

Laila Restan

## BEYOND BORDERS

Palestinian Children's Perspectives on their Everyday Life and Future

Ein el Helwe Refugee Camp, Southern Lebanon



Trondheim, Autumn 2010



**DEDICATED TO**

**AAREF, SAJIDA and ROKAIA**

**Figure 1: Cover photo shows the Ein el Helwe camp, taken by a 12 year old female informant**



## Preface

This study aims to provide an analysis of the everyday life and future perspectives of Palestinian children in Ein el Helwe refugee camp, Southern Lebanon. The main research informants in this qualitative study were children aged 9 to 14 years old. The fieldwork and data collection took place in Ein el Helwe in October and December 2009. The focus of this study is on some of the significant local institutions in these children's everyday lives, such as their home (the camp), their belief system or faith, their school and their families. I express my utmost gratitude to all the children and their respective families in Ein el Helwe who participated in this study. More specifically, I thank them for taking time off to provide me with some insight into their everyday lives. Without their help, this thesis could not have been written; I extend my best wishes to them all.

Given the limited timeframe allowed for the fieldwork and my position as an outsider in the field site, I can only present an interpretation of the child informant's experiences in Ein el Helwe camp. In spite of such limitations, I have based my analysis on a varied data collection provided by children, as well as some parents, NGO workers and secondary sources.

Responsible policy makers and other service providers concerned with Palestinian refugee children might therefore find it useful to include these research findings in their work and planning. In particular, Save the Children and similar organisations working with Palestinian children and children living in similar conditions might also find this thesis of relevancy to their work.

At present there are several political actors in the Middle East and many of the conflicts in the region are ongoing. As in most conflicts, there will be different opinions and versions of undoubtedly contested political and historical events. Extant publications on the past and present political situation of the Middle East should be consulted by any interested reader in order to assess alternative sources and versions of those events which I have outlined in the background chapter of this thesis. Human rights organisations and NGOs, both local and international also publish reports on the human rights situation in Lebanon. Throughout the writing process, I have learnt that political realities in Lebanon cannot be ignored even when the focus is on children's life. However, although no researcher can claim complete objectivity, I have attempted to avoid expressing my personal opinions of any political events in this text. Rather, I view my role as a researcher, student and interpreter of children's voices in this area. I present what has emerged in this process in this study.



## Acknowledgements

There are many people I wish to acknowledge; however, I can name only a few on this page. Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to Save the Children's research foundation for supporting me financially by covering fieldwork expenses. I would also like to thank the NGO NABAA, for assistance in the interviews with NGO workers.

I wish also to thank those who have been of invaluable assistance in the process of fieldwork in Ein el Helwe; Hassan Waarie and his sister, Hussein, Sajida, Rawan, Husneya, Nabiha and Mouna. In particular, I wish to thank Hussein and Sajida; you have both been more than wonderful in assisting me during fieldwork. Thanks also to Husneya and your family for making me feel so at home in Ein el Helwe and to Rabab, Faisal and family for showing me more of Lebanon.

I wish to thank my parents and extended family for their inspiration in this writing process, especially Rokaia, Mohammed, Nauma and Khalid. To my uncle Asbjørn, I am also grateful, for your well-founded advice on ethical issues. Thank you to Svein Staff for advice before I travelled to Lebanon. Thanks also to Mats Gilbert for recommending the SOC-theory and to Jeannette Postma, thank you for your advice which inspired me to take this degree in the first place.

Finally, I wish to extend my gratitude to all the people who have assisted this research in its various stages: Runar, Rawan, Aref, Ingar, Shadi and the famous Bjørn Tarek; I have appreciated your help very much. Thanks to Ramzey and Thawra for translating my information sheets into Arabic. David Scott Hammes, thank you very much for help with the English language and for general research report advice. Thanks to Åge Tiltnes at FAFO for kindly helping me review the background chapter. I also wish to thank all of my classmates at the Norwegian centre for Child Research for creating such an inspiring study environment during the course of this Master's degree. Thanks to Line Hellem at NOSEB for being available to lend a helping hand to all students. Thanks to Tatek Abebe for assistance with geographical theories and literature. Last, but not least, I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Vebjørng Tingstad. Your optimistic attitude, encouragement and great ability to provide constructive criticism has been invaluable in this writing process. Any mistakes which remain are my own.

Trondheim, 20 December, 2010.





