contract exactly as they had been prepared by the club leaders. The leagues are now organised precisely as described by the club leaders. Looked at from one angle, these incidents illustrate that decisions concerning the well being of refugees in Bureij are taken or initiated without any formal participation of the camp people, even in the new PA era. But the incidents also show another dimension of political organisation in the camps. Although the camps have lacked institutionalised representation, they have exercised power through their political potential and ability to mobilise. As camps are densely populated locations full of highly politicised residents sharing fundamental political interests, they can be transformed into centres of political action. The political and military potential of united refugees in camps is tremendous, as was illustrated during the Intifada. The refugees are conscious of their political potential. The ultimatum issued by the camp about the organisation of sports activities was the kind of offer the Minister and the Chairman of the Olympic Committee could not refuse. The plan to establish camp committees for needs assessments in the camps could be risky too, since the refugee committees could easily start to live their own lives. PLO activity originating from camps in Lebanon and Jordan, as well as the activities in camps during the Intifada, indicate how refugee movements have inclined to be irreversible once set in motion²⁴.

²³The board and leader of the club are elected by club members. Although elections in UNRWA administered clubs in Palestinian refugee camps are known to be politicised and faction related, the leaders of the Bureij club do not have reputations as lineage or faction leaders.

²⁴In Khan Yunis the committees did not accept to be dissolved. A leadership has been established, fighting for improving the living conditions in the camp, and for political representation of the camp refugees in Gaza and the Khan Yunis municipality.

The history of not institutionalised representation of camp residents changed with the elections held in the Palestinian territories on 20 January, 1996. The elections represented the first opportunity ever for Palestinian refugees, and non-refugees, to elect a President and representatives to a Palestinian Legislative Council. The organisation and participation of Bureij residents in the election will now be discussed below.

Political organisation during the elections in January 1996

We will analyse the first Palestinian elections according to two main dimensions:

1. The political orientation demonstrated by camp refugees during elections;
2. How the election process may in turn influence refugees' political orientation.

When the election campaign started on 2 January, 1996 50 candidates had registered in the Deir al Balah constituency office where Bureij is located. The majority of the population in Deir al Balah are refugees living in three refugee camps: Bureij, Mighazi and Nuseirat. 40 of the 50 candidates in the constituency were UNRWA registered refugees. 37 out of the 50 candidates had addresses in the camps. Nine of these candidates were from Bureij. The candidates competed for the 5 seats in the Deir al Balah constituency. Below is a list of the winners in Bureij according to the constituency:

Three conclusions may be drawn concerning political orientation, as demonstrated by the votes cast by the Bureij residents;

1. The camp residents voted for representatives from the camp;
2. Bureij residents voted for refugees;
3. The refugees did not elect lineage candidates.

Each of these points will be elaborated upon below.

Preference for representatives from the same camp

It is apparent from the tables above that the electorate in Bureij Camp preferred candidates from the camp where the four candidates with most support all came from the camp, indicating that strong camp identity is a distinctive feature of the political orientation of its residents.

It is not uncommon for electorates to prefer local candidates to remote ones. However, the degree to which a centrifugal political orientation prevailed in the villages was something that distinguished Palestinian political culture and code of conduct (Sayigh 1979:16). Hence the orientation of the electorate in Bureij during

the elections represents a continuity of traditional centrifugal Palestinian political orientation, where genealogical and geographical proximity were among the most important criteria for establishing political alliances. When solving practical problems, such as land disputes and the protection of harvests from taxation by various illegitimate rulers, villagers preferred solidarity based on geographic identification rather than engagement in divisive discussions about major ideological issues. In the villages of Palestine where lineages had grown in size over generations and continued to live in the same neighbourhoods, membership of a lineage became the basis for co-operation and alliance in political as well as social matters. To a certain extent, the camps are similar to the villages, since the residents have common interests in terms of their relationship with the outside world and in the patterns of solidarity which were forged in the various neighbourhoods since the arrival of the camp residents in 1948. Camp political orientation manifested in the election thus implies continuity of an original village political organisation.

On the other hand, the nine candidates from the camp were not the ones who took all the first nine places. Although it was an important criteria to be from the camp, it was not a sufficient criteria. As the camp both houses refugees and original Bedouin families, the results shown in the table below indicate that the political implications of being a refugee also determined how the refugees voted.

As the table shows, the four most popular candidates in Bureij all had records as activists in the national struggle. The non-active among them during the Intifada were hardly boosted by the “camp effect” and scarcely received more votes in the camp than in the constituency. Most significant are the results for the Bedouin candidates living in the camp. H. Abu Jaber Heyayyer got a higher percentage of votes outside than inside the camp. This adds to our interpretation that refugee identity had a distinct influence on the vote in the camp.

Influence of refugee identity on voting

The common experience of the flight of 1948 constituted those who escaped and their descendants as a political category with common political interests. In addition, refugees living in the camps might have more acute concerns due to the lack of proper living conditions inside the camps as well as their not having the land necessary to build new homes outside the overcrowded camps. As we have discussed in the sections above, this has contributed to the camps becoming strongholds in the struggle against Israeli occupation, the latest of which occurred during the Intifada. We have earlier designated political resources as forms of political capital which could be converted into power in the political arena during struggles for power positions. The results of the vote in Bureij indicate that for a candidate to succeed it was necessary to hold what we might call “camp political capital”, in addition to simply performing well during the campaign. Camp political capital is accumulated