## Table of contents

• Preface	iii
• Acknowledgements	v
• List of figures	xi
• List of Acronyms	xii
• Arabic glossary	xiii
Arabic glossary .....	xvi
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
From past to present .....	2
What does the future hold? .....	3
“Our” depictions of children .....	4
Meeting with children in Ein el Helwe .....	4
Previous research .....	6
Objective of the thesis .....	6
The research questions .....	7
The outline of this thesis .....	8
<b>CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Country profile of Lebanon .....	9
Palestinian refugees and their origin .....	10
The United Nations Refugee Works Agency .....	11
Arriving in Lebanon .....	12
The Palestinian revolution .....	13
Israeli invasions .....	14
The Camp wars .....	14
Post war relationships .....	15
Present situation for the Palestinian refugees .....	16
Palestinian political organization .....	16
Children situation in the camps .....	17
<b>CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES</b> .....	<b>19</b>
Palestinian refugee children- some extant approaches and depictions .....	19
Choosing a bottom- up approach .....	20
Listening to children’s voices .....	21
Real vulnerability or depictions of pity .....	23

A Sense of Coherence .....	23
Extant research.....	24
Everyday life in protracted exile.....	26
Looking for the future .....	27
Analytic concepts which emerged in the data-analysis .....	28
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>29</b>
Field site: Ein el Helwe camp.....	29
Research design .....	30
Initial Research categories: .....	31
Research informants.....	31
Research schedule:.....	32
Individual interviews.....	32
Focus-group sessions .....	34
Child oriented research .....	35
Drawings .....	36
Photography.....	36
Reflexivity.....	36
Preparing the field work.....	37
Access to the field site location .....	38
Initiation of fieldwork .....	39
Meeting with informants .....	40
Choosing the sample .....	40
Locations .....	41
Relationships in the field.....	41
Ethical considerations .....	42
Informed consent .....	42
Continuous consent.....	43
Dissemination process and anonymity.....	43
Transcription.....	44
The process of data analysis .....	44
Validity.....	45
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: LIFE IN THE PRESENT.....</b>	<b>46</b>
1. Camp.....	47
A place to call my home .....	47
A predictable everyday life .....	49

We're not used to it outside .....	50
Wrong perceptions of our place .....	55
There are no shootings outside.....	57
<b>2.Social networks.....</b>	<b>61</b>
My beautiful neighbourhood.....	61
The nuclear family.....	63
The extended family .....	64
Generations in the camp space.....	66
Local friendships .....	67
The differences in between us.....	68
<b>3.Belief–System .....</b>	<b>70</b>
A space for spirituality .....	70
Moral codes.....	73
<b>4.Children's Culture.....</b>	<b>75</b>
Missing out on play? .....	75
Play, gender and movement within the camp .....	77
Children's TV .....	78
<b>CHAPTER SIX: LOOKING BACK AND VISIONS OF THE FUTURE .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>1.Home is the place we left .....</b>	<b>80</b>
Displaced children? .....	80
Learning of another home.....	82
Media depictions of Palestine .....	85
Am I in Palestine? .....	87
<b>2.The school.....</b>	<b>89</b>
A place to see my friends.....	89
School: A form of oppression .....	91
Understanding schooling .....	93
Responding to educational challenges.....	95
Comparing schools .....	97
“School as oppression - work as fun” .....	98
<b>3.“Imagine the Future” .....</b>	<b>99</b>
Return .....	100
Education as steadfastness .....	102
Doctor or engineer.....	103

A better future- for everyone .....	104
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION &amp; RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>106</b>
A bittersweet place.....	106
An education to manage the future? .....	109
Beyond borders.....	111
Recommendations for further research .....	112
<b>References.....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>122</b>
Data material: List of interviewed NGOs .....	122
Interview Guide .....	123
Focus group: Session activities.....	124
Informational Sheets .....	126
Photo project:.....	132