on two levels: at the level of the Intifada, a sort of Intifada capital, and another as refugee political capital. The most popular candidates in the camp were those with the most refugee and Intifada capital to exchange for votes during the elections. They were either active leaders, imprisoned, fighters or, as Naser al Din Jabar, threatening the rich establishment during the campaign. It is also illuminating to see which of the camp candidates did not get any votes. As observed in our discussion of marriage patterns, there is a distinct pattern of non-marriages between refugees and non-refugees. Many Bedouins are members of large tribes in Gaza, and they own land ; Bedouin lineages also claim to own the land on which Bureij Camp sits. Rumours circulated among the refugees during the election campaign of a secret alliance between lineages of Bedouin origin inside the camp and some large Bedouin tribes in the constituency. This made it even more urgent for many camp residents not to ignore the fact that votes were given to non-refugees. This may explain why two camp residents of Bedouin origin received as strong support outside Bureij as inside it where the least successful candidate received 5 per cent of the votes. Jalal al Masdar, the non-refugee Bedouin candidate who took one of the five seats in the Deir al Balah constituency, received only 3 per cent of the votes in Bureij. In the constituency south of Deir al Balah, the Khan Yunis constituency, a similarly distinct refugee orientation could be observed. Two of the Fatah candidates in Khan Yunis from the biggest non-refugee lineages in Khan Yunis – one of them a PA minister did not succeed in the election. Both camp representatives on the Fatah list were elected, one, Jawad al Tibi, who was active during the Intifada and a former prisoner, got close to ten times more votes inside the camp than the former Minister of Housing²⁵.

Why then did Freih Abu Middein, also of non-refugee origin, get the fifth highest number of votes in Bureij Camp? Abu Middein conducted a convincing campaign with speeches and answered questions which were appreciated by the camp residents. In addition, during his term as Minister of Justice Abu Middein became popular among the refugees for acting consistently in his claims for the release of Palestinian prisoners, compensation from Israel for Intifada victims (comparing it to German compensation to Israel), etc. Thus, he became trustworthy according to the refugee/Intifada criteria – his identity as a non-refugee did not become an issue.

²⁵ Polling station 43 inside the Khan Yunis camp, 541 votes for Jawwad al Tibi, 61 for Zakkaria al Agha.

Lineage versus refugee political orientation

The third deduction we have made above based on the election results was that the refugees did not organise and elect representatives according to kinship orientation.

There were three typical lineage candidates in the camp: two Bedouin and one with refugee lineage, and they were the ones who received the lowest number of votes. Does this mean that kinship is not fundamental to refugee political organisation?

The tribal element in Palestinian political culture and orientation did not manifest itself in Bureij Camp, we believe, first and foremost because the refugee identity of the camp residents manifested itself more strongly than lineage identity due to the national context of the election. The most preferred camp representatives were found among those who had proven records as activists and fighters inside the camp, independent of their lineage status.

Nevertheless, the fact that the biggest refugee lineages did not have their own candidates in the camps might have had some influence on the election outcome after all. It is striking how few votes Fatah got in Bureij. In the Deir al Balah constituency, three of Fatah's five candidates were elected, and the two who were not elected came out in sixth and seventh place. In Bureij the Fatah candidate from the camp won an impressive victory, while F. Middein (the Fatah candidate who got most votes in constituency), nearly lost, receiving the fifth seat. The other Fatah candidates lost, one receiving the least support, of all around 4 per cent of the votes in Bureij. The disappointing results for Fatah in Bureij were possibly a reaction by the biggest lineages in the camp to the nomination process within Fatah. Three Fatah members from the largest refugee lineages in the camp lost in the internal Fatah nomination²⁶. We were told by members of the Isa lineage that inside their lineage, members, including themselves, declined to vote for Fatah candidates, as they were disappointed not to have the candidate from their lineage approved as a Fatah candidate. Khaled Wushah, another known Fatah leader in the camp who comes from a large lineage and decided to run as an independent after he failed to secure nomination, did not succeed in the elections²⁷.

Some of the large local lineages in the constituency, who live outside the camps, arranged elections on the basis of lineage. These elections were organised as gatherings where lineage members who wanted to run as candidates presented themselves, and then a written, secret election was held. The one who received the most

²⁶ One from the largest refugee lineage in the camp, Isa, (107 households), one from the third biggest refugee lineage in the camp, Wushah, (93 households), and one from the twelfth biggest lineage, Mansur, (41 households).

²⁷ Although his lineage had wanted him as an official Fatah candidate, they did not consider an independent candidacy after having lost the internal Fatah nomination as equally attractive.

votes in the elections ran as a candidate. The refugee lineages in Bureij are relatively small and as such unable to exercise a significant impact on the outcome of national elections. Nevertheless, alliances of lineages originating from the same village could add up to quite a few votes. The candidate Jawdah Jude from Bureij participated in such a meeting where his lineage gathered with other refugee lineages originally from Ashdod. Jawdat Judeh lost in this internal election. He nevertheless decided to run as a candidate. In the camp it was commented that it is not good to run after having lost an election, and Judeh like K. Wushah did not succeed. These cases may be able to demonstrate that one additional reason for the absence of distinct kinship orientation in Bureij during election time might be practical, namely it was due to the small size of the lineage, rather than to a qualitatively different political culture. Lineage leaders are also aware of the fact that elections to a local council are planned to be held during 1996. Having lost in one election would be unfavourable for the outcome in the local election, where a merger of big lineages in the camp, such as Isa and Fatah, is likely to become apparent.

We may conclude that during the national elections the common interests of camp refugees overshadowed internal cleavages, and it became crucial for camp refugees to elect suitable camp representatives. This does not necessarily mean that lineage does not have an impact on refugee political orientation. Rather, the lineage element might have been suspended – until local elections are held – as lineage members in Bureij were conscious of the fact that the size of their lineages simply was too small to influence the result of the elections.

The impact of the elections on the camp

The second dimension of the election that is important for political organisation is the extent to which the election had an influence on the political orientation of the refugees. Political action in Bureij could be viewed as waves of resistance and mobilization. In the post-Intifada period tensions grew in the camps as the sense of being neglected spread and expectations of visible and rapid economic and political improvements remained unfulfilled. Complaints of political exclusion by the Palestinian Authority were made by camp refugees, and allegations of a political alliance between PLO returnees and the economic elite in Gaza added to the frustration in the camps. The elections became a way to canalise and convert this frustration into political actions. Several candidates in Gaza were asked to leave camps as they tried to arrange political meetings; the camp inhabitants simply did not want to see them visit their areas while prior to that these candidates had neglected the camp residents at a time when help was needed.