**List of figures**

Figure 1: Cover photo shows the Ein el Helwe camp..... iv

Figure 2 Map of Palestinian refugee routes in 1948..... xvii

Figure 3 Map of Lebanon:.....10

Figure 4 Map of Palestinian Refugee camps in Lebanon .....29

Figure 5: Photo of Ein el Helwe in 1982. ....30

Figure 6 Photo from my focus group. ....34

Figure 7: Photo of Ein el Helwe today .....38

Figure 8 Photo of the vegetable market in Ein el Helwe.....47

Figure 9 Photo of the Main street in Ein el Helwe.....51

Figure 10 Photo of a mall in Saida. ....52

Figure 11 Drawing of a boat on the seaside of Saidon,.....57

Figure 12 Photo of Naher el Bared refugee camp. ....61

Figure 13 Drawing: The Quran School in the Mosque.. ....70

Figure 14 Photo: Children playing in Ein el Helwe. ....75

Figure 15 Photo: Children's toy guns. . ....78

Figure 16 Photo of a doll. ....78

Figure 17 Drawing: Children playing "takh takh" .....79

Figure 18 Drawing of a map of Palestine and its flag. ....82

Figure 19 Drawing: The dome of the rock is in danger.....85

Figure 20 Drawing of Ein el Helwe’s vegetable market. ....134

Figure 21: Drawing. “I want to become a doctor” . ....135

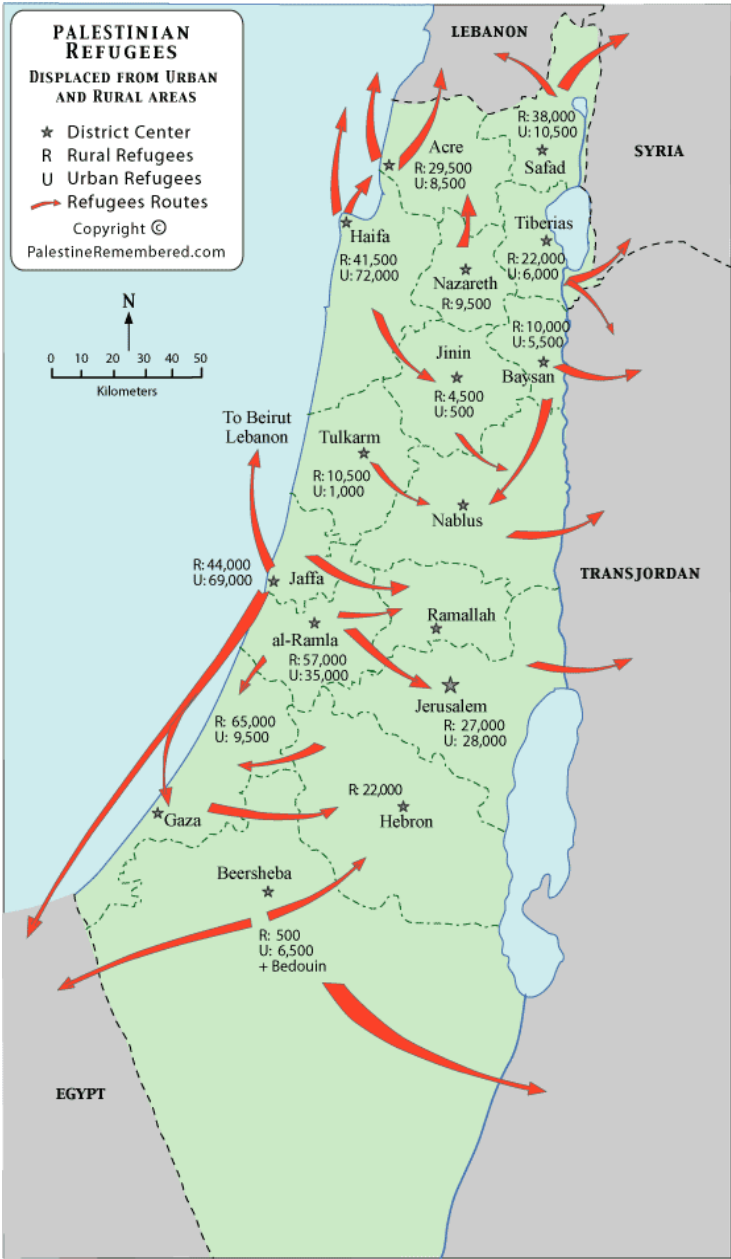
## List of acronyms

<b>AMAL:</b>	Afwâj al-Muqâwama al-Lubnâniyya (the Lebanese Resistance Detachments)
<b>FAFO</b>	Fagbevegelsens senter for Forskning, utredning og dokumentasjon (Trade union movement for research, evaluation and documentation)
<b>MENA region</b>	Middle East and North Africa region
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>PLO</b>	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
<b>SOC</b>	Sense of coherence theory
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCHR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNCRC</b>	United Nations Children’s Rights Convention
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

## Arabic glossary

<i>Adan</i>	The call for prayer
<i>Al Hara</i>	The neighbourhood
<i>Al Nakba</i>	The catastrophe
<i>Ballad</i>	Village
<i>Harb el Tamouz</i>	The June war (in 2006)
<i>Harb</i>	War
<i>Haq al Auwda</i>	The Right of return
<i>Hijab</i>	Islamic headscarf for women
<i>Intifadah</i>	To shake off (reference to the Palestinian uprisings)
<i>Jeel</i>	Generation
<i>Nidam</i>	System
<i>Saida</i>	Saidon (city)

# Map of Palestinian refugee flow to Lebanon in 1948



**Figure 2 Map of Palestinian refugee routes in 1948.**  
 Source: PalestineRemembered.com, accessed 12 December 2010.

Figure 2 shows the important routes that Palestinian refugees took during their flight from their homeland in 1948. Of particular importance to this study are the refugees from the Northern areas of Palestine who fled to Lebanon as this was the nearest settlement location. Most children in Ein el Helwe refugee camp are the descendants of these peoples.