In Bureij lineages as well as neighbours and friends arranged local meetings inside the camp. Thus the main sites of meetings were not the rallies in public places, although a couple of these took place as well. Most frequently, the candidates had

agents or contacts who worked to get them invitations to these neighbourhood meetings and thus to visit the electorate “at home”. One such site for meetings was Block 3 in Bureij where a group of friends used the visitors’ room of one lineage member, the *diwan*, to invite candidates in the constituency to come and have a dialogue with them. The room was completely covered with carpets on the floor on which from 30 to 40 locals sat smoking, drinking tea and coffee, while listening to and asking the invited candidate questions. The site was popular and no candidate turned down an offer to come. One candidate offered to bring a sheep and slaughter it, if he got invited to the *diwan* but the people in the *diwan* still refused to invite him as they found other candidates more interesting. Candidates who visited the *diwan* stated that they attended two to six such “home-meetings” a day. The *diwan* had 15 of the 50 candidates in the constituency come to visit them. Each candidate who visited the *diwan* was asked frank questions on a wide range of issues, from their attitudes to final status questions (where the candidates did not disagree on the goals, although some candidates stated that the whole issue should be postponed if the return/compensation of the refugees was not achieved), to the personal finance of the candidates. One of the Beduin candidates in Bureij was asked several times during his campaign why he always had favoured Beduins when new employees were needed in UNRWA where he worked²⁸. The voters who gathered in the *diwan* in Bureij had agreed that the day before the election they should decide on which candidates to vote for, and then convince their wives and other lineage members to vote for the same candidates. However, as the day approached, they could only agree on which candidates not to vote for. They then discussed whether they should hold an internal election, binding the (informal) members of the *diwan* to vote for the candidates who won the most votes during the internal election. Eventually, the argument that won the day stipulated that it would not be democratic to have such an internal binding vote.

The elections in Bureij became an opportunity for the camp residents to externalise some of the political energy and frustrations accumulated in the post-Intifada period, as the PA leaders and candidates were dependent on the votes of the camp refugee population to get elected. Thus elections increased political self-confidence in the camps. As during the Intifada, camp residents felt that the elections brought power to the camps.

One political organisation currently dominates the politics of Bureij as well as that of Gaza, namely Fatah. To gain support within the camp as well as a position within Fatah, combinations of forms of political capital are necessary. One such

²⁸This even led to a prohibition for the voters at one public meeting held in Bureij being prohibited from asking questions that not all the candidates could answer. At the meeting the voters wrote their questions down, the papers were then put in a box and the candidates in turn then answered one randomly drawn question each...

form is “lineage capital”, i.e., to belong to one of the bigger lineages ensures an internal power base and guaranteed support of the lineage members in the camp. In nomination processes and the struggle for positions within Fatah, this support is decisive for attaining positions locally. At the same time, it is crucial to have “Intifada capital”, and to have demonstrated activity in the struggle against the Israeli occupiers inside the camp during the Intifada or while working with the PLO in exile. These forms add up to what we have labelled “camp capital” whose impact was felt during election time. The success of camp candidates during the election corresponded with the degree to which they signified radicalism and refugeehood.

Conclusion

Two processes have been central to the evolution of the political system of the camp: development of political institutions representing camp residents, and reconstruction of kinship ties and institutions that were uprooted as a result of the flight in 1948. The kinship institutions are now becoming constituents in the political system of the camp. Local *diwans* were the central arenas for the election campaigns. *Mukhtars*, and other leaders of descent groups have obtained leading positions in the various political factions, and *sulha* committees remain the central mechanism for settling conflicts in the camp. Hence kinship institutions are integrated into the evolving political system of the camp.

Both these processes, development of political institutions as well as restructuring of kinship institutions, contribute to strengthening the cohesiveness of the camp community and the camp residents’ sense of belonging to the camp. One effect of the hardships of the Intifada was that the camp defined the boundaries within which the collective political experiences of camp residents were created. The national elections also strengthened local political identities, a process that might continue when the municipal elections are held in Gaza during 1996. National political occasions have both centrifugal and centripetal implications. They integrate separate localities into one political system and contribute to the structuring of a collective national identity, while at the same time local identities and political systems are strengthened. Hence, during the Intifada and the election Bureij residents became politically integrated in Gaza, and at the same time their local identities were reproduced. As local identity is primarily identity based on *camp* residency, integration of *camps* in the development of national institutions does not necessarily weaken refugee and camp identity. We have seen in this chapter that a distinctive feature of political organisation in Bureij is that internal cleavages and contradictions are at play, as external compelling issues unite the residents. The structuring of camps as political units through the development of camp political institutions by means of local elections and representation of camp refugees at the level

of national elections could also imply an increased political focus on camp and refugee issues.

Economic organisation

To understand the economic organisation of Bureij it is necessary to have a grasp of the integration of the camp in wider economic systems. The organisation of economic activities in the camp is linked to how Gaza has served as a reservoir of cheap labour for external labour markets. The refugees arriving in Gaza in 1948 came without any capital from their towns and villages and became dependent on UNRWA's relief services. The wave of refugees that settled in Gaza in 1948 contributed to making Gaza one of the most densely populated areas in the world (McDowell 1989:21). Added to this feature of human capital in the form of labour was the fact that the majority of the original as well as the recently arrived peasantry did not have access to sufficient available land to continue to live as peasants. Thus Gaza became urbanised without being industrialised, and the only capital remaining for the refugees was as a labour force. But as Gaza had no available land nor any industrial sector, the only way to use this labour resource was through export. In this way labour power became the main export commodity of Gaza leaving refugee camps like Bureij with almost no commercial activity, as there was no commercial base in the camp. To understand the economic activities going on in the camp, it is therefore necessary to investigate the relationship between the two levels of economic organisation: at a micro level it is important to show how households are organised and how they serve as subsistence production and distribution units, and at a macro level how economic activity in the camp is connected to external labour markets.

Migration and the camp's economy

The economy of the refugee camps can be characterised as based on domestic family production asymmetrically integrated into the international market economy through income generation from labour migration. As another chapter in this report is concerned with refugee migrant workers in the Gulf and their relationship to family in the West Bank and Gaza, it is sufficient here merely to indicate the importance of this form of work migration for the camp's economy. A study conducted in one of the two neighbouring camps of Bureij, Deir al Balah, found that

one third of the sample were outside Gaza working at the time of the study²⁹ (Elnajjar 1993:39). In the summer months, the camp population increased by 30 percent according to the study when the emigrants visited their families (ibid:40). Although these numbers are not based on data from a representative sample, they might indicate the importance of labour migration for camp economy. Various implications of working migration will be discussed at the end of this section. Below we discuss the implications of work in Israel for the economy of Bureij.

Working in Israel

After the Gulf war the number of permits issued for work in Israel was dramatically reduced. The number of workers with permits was halved between 1992 and 1993 (Øvensen 1994). In 1993, 23 percent of the Gaza labour force worked in Israel (Øvensen 1994:172), and in January 1994 the figure was a mere 11 percent (Roy 1994:92). During spring 1995 only around 15,000 Gaza Palestinians had permits to work in Israel (Middle East International 1995, No 493), a number that decreased in the summer to 5000, these were mostly married men more than 30 years old (Middle East, June 1995). This compared to around 100,000, or 70 percent of Gaza's labour force before the Intifada (Roy 1994:92). In Bureij, a study estimated that 85 percent of the camp's labour force worked in Israel in 1990³⁰. (Al Haq 1991:148). In June 1995 only 495 people from Bureij had permits to work in Israel³¹, one of whom is Ibrahim. He lives in Bureij and has been working in Israel for the last 20 years as a construction worker:

“I wake up at 2:30 in the morning. At 3:30 a.m. I take a service taxi to the Eretz checkpoint where we arrive at about 4:30 a.m. Then we walk over to the Israeli side where an Egged bus waits to depart at 5:00 a.m. Before the Gulf war we could go directly to our workplaces in Israel from the camp. At 6:30 a.m. we arrive at our workplace in Israel where we work until 4:00 p.m. We eat between 10:30 and 11.00 a.m. In addition we have two five-minute coffee breaks. The bus returns at 4:30 and is at Eretz checkpoint at about 5:45 p.m., having gathered workers from various workplaces. I arrive at the camp between 6:30 and 7:00 p.m. Twenty years ago, it was easy to get work in Israel. Now it is very hard. Everybody has to have magnetic cards. These

²⁹ The study was conducted in the Deir al Balah refugee camp in Gaza. 41 households in one block of the camp were selected. Registered refugees were then compared to those present and those being abroad. It is thus not a representative sample.

³⁰ Al Haq estimates the labour force in Bureij to be 3000 persons in 1990 and that 85 percent of these work in Israel (Al Haq 1990:148).

³¹ Data from the Palestinian Ministry of Labour (which obtains the permits from Israel).

you have to renew every second month. So every second month I have to wait 4-5 days to get the permit.”

Ibrahim earns 2500 NIS³² (833 USD) for every month he works. During spring 1995 a two month border closure was imposed following a bomb attack in Israel in January. During this period he did not try to get work in Gaza where he says he would get around 40 NIS a day (13 USD), but waited for the border to open. Ibrahim estimates his regular monthly expenses to be roughly:

Transportation to the workplace: 18 NIS x 25 days = 450 NIS; electricity: 150 NIS (not paid during Intifada); gas: 2 barrels x 35 NIS = 70 NIS; tehina etc.: 200 NIS; rice: 70 NIS; sugar: 70 NIS; meat 250 NIS.

Ibrahim also provides his parents with money every month and says that he saves around 100 USD of his salary monthly. His main expenditure will be devoted to finishing the building of a second floor above his shelter. Ibrahim believes that working conditions in Israel are not so bad. It is hard to work as a construction worker but it is even harder in Gaza; the bosses are tougher here, he says. The main problem is the wait at the border. It was so much better before when he could take the bus directly to Israel. But he doesn't blame the Islamic groups for the bomb attacks which have caused the closures and the problems at the checkpoint: "If I lost my job in Israel I would carry out a bomb attack my self", he says as a joke. He says he is tired in the evenings, but he does not complain, having the benefit of higher salaries than people who do not work in Israel.

Ibrahim has 10 children, all still at school, with the oldest at the University in Gaza. His household forms is part of a compound of households, comprising by the household of his parents, as well as the households of his three married brothers. All are connected by a piece of central ground. In the evenings the brothers normally sit outside with their father and visitors, while the women stay together inside or remain out of sight. Although each is financially separate – the children's education and the provision of houses for the boys when they marry are mainly the responsibility of the boys' parents – the households at the same time also operate as one production unit. Food is normally, and always on Fridays, produced in the kitchen outside Ibrahim's parent's shelter by the wives of the sons. All members of the households participate in the building of a second floor above Ibrahim's shelter for the oldest boys when they marry, although Ibrahim provides the raw materials.

Ibrahim works on the margin of the Israeli labour market. During 20 years of working 15 long hours a day, he has mainly performed the hard construction work which the Israelis shun. Although Ibrahim becomes worn out as a result of working in Israel, he is considered relatively wealthy in Bureij. His work in Israel

³² NIS = New Israeli Shekel, 1 NIS = 0.3 USD

enables his household and his family to expand. To build the additional new floor a to his house he can rely on the labour of the people living in his household compound. Eventually he may even invest income from his work in Israel in an enterprise in the camp and thus expand the use of the labour force at his disposal in the household compound. Economic activities going on in the camp commonly follow such a pattern of migrant workers converting savings, and involving family members in small scale enterprises.