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Considering that children now constitute half of the world's refugee population, it is remarkable that the long-term future of these children still does not receive sufficient attention in the general debate on the refugee issue (Hieronymi 2008). This thesis approaches the subject of Palestinian refugee children in Lebanon, and their views of their present and future life in protracted exile.

Palestinian refugees and their descendants have now remained in protracted exile for more than 60 years. With the passing time in exile, new generations of Palestinians have continued to be born into inherited refugee status and refugee camps. In Lebanon, Palestinian children now comprise one third of the total Palestinian population, and constitute a third and fourth generation of refugees (Serhan & Tabari 2005).

The Palestinian exile began in 1948, when approximately 750 000 Palestinians had to leave their native country of Palestine. This massive flight followed the events stemming from the preceding Arab-Israeli war. Approximately 100 000 Palestinian people then left the northern areas of Palestine for neighbouring Lebanon (Ugland et al 2003; Peteet 2005; Butenschøn 2008; UN 2010).

When the Palestinians arrived in Lebanon in 1948, they entered a country in a fragile political state. Just five years earlier, Lebanon had gained its independence from French colonial rule. Lebanon then counted and still counts, many religious and political factions relative to its small size (Fisk 2005; Chatty & Hundt et al. 2005).

The relationships between the political factions in Lebanon have often been so tense that it has resulted in violent clashes. This situation has made the political situation in Lebanon increasingly unstable. The arrival of the Palestinian refugees added a new political and religious faction to an already religiously, and politically divided country. The Palestinian refugees were initially welcomed by their Lebanese hosts, but quite soon the relationship between them was to become increasingly tense (ibid).

In 1973, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) moved their headquarters to Lebanon. This move was preceded by a decade of relative optimism and community spirit among the Palestinian refugees. Simultaneously, political activities organised by Palestinians attracted

Israeli attention across the border. This was a situation that had serious consequences, for both Lebanese and Palestinian people (Fisk 2005; Sayigh 1997).

In 1975, Lebanon became the site of a long and violent civil war which lasted for 15 years. The civil war reflected both the internal Lebanese and the regional political instability at that time (Fisk 2001). In addition, to the continuous hardships of exile this was a new challenge for the Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon. During the civil war, Palestinians suffered internal displacement, massacres and Israeli invasion, only to mention but a few of their tribulations (ibid).

### **From past to present**

Today, the situation for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is still characterised by severe difficulties. Frequently, they are reported to have the worst living conditions compared to those of other host countries of Palestinian refugees (USCR 1999 in FAFO 2003; UNRWA 2010). Many still reside in refugee camps, while still not having equal social and civil rights as to Lebanese citizens. Most refugees face limited employment opportunities and possess scant economic resources (Upland 2003).

According to the 1987 United Nations Child Rights Convention (UNCRC), human rights should be provided to all children, including refugee children (Bierwirth 2005; Boyden & Hart 2007). Meanwhile, these universal human rights are often the least prioritised by many host countries of refugees. In the Lebanese context, Palestinian parents often worry about the future for their children in such a politically unstable and often hostile environment, where neither they nor their children's human rights are sufficiently respected (Amnesty International 2009; Human Rights Watch 2010).

Currently, Palestinian refugee children are offered a free basic education by the United Nations in Lebanon. Education is promoted as a basic human right for all children, and also as an opportunity to improve the present conditions. In the context, of living in long term exile Lebanon, I wondered how Palestinian children themselves perceived this educational opportunity, not only to prepare for their future, but also how they experienced school as a part of their everyday life.

As an example of the continuous and real difficulties of the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon, the destruction of the Palestinian refugee camp, Naher el Bared, in 2007 must be

mentioned. There are several different versions of what caused this event to happen. However, it has been agreed that the attack led to a total destruction of the refugee camp (UNRWA 2010; Chatty 2010).

As a result of this destruction, approximately 27 000 to 30 000 civilian Palestinian refugees, among them many children, were displaced from their homes in the camp and were forced to seek refuge once again (ibid). For many of the Palestinians in Lebanon, such an event probably brought back memories of other difficult experiences from the past; nurturing new narratives between generations.

### **What does the future hold?**

In summary, more than three generations of exiled Palestinians have now continued to live in what can be described as a situation of “constant emergency” (Staff 2009<sup>1</sup>). Considering that children often are the most vulnerable in conflict situations, one can only imagine which toll the historical events in Lebanon must have made on the emerging generations of Palestinian refugees.