Economic activities within the camp

Commercial activity in Bureij consists mainly of small craftware productions and various kinds of shops or related enterprises. One such activity is the billiard rooms that have been recently opened in the camp. They are common places for youth and young men to meet, and play cards and drink tea when they are not playing billiards.

Samir and Hussein are two brothers running a billiards room with one table. They rented a room from their uncle who has moved to a new floor which he added to the house above the billiards room. The rent the brothers pay their uncle is 20 NIS³³ a day. The table cost them 1500 NIS. It costs three NIS to play a game³⁴. They earn about 80 NIS a day. Some billiards rooms combine billiards with selling tea and coffee. Samir and Hussein are related to the owner of the tea shop in the next room, thus another family member benefits from their enterprise. Compared to the market rate for wages for day workers in Gaza, around 30 NIS a day, Samir and Husam are doing rather well.

The success of enterprises like the billiards halls to some extent depend on the social network of the entrepreneur. The larger the network, the bigger the opportunity of succeeding. A place like a billiards room becomes a place for gatherings of groups of friends and relatives as long as they know and respect the owner. Another enterprise, a shoe shop in the camp, also has become a success story as a result of the family members pooling resources.

Muhammed al Suhi runs the oldest of the four shoe shops in Bureij. His father opened the shop in 1970 with money invested from two of Muhammed's father's brothers who worked in Saudi Arabia. They have been

³³ NIS = New Israeli Shekel, 1 NIS = 0.3 USD

³⁴ In refugee camps in Jordan it has become forbidden to have billiard rooms because there was a significant increase in theft in the camp by youth who did not have any money but wanted to play.

buying most of the shoes from Hebron, but two years ago the family established a small factory in Bureij, investing 27,000 USD at an interest rate of 11 per cent, which means they have to pay back 32,500 USD after four years. They do not pay rent for the shop as it used to be part of the family's shelter. They rent the location for the factory for 420 JD³⁵ a year from another refugee in Bureij. Muhammed has three brothers of whom one is still in school and one is self-employed making window frames. The father and the third brother work in the factory. They employ local people on a casual basis, some of whom are friends of Muhammed, and pay them 10 NIS a day. The shoe shop is open from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. The shop is doing rather well. Muhammed normally sells between 10 and 20 pairs of shoes a day, with a gross income of up to 800 NIS a day being distributed between his own and his family's households.

The cost of operating shops in the camps is low, and as such is attractive to entrepreneurs, but people hardly become rich from commercial activity inside the camps. The problem of course is the low purchasing power of the camp residents, which does not permit shop owners to sell their articles at a high profit. Nevertheless, the case demonstrates the point of a successful economic organisation where family relations form the basis of entrepreneurship, in which money accumulated from labour migration is converted into household production and in turn marketed in the camp.

The Fafu survey of Palestinian household economy found that the size of households seems to determine the prevalence of productive activity – the larger the size of the household, the more likely it is that some form of subsistence production exists (Øvensen 1994:87). In other words, if households are large the chance of household members becoming involved in some form of household production increases; if, on the other hand, households are small the chance of household members becoming UNRWA hardship clients cases increases (Øvensen 1994:111, 128). The small size of households means less chance of having economic activities carried out in the home. This is related to the fact that the bigger the household, the higher the chance that someone inside the household is involved in wage earning work (Øvensen 1994:128). As long as someone has paid work, the income can be reinvested or converted into some form of household production or used in the informal work sector. Small households on the other hand mean less chance of someone having regular paid work, and thus there are no resources to convert into production in the home sector.

³⁵ JD = Jordanian Dinar, 1 JD = 1.5 USD

It is the sharing of income and resources between family members inside households comprised of extended families which enabled the realization of both the shoe and the billiards room enterprises described above. Households are first of all consumer and distribution units, not production units. Production inside the locality of the household is as a rule subsistence production. It is not the production itself, but the fact that household productions depends on some household member being involved in waged labour that is characteristic of the micro organisation of economic activities in the camp. Rather it is how resources are distributed and allocated between family members inside various categories of households.

The cases mentioned above were those of successful enterprises in the camp. Not all households, however, possess the means to engage in productive activity. Most households do not have any member working in Israel and hence lack the ability to accumulate any means for investment inside the camp. A consequence of the sharing of resources in the households is that the expenses are also shared. When children grow up several household members struggle to cover all the needs of their members. A critical stage in a household is when sons want to get married.

Critical expenses of camp residents

When a male household member wants to marry, many households in Bureij face a problem as money is needed to build a new room in the shelter or a new home for the couple. The case of Abu Kamal, below, illustrates the sort of hardships facing a household at this critical stage, and especially the hardships faced by households without any older members able to obtain work outside Gaza.

Abu Kamal's household comprises eight grown-ups (wife, mother, step-mother, three younger brothers, and one sister,) and four children (own children and children of a brother whose wife is dead). Abu Kamal's father is dead, and he does not have any relative helping his household as there have been conflicts inside his family. During the week, the expenses of the household members for food are about 300 NIS, (sugar, oil, tea, flour: 110; vegetables, fruit: 100; meat twice a week: 100.) Income varies considerably depending on whether the work obtained is inside or outside Gaza.