Still, throughout decades of violent conflicts, Palestinian children have continued to grow up and proceed with their everyday activities. Meanwhile, they have been told stories of their original homeland by parents and grandparents in the Diaspora (Schulz 2003; Sa’id & Abu-Lughod 2007). This might, after all, in spite of the harsh present realities, reflect the older generation’s remaining hope for a final return to Palestine. In the work with this thesis, I wished to understand the nature of children’s relationship to their Palestinian identity, as third or fourth generation refugees. What did they say about Palestine? Did they share their grandparents dreams about “going home to Palestine”?

In research and reports on Palestinian refugees, it is often said that their views on the future of their exiled community’s are quite pessimistic. After more than 60 years in protracted exile, this might not come as any great surprise. The Palestinian leadership’s several failed peace negotiations with Israel, have left the exiled community even more disillusioned (Khalidi 2001). Some analysts claim that the future for these people depends on external political forces, of which they have little or no political control (Ugland 2003). In this thesis, I have attempted to understand how Palestinian children perceive their present situation.

---

<sup>1</sup>. Svein Staff (Medical Doctor). Personal communication, 22 September, Oslo, 2009.

## **“Our” depictions of children**

In today’s globalised world, new tools for communication pass information between different regions of the world faster than ever. Still, our understandings of different cultures and geographical contexts are not necessarily increasing at the same rate (Eide 2010<sup>2</sup>). In the repetitive media coverage of unsolved political conflicts in the Middle East region (Said 1999), Palestinian children are usually depicted as victims. They are also said to be easily influenced and therefore potential perpetrators of violence. In contrast to the mainstream and simplistic picturing of both the spectacular events and the people in this region, I wished to learn more about their everyday life.

Still, the victimizing approach towards children in violent conflicts is understandable, perhaps even necessary, but presents a very limiting picture of their life. Children are seldom given the chance to expand this picture by speaking on their own behalf. In contrast to the mainstream approach, my main objective in this study was therefore to focus on Palestinian children’s thoughts about the future. In order to understand and interpret what I understand as a neglected perspective of Palestinian experience in exile, I first had to talk to the children themselves.

### **Meeting with children in Ein el Helwe**

The Palestinian refugee camp Ein el Helwe, located in Southern Lebanon, was the place where I choose to further investigate Palestinian children’s views on their life further. Here, some local women kindly helped me to meet with twelve boys and twelve girls from the camp. These child informants were from 9 to 14 years old and they contributed in an important way to this study, by being my main research informants. After our initial meetings, the same group of children participated in proceeding focus group sessions and a photo project. The data material these activities resulted in has been the central basis for the analysis in this paper.

My own family background (Palestinian father, knowledge of Palestinian culture and fluency in Arabic) proved useful in my interactions with people in Ein el Helwe. Being a woman made it even easier to meet women and girls. Previous meetings with Palestinian children, prior to my fieldwork, had also influenced my interest in this research subject. However,

---

<sup>2</sup> Kai Eide (former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan), Lecture, Trondheim, 16 October, 2010.

regardless of this interest and awareness, the realities of life in Ein el Helwe and Lebanon were completely new and unfamiliar to me prior to my fieldwork.

In the context of undertaking research, the individual researcher's background will often affect the direction and focus of a research project. Consequently, research can never claim complete objectivity. Simultaneously, it may be unadvisable when considering ethical issues, to do research with living persons or groups without any understanding or sympathy for their situation. My interest has been to act as a facilitator for the children's voices, who were telling me their own stories. Having the opportunity to tell their stories clearly situated children as the experts on their own life. After the data collection had ceased, my role has been to understand, analyse and finally to communicate these children's viewpoints.

In undertaking research, in particular with vulnerable groups, several ethical dilemmas may emerge. In this context, one dilemma is that some Palestinian refugees might be tired of the continuous stream of researchers coming to write about their life in exile. However, they see no change in their difficult situation. During my very first days in Lebanon, I encountered some young Palestinians from a Beirut camp. They questioned the usefulness of doing research with refugees. In their opinion, such research would not result in changing anything in their present situation.

A couple of weeks after this encounter, I met children in Ein el Helwe who themselves were initiating meetings with me, eager to talk and to be listened to. Although people of all ages, in Ein el Helwe, were used to foreigners, they generally did not seem to expect anything from outsiders. This might exemplify that while some people might be pessimistic and even negative towards research, others may find it a relief to talk to someone who is interested and is willing to listen to them. Both attitudes as well as alternative views should be taken into consideration and respected by researchers.

In the initiation of a research process, informants must be informed precisely about the implications their participation might have. Furthermore, any researcher should consider what purpose any research might serve (Alderson 2004). In this project, the comparatively limited amount of research from a childhood perspective, continued to make me believe in the usefulness of doing a research project with Palestinian refugee children.

## **Previous research**

Much research, writings and book publication have been done on Palestinian issues (Sayigh 1997) and on the specific situation of Palestinian refugees across the Middle East (Schulz 2003; Peteet 2005). In stark contrast, I have found very little literature that specifically documents the personal experiences of Palestinian children. In the existing literature on the Palestinian resistance, the contributions of children to their larger society are rarely acknowledged (Barber 2009).

The majority of extant literature on Palestinian children is primarily directed towards the healing of psychological trauma. This focus stems from necessary interventions directed towards children having experienced traumatic events, such as military occupation or armed conflict. This type of research has been vital in helping vulnerable children in need of care after traumatic experiences. However, the perspectives on these children as being *more* than just mere victims are harder to find in this traditional research.

Boyden (2005) notes, that when meeting children in challenging environments one will often experience a *mix* of resilience and vulnerability. This reference to a *mix* implies that these children's lives often contain *more* than the vulnerability factor which partly stems from their violent environment. New perspectives within research recognise that working strictly through Western models is not always the best approach in working with children living in a non-Western context (Boyden, Chatty & Hundt 2005). The argument is that psychological models often will fail to recognise the cultural protection factors that effectively can help children (and adults), dealing with traumatic experiences.

## **Objective of the thesis**

Extant literature on vulnerable children living in politically unstable environments suggests that these children worry more about the future than children in more stable areas (Boyden 2005). Meanwhile, many cultures treat children as the ultimate symbols of hope and the future. The future orientation towards children might therefore be even more apparent in the narratives of ethnic groups and nations in protracted exile.

The political activism among refugee communities, aiming to improve their living conditions and political status, often stems from difficulties in the present and the longing for an end to living in exile. In a Palestinian childhood narrative from the sixties, the author talks about

how the rising political activism, in Ein el Helwe camp, increased peoples hopes for a better future. He explains the hopes of the older refugees to the younger generation;

*There was the romantic hope that you were the small flame that was going to light the fires of all the others. (Fernea 2002, p. 221).*

In contrast to refugees aspirations regarding a solution to their exile, host nations and the international society will often offer different strategies and solutions to deal with a protracted refugee case (Hieronymi 2008). In relation to discussions on long-term solutions to protracted exile, one of my interests was to understand how Palestinian children might see themselves as part of a future Palestinian community. In order to talk with children about the abstract issue which the future really represents, I choose to ask them about their present life.

Consequently, my questions focus mainly on their everyday life and their immediate surroundings. And the focus of our conversations was the children's *school, their social networks* and the *refugee camp*. I chose this approach to offer them an opportunity to talk about some of the local institutions available to them. These institutions, such as school, are generally perceived as necessary "ingredients" in order for children to achieve a better future.

### **The research questions**

The main research questions are:

- What do children think about being Palestinian as third or fourth generation refugees?
- What are the particularities of being a Palestinian child in Lebanon, as opposed to a Palestinian child in other areas in the Middle East region?
- How do the children view life in a refugee camp?
- How do they perceive school and education?
- What kinds of social relationships are apparent and relevant?
- What kinds of cultural factors are also protection factors?
- What are children's thoughts and hopes for the future?

## **The outline of this thesis**

This thesis consists of seven chapters:

Chapter one: This chapter introduces the phenomenon and the field site and provides a brief overview of the historical background.

Chapter two: This chapter describes the background of the study by presenting a historical overview of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. This description provides a necessary basis for exploring the research questions further.

Chapter three: This chapter presents relevant theoretical perspectives which have guided the various different stages of the research process.

Chapter four: This chapter presents the manner in which the study is methodologically placed and connects the guiding theoretical perspectives and subsequent research methods which were applied in the research site.

The analytic part of this thesis is presented in three chapters:

Chapter five: This chapter presents the children's perceptions of life in the camp today.

Chapter six: This chapter deals with past, present and future issues from the point of view of the children.

Chapter seven: This chapter provides a summary and discussion of the research findings, and presents some implications for *further research*.



## CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND

In this chapter I focus on some of the past and present issues which have been essential to the Palestinian experience in Lebanon. After a short country profile of Lebanon, the chapter further describes some historical and present issues for the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

It has been argued, that even children's experiences should be understood in the light of their immediate surroundings and the wider society (Katz 2004; Abebe 2007). The historical events and political decisions which took place in the Palestinian community and in Lebanon also influenced the everyday lives of children in this area. It is for this reason, that I include both past and present events in this background. This perspective situates today's Palestinian children in a generational context which takes account of their grandparents and parent childhood experiences.