Abu Kamal finished secondary school in 1985 after which he started to work in the construction sector in Israel, receiving about 800 NIS weekly. In 1987, before the Intifada, he was arrested on suspicion of being affiliated to the PFLP. He was soon released and went back to work in Israel until 1989 when he again was arrested for Intifada related activities. He then spent two years in prison. After he was released from prison he spent six months in Gaza without work before he again was arrested in 1992. He stayed in prison until

the end of 1993. In the spring of 1994 he illegally worked in Israel for about five months at a job he got through a friend from the PFLP in Bureij who had a permit to work in Israel. He then married. From November 1994 until the middle of January 1995, Abu Kamal again worked illegally in Israel, earning 6000 NIS (1000 a week). He got this job through the same friend. But after a bomb attack in Israel in January 1995, Abu Kamal's employer drove him back to Eretz, afraid of possible police investigations of his Palestinian employees. Since his return to Gaza, Abu Kamal has been involved in casual work. In March he worked for 10 days with his brother in the neighbouring Nuseirat camp, earning 1500 NIS. In April, he earned 200 NIS from the same project. In May, he worked five days with his brothers in Gaza, also in construction, earning altogether 400 NIS. During the first two weeks of June 1995, Abu Kamal worked four days, building a house in the camp with a neighbour who asked him to help, earning 120 NIS. As a daily paid construction worker he earns 30 NIS in Gaza. Abu Kamal's youngest brother, who worked with him in Nuseirat, is 19 years old and has just finished secondary school. He is prepared to complete his education, but the household cannot afford it. The second youngest brother, 22 years old, has taken a vocational course in UNRWA and is working making windows. Currently he earns 50 NIS a week as a trainee. He has also been working during the spring, harvesting oranges in Gaza and earning 20 NIS a day.

According to Abu Kamal's evaluations, the per capita living costs in his household are only 100 NIS a month. The household simply does not pay the bills for water and electricity, which they continue to receive. From one and a half months working in Israel Abu Kamal is able to provide his 12 household members with their subsistence needs for half a year according to his own calculations. But as the Israeli border is closed to the labour force members of Abu Kamal's household, even these low subsistence needs of the household could become hard to meet on a meagre income from Gaza. The dramatic effect of border closures is related to the low number of Palestinians involved in wage earning. This results in each income generator having many dependants. Although these people may be involved in household production, they still depend on the income generated from paid labour to run the household. If the only breadwinner of a household fails, no fuel comes in to the household machinery so to speak, and the whole system breaks down. Abu Kamal and his brothers thus become forced to involve themselves in casual work which hampers the youngest brothers from continuing their education. As long as a member of the household worked outside Gaza, this would have been sufficient to accumulate money and make investments in education. Now there is no room for this. As Abu Kamal's brothers want to get married, they are faced with a crowded

shelter, and since they cannot afford to build any new rooms for them, there is considerable frustration in the household.

At one stage, refugee camp households normally comprise at least three generations. The critical stage in these households is not necessarily when the children are young and when the consumers exceed the producers, but when the youngest sons of the household are about to get married. Marriages are the major “surplus” expense (expense not for subsistence), as long as there are no more opportunities of relocating household members inside the shelter. Thus savings are accumulated so that heads of household can enable offspring to establish new households. The establishment of new households does not mean that the flow of resources between near relatives stops. New households are social security nets for those who have invested in them; they are still governed by the moral credit system of kinship solidarity. But to be able to establish them one needs something to invest. The household of Abu Kamal is caught in the hopeless situation of having no opportunity to accumulate means as the household does not have any member eligible to participate in the Israeli labour market. They then also do not have any way to accumulate the means necessary to invest in education so enabling a member to migrate to the Gulf or other labour markets. By relying on casual work in Gaza they can only generate enough income to cover their basic recurring costs. The pressures upon Abu Kamal’s household compels other household members to engage their labour capacity in any possible kind to meet production of subsistence needs and to lessen consumption expenditure. But households cannot transform resources that do not exist. There has to be some kind of resource input.

The situation of Abu Kamal’s household also reveals another aspect of the most acute problems faced by the refugees in Bureij: as access to labour markets becomes restricted, the overcrowding in Gaza increases. Hence the prospects for camp refugees to establish new houses narrows. This situation is worsened by the fact that many returnees, former Gulf-migrants as well as returning PLO-staff, spend considerable proportions of their savings on new housing. This has led to a skyrocketing of land prices. In Gaza city prices in the commercial areas are now 3,000 JD per square meter, about the same as in the centre of a metropolis in Europe or USA. In Bureij the prices of houses and land have increased tenfold during the last ten years. Now the price per square meter varies from 40 to 110 JD depending on the block or area of the camp³⁶. To buy a 100 square meter apartment inside the camp now costs about 20 000 JD. The salary level for casual work in Gaza – if available – is less than 15 USD a day (Roy 1994:93), and makes such an investment

³⁶ Lower prices are in ‘Block 1’, notorious for overcrowding, bad housing standards and social problems. Higher prices are in ‘Block 3’ where the Israelis destroyed the neighborhood and reconstructed it with new roads in order to ease access to the camp when chasing guerrillas, according to camp residents.

impossible for the poorer segments of the Gaza population. The camp residents are then caught in a vicious circle, not being able to emigrate in search of work and thus unable to accumulate the means necessary to do something to solve the internal population pressure.

If the economic situation of a household becomes critical, one last alternative remains for the camp refugees: the Special Hardship Program of UNRWA.

Special hardship cases

UNRWA's Special Hardship Program assists as many as 9 per cent of the refugees in Gaza (UNRWA 1995b). In Bureij 4634 persons in 943 families receive assistance³⁷. According to the UNRWA office in Bureij many refugees in the camp that are not enrolled in the program have as bad living standards as those covered by the Special Hardship Program. However as the budget allocated to Bureij already has been spent, no more families can be helped before next year's budget. The assistance given comprises bimonthly food rations and a higher level of hospitalisation subsidy for all participants. The food assistance received bimonthly consists of 10 kg flour, 1 kilo rice, 1 kilo sugar, 0.75 kg vegetable oil, 0.75 kg sardines, 0.5 kg pulses, 0.44 kg tomato paste and 0.5 kg whole milk per person. In addition, social workers estimate whether cases eligible to receive: cash to meet emergency needs, shelter rehabilitation, preferential access to UNRWA training centres, or poverty alleviation (self-support) projects. Mahmud's household is one of those that is assisted.