Many events have taken place in Lebanon since 1948, and this background can only deal with the events which are more or less relevant to the analytic chapters of this thesis. The various views on the Middle East conflict are, however, outside the scope of this study.

### **Country profile of Lebanon**

Lebanon is located in Western Asia, on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It is bordered by Syria to the north and east, and Israel to the south. The location at the crossroads of the Mediterranean Basin and the Arabian hinterland has dictated its rich history, and shaped a cultural identity of religious and ethnic diversity (UN 2010). The total population size is estimated to be approximately 4.2 million people (UN 2009). Arabic is the official language in Lebanon, but French is also an important language. The main religious groups are Christians, Muslims, and the Druze<sup>3</sup>. The relationship between these political and religious groups has often been characterised by instability (Fisk 2005). Until it gained its independence, in 1943, Lebanon was under French colonial rule. The distribution of political power is conducted between the three largest religious and political groups in the country; the Shia Muslims, the Sunni Muslims and the Christians. According to the Lebanese political system, the President of Lebanon has to be from a Maronite<sup>4</sup> Christian background, the Prime

---

<sup>3</sup> The Druze is an ethnic and religious group often considered to be Shia Muslims (Rassam & Bates 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Maronites constitute one of the Christian groups in Lebanon. The Maronite Uniate Church, mainly limited to Lebanon, are followers of Saint John Maroun. They have traditionally stayed in the mountain areas of Northern Lebanon (Bates & Rassam 2001).

Minister should be a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the Parliament should be a Shia Muslim (Bates & Rassam 2001).

In 1975, a civil war that was to last fifteen years broke out in Lebanon. During the war several regional powers interfered and entered Lebanon, in particular neighbouring Israel and Syria. A massive loss of human life and property, and a large migration of Lebanese peoples followed. Meanwhile, Lebanese civilians and children were directly or indirectly suffering in the ongoing conflicts (Macksoud 1992; Hansen 1999; Fisk



Figure 3 Map of Lebanon:source:Cia.gov.

2001). The war finally ended in 1990 with the signing of the Taif Agreement (Hansen 1999; Fisk 2001; Halabi 2004; Peteet 2005).

In the summer of 2006, Lebanon was again faced with a military conflict with Israel. The conflict also affected the Southern part of Lebanon which is where the field site location, Ein el Helwe, is located. This conflict is referred to as the “June war” or in Arabic “Harb el Tamouz.” Across the Southern border between Israel and Lebanon, the Shia Muslim Lebanese group Hezbollah in Southern and Israel began to fight (UN 2010). I will now proceed by introducing a few historical events which were significant for the Palestinians before and after they came to Lebanon in 1948.

### **Palestinian refugees and their origin**

In 1947, when Palestine was still under British mandate, the United Nations decided to divide the land between the Jews and the Palestinians living in the area. Following this decision, war broke out in 1948; a conflict which is often referred to as the Arab-Israeli war. During the war, armed Jewish militias occupied most of Palestine and conquered any resistance from the Palestinians. Consequently, the Palestinians were driven out of their native lands, cities and

villages (Said 1999; Ugland et al. 2003; Morris<sup>5</sup> 2004; Chatty & Hundt 2005, p.13; Pappé 2006; Butenschøn 2008). Approximately 600 000 to 750 000 Palestinians were then displaced from their ancestral towns and villages (Sayigh 1994; Peteet 2005; Chatty & Hundt 2005).

Approximately 100 000 of these people fled northwards, towards Lebanon and across the border (see Figure 1). The majority of these people were originally peasants from the Galilee region and the Northern parts of Palestine<sup>6</sup>. Other Palestinians became refugees in Syria, Jordan or Egypt, or they became internally displaced to the West Bank or Gaza (Sayigh 1994; Khalidi 2001; Chatty & Hundt 2005; Peteet 2005; Suleiman 2010).

The Palestinian historical narrative refer to the events which took place in 1948 as “al Nakba” which means the Catastrophe” in Arabic. The “Nakba” is often considered as the beginning of the contemporary Palestinian history by many Palestinians. The Nakba therefore became a point of reference for all other events, past, and future for the refugees (Said 1999; Sa’id & Abu-Lughod 2007).

### **The United Nations Refugee Works Agency**

The Palestinian exodus in 1948, led to a large dispersal of people of all ages. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established in 1949. The establishment came in order to provide humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees (UNRWA 2010). Initially, it was presumed that the refugee problem would be resolved in a few months and that the agency would only be a temporary solution (Besson 1997; Peteet 2005).