Mahmud is 42 years old, married and has 8 children. His father has not worked and has not been able to provide good housing for his children. Mahmud got married in 1979 to a relative then living in Jordan. All her closest family members are still in Jordan but want to come to Gaza. Soon after marrying, Mahmud served 3 years in prison for having been affiliated to Fatah. Before his marriage he used to work as a tailor. The family still has the sewing machine but cannot make a living from sewing. The family's shelter comprises two rooms covered with tin and one without a roof which is a combined kitchen and toilet³⁸. Mahmud became ill during his prison term and since then has suffered from liver illness and pain in his neck and back which prevents him from working. He used to receive support from the PLO until the organisation was driven out of Lebanon. His family receives food

³⁷ Information from local UNRWA office.

³⁸ UNRWA undertook a house-to-house survey in 1993 in Gaza which revealed that 60 % of special hardship families were living in sub-standard housing. 5000 houses needed complete reconstruction or major repairs; 2800 required re-roofing. (UNRWA 1994b)

from UNRWA every second month. They do not receive money support and do not eat meat at the *id* feast of Ramadan.

In Bureij support from UNRWA Special Hardship Program goes to households that do not have labour force participants. The largest groups of hardship cases are widows, the aged, students, medical cases, are people imprisoned or temporarily disabled. As the figure below shows, more than 2000 of the 4634 special hardship cases in Bureij are medical ones permanent patients, physically or mentally disabled like Mahmud³⁹.

As the labour market in Gaza has had very little work supplied to it, and salaries in the private sector have been very low, it has almost been more beneficial to become a recipient of UNRWA aid than to fight for work as labourers in Gaza. This does not mean that recipients of UNRWA aid can find work, since the demand for paid work outstrips supply in Gaza. The program does, however, facilitate the function of the camp as a reservoir of labour since it contributes to the reproduction of the labour force in the same way that household subsistence production does. It thus functions to subsidise the economy of the Gulf states and Israel, as these countries do not cover the recurring costs of their migrant workers⁴⁰.

Gaza as a labour pool

The lack of work in Bureij, as in most of Gaza, forces the refugees to use their only security nets: UNRWA and their family networks. These family networks enable casual workers to be excluded from labour markets at certain periods, but cannot maintain all household members if no income is generated over a longer time. UNRWA has been the only legal security net.

Such economic spheres of family subsistence production and UNRWA relief services which function as security nets, make it convenient for employers outside Gaza to exploit the labour force of refugee migration workers as they can rely on the social security systems of the sender region. The host societies for the migrant workers thus do not have to take the responsibility for old-age pensions, sick-leave and unemployment compensation, as this is covered by UNRWA and the fragile Gaza economy. Thus, the labour of the migrant wage-earner may even be looked upon as being subsidised by the labour of his kin-group in the home sector in Gaza. There is no mutual dependency relationship between Gaza camps and external

³⁹ The data on the special hardship cases in Bureij has been obtained from UNRWA.

⁴⁰ The political implication of this is not that the program should be suspended – as the clients of the program no doubt are in need of aid. It rather makes relevant who is obliged to support the program financially, and if not the receivers of labour power from the labour reservoirs have a special responsibility in this matter.

labour markets; the relationship is asymmetrical as Gaza workers can be replaced by labour from other areas while the refugees do not have any internal labour market from which they can compensate loss of labour outside Gaza. Gaza is thus perpetuated as a reservoir of cheap labour.

Conclusion

For Gaza refugees there is no consolation in the lack of discrimination between refugees and non-refugees' access to external labour markets as both categories of Gazans are dependent on this access. The sad reality for Gaza refugees as well as for the non-refugees is that access not only to the Israeli but also the Gulf labour market has become restricted following the Gulf war, and the flow of migrants seems to be of refugees from the Gulf as well as the members and leaders from the PLO Diaspora returning to Gaza⁴¹.

The implications of the restrictions on access to external labour markets and of the subsequent demographic expansion are that the poorest segment of the Palestinian Diaspora gets poorer, and the most densely populated area in the world becomes even more dense.

A social consequence of population increase is pressure on the infrastructure of the camps, which exacerbates decay in the existing infrastructure: open sewage, water shortage and irregular electricity supply, etc. The poor infrastructure of the camps makes them preserve their symbolic significance. As the camps remain slum areas, they remain visible symbols of "problem areas", and of temporariness.

The economic problems in the camps thus serve to visualise the refugee problem, and to strengthen the refugee identity of the camp residents as well as to radicalise them.

Conclusion

Production of locality transforms space into places through social processes. (Appadurai 1993). We have focused on some of these processes, for example marriages, social contacts, development of and compliance with cultural codes of conduct, the operation of family institutions, forms of political organisation, family conflicts, factional conflicts, elections, income generation, work migration, and household dynamics. What characterises the product of these social processes in Bureij? From our discussion we can deduce at least four distinctive features of Bureij

⁴¹ We have not found reliable statistics on this mobility.

as a place. 1. Bureij is a social system 2. Images of the places the refugees fled from are continuously reproduced in Bureij. 3. Bureij is a political system. 4. The economy of Bureij is governed by processes of underdevelopment.

What does each of these distinctive features signify?

1. *Bureij is a social system.* Bureij is a place, a local community, a social system with inhabitants who are involved in each others' lives through living inside the territorial borders of the camp. Inside the camp, ordered social relations have been maintained and cemented over generations; lives are born and ended, marriages are contracted, houses are built, social contracts are made and honoured, careers launched and broken, money is made and spent (Appadurai 1993). The camp is an environment for local projects and practices against which activities going on outside the camp are compared and related to by the residents. Hence, residents in the camp have communal, local identities. They are "from Bureij", with identities as residents of Bureij.
2. *Images of the places the refugees fled from are continuously reproduced in Bureij.* The social production of Bureij involves the symbolic reconstruction of home places. Marriages are central for the social orientation of the camp residents. two-thirds of camp residents marry someone descended from the same village in the West Bank or Gaza as themselves. These marriages ensure that symbolic representations of home places through production of idioms, images, names, and the history of home places are preserved. During the elections in January 1996 ways to mobilise and organise according to place of origin were attempted. Hence there was representation not only according to where one live, but also according to where one originate from. Social cohesion and marriages within patrilineal descent groups further contributes to shaping the memory of home, as the kin groups of the home villages are preserved in this way.
3. *Bureij is a political system.* The political system of Bureij contains kinship institutions as well as political factions. Political history has shaped the camp as a political entity. During the Intifada political organisation was basically accomplished through factions and committees inside the camp. Measures such as curfews and other forms of collective punishment by the Israelis further contributed to develop and strengthen internal collective political experiences and identities. Thus the camp is the environment where factions or descent groups antagonise each other, and it is initially also from the camp that mechanisms are developed to cope with internal conflicts. However, faction and kinship identities are suspended, and internal cleavages subside

when camp residents define matters in terms of collective interests relevant for them as “citizens” of Bureij. During elections collective camp matters made the residents vote for camp “strugglers” to represent them. Hence Bureij constitutes a political system as well as a political entity.

4. *The economy of Bureij is governed by processes of underdevelopment.* How Bureij is linked and integrated into macro social and political systems is to some extent influenced by actions conducted by the residents themselves, as seen during the Intifada. The form of economic integration into wider systems, though, remains asymmetrical. The economy of the camp depends on income generation outside Gaza, and on emergency relief from UNRWA. Since Gaza has functioned as a reservoir of cheap labour for external labour markets, savings have been spent on the reproduction of families (and hence the labour force), and only to a minor extent on investments in means of production in Gaza. In periods when Gazans are excluded from labour markets outside Gaza, no economic sector in Gaza exists which can substitute for the lost income. Currently the access to external labour markets is limited, and Gaza has to absorb rather than export labour migrants. In this situation camps become congested places of unemployed workers who lack resources to enable them to meet their subsistence needs.

We regard these characteristics as important for understanding how the camp has been socially produced. As we have noted earlier in this chapter, the social and economic construction of camps are ostensibly embedded in a paradox. The deeper people plant their roots inside the camp, and the stronger they develop internal cohesion, the more the temporariness of the place is signified. This is because Bureij as a place preserves its character as a camp, as a temporary refuge for the refugees, rather than as a village or town with reference to the social orientation of its inhabitants. The cementation of intra-camp social relations means that relations with non-refugees, as well as non-camp residents, are restricted. At the same time the low standard of living conditions for camp people preserves the image of camps as temporary habitats. As more and more people become congested inside the camps where no economic base exists, the infrastructure gets close to breaking down, which in turn symbolises a need for a change in the temporary situation. Simultaneously, memories of home become ethnic signifiers – symbols of what the camp residents consider to be special traits that characterise them as a group. Living together in the same place while belonging to somewhere else, makes them a special community. Hence, as camp residents preserve their camp identities – they preserve their refugee identities.

Policy implications

What might be called the “refugee dilemma” implies that integration becomes an argument for resettlement. The dilemma has a political and an economic dimension. The political dimension was expressed during elections in Jordan by the former Jordanian prime minister Ahmad “Ubaydat, who was critical of refugees participating in elections. This, he argued, implied an acceptance of the status quo and of the permanent nature of the camps (Brand 1987:174-5). In Gaza, the economic dimension of “the refugee dilemma” has been between the political status of refugees versus improving the standards of the refugee residence areas – the dilemma being that improved refugee living conditions and residence standards could be used as a practical argument for resettlement of refugees, and hence weaken political demands of the refugees. Experts working for the Palestinian Planning Ministry evaluating the conditions in the camps have informed us that from a strictly planning perspective, relocation from the camps into less densely populated areas, and the development of new residential areas would be preferable to improving the infrastructure of the camps as the pressure of so many people in so small space – 50 000 people per square km in Bureij, makes it impossible to develop common facilities without destroying shelters. UNRWA, which is responsible for camp infrastructure, has been reluctant to plan beyond its three-yearly mandate for fear of the implication that the UN was no longer seeking a solution to the refugee problem (McDowall 1989:23). But as the congestion and crowding of refugees in the camps increase, the need for political solutions becomes more acute.

To do nothing about the living conditions in the camps create social bombs. At the same time, to start projects without the participation of the camp residents is counter-productive. A prerequisite for even touching on the question of the development of the camps is to include the people who live in the camps in decision making processes. We have described Bureij as a cohesive social and political system which means that the camp residents have a great potential for collective action which should be regarded as an asset from which development projects can benefit. Camp residents have accumulated experiences in building grassroot movements with a high level of participation among camp residents, as witnessed during the Intifada as well as during the election in January 1996. The local councils due to be elected during 1996 may become relevant representative institutions, as long as they do not become controlled by the interests of specific factions or descent groups. We regard committees representing the various (UNRWA defined) blocks in Bureij, and thus representation according to subdivided geographical areas, rather than kinship/faction belonging, as the most efficient and representative method of organising the interests of camp residents. In the socially cohesive neighbourhoods people are able to agree on community leaders to represent them. If such committees

were constituted in camps to start discussions with authorities, donors and aid organisations, the potential for finding legitimate solutions to the refugee dilemma would increase. Finally, it is up to the refugees themselves to decide how to organise themselves. What is politically important is to allocate resources and start dialogues on how to improve camp life as well as to develop scenarios for the final status of the refugees – through including refugees in the decision making process. Participation has value in itself. In the same way as happened during the elections in January 1996, formalised political participation channelled political frustrations into constructive action.

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Constructing Order: Palestinian Adaptations to Refugee Life

Constructing Order explores how Palestinian refugees adapt to their situation and how they reconstruct a semblance of order in their lives. In three separate sections, the book focuses on how refugees have adapted to conditions of life in a Gaza refugee camp, labour migration to the Gulf and in returning to the West Bank.

Anthropological and qualitative in nature, the book describes how Palestinians set about constructing their economic, social and cultural adaptations to the changing circumstances in which they live.



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