This was not the case, since 1950, the UNRWA continued to provide services to the Palestinian refugees. This relieved Lebanon of the social and economic responsibility for the refugees. After the arrival of the refugees, UNRWA contacted the Lebanese authority to settle the refugees into designated areas. Initially, 15 official refugee camps were serviced and administered by the UNRWA (UN 2010).

---

<sup>5</sup> Benny Morris and Ilan Pappé are both Israeli historians.

<sup>6</sup> These Northern areas include the districts of Acre, Beisan, Nazareth, Safad, Tiberias and the vicinity of Haifa (Chatty & Hundt 2005).

The official United Nations definition of a Palestinian refugee is as follows:

*A Palestine refugee is; those and their direct descendants, who lived in Mandate Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, and who lost both home and livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. (UNRWA 2010)*

This definition signifies that Palestinian children in exile today are counted as refugees. The exiled Palestinians still claim their right, to return to their original homelands in Palestine. According to the 194 UN general assembly's resolution, the Palestinian refugees have a legal right to return to their areas of origin (Khalidi 2001).

### **Arriving in Lebanon**

The Palestinians, who came in 1948, were initially well received by the Lebanese authorities and had great sympathy from the public. However, once it became clear that the refugees would not return in the nearest future, this friendly attitude dissolved. Lebanese authorities began to impose strict measures on Palestinian refugees, in particular on those living in the refugee camps. The already mentioned sect and class system in Lebanon has also been part of defining the Palestinian experience in the country. The sectarian divisions inside Lebanon have lead to hostility, but simultaneously to large political support among the Lebanese fractions to the cause of the Palestinian refugees (Sayigh 1994).

One of the first consequences of this system was Lebanon's decision to grant citizenship to most of the Christian<sup>7</sup> Palestinian refugees who first arrived after 1948. However, the majority of the Palestinians refugees, who are Sunni Muslims, were not granted Lebanese citizenship or equal rights. This stemmed mainly for the Lebanese fear, of disrupting the already fragile political balance, between Muslim and Christian groups in the country.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese government feared that the Palestinians would begin to fight the Israelis on the Lebanese-Israel borders, and that they would end up in clashes with local militias (Sayigh 1997; Chatty & Hundt 2005). Consequently, the Lebanese government entrusted Palestinian affairs to security agencies such as the army's intelligences department, the "Second Bureau" (Chatty & Hundt 2005, p.17). During the early period of their arrival, the Palestinians were dealt with as temporary guests and awaiting the international

---

<sup>7</sup> Palestinians are primarily Sunni Muslims, but hold a small and significant minority of Christians (approximately 5 % of the total Palestinian population). Within the Palestinian society, relations between Christians and Muslims have often been described as "excellent" (Kobti 1999).

community's settlement of their problem (Chatty & Hundt 2005). Palestinian refugees were considered a special category with the right to reside in Lebanon, but without any social or economic rights. The relationship between the refugees and Lebanon was already at this time characterised as tense (Chatty & Hundt 2005, p.17).

### **The Palestinian revolution**

In 1973, The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and their fighters moved their headquarters from <sup>8</sup>Jordan into Southern Lebanon and the refugee camps (Fisk 2001). The PLO established social institutions, and economic corporations which also employed large numbers of Palestinians youths (Chatty & Hundt 2005). Several Palestinian children and youth also participated in political and militant training (Fernea 2000; Fisk 2001).

During this period, the Palestinian refugee camps became places of independence, optimism and relative prosperity (Sayigh 1997; Khalidi 2001; Fernea 2002; Chatty & Hundt 2005). The PLO also offered the civilian Palestinians population with the military protection which the UNRWA refugee definition fails to provide to them<sup>9</sup> (Peteet 2005). The increased political activity and nationalistic agenda of the PLO, in Lebanon, was not appreciated by many Lebanese peoples and political groups. On the contrary, the Lebanese political groups which rejected the presence of the PLO prepared for a confrontation. They believed that they had to defend the existing Lebanese political system by expelling PLO's armed guerrilla forces from Lebanon. In 1975, Lebanese forces began an open battle against the Palestinians. These fights were absorbed by the Lebanese civil war (Sayigh 1997; Chatty & Hundt 2005).

Parallel to these events, the Lebanese Phalange<sup>10</sup> militias besieged and controlled three Palestinian refugee camps.<sup>11</sup> As a result, thousands of Palestinian families were again displaced in all directions of Lebanon (Chatty & Hundt 2005). The refugee camps were

---

<sup>8</sup> In 1971, PLO ended up in a conflict with the Jordanian army and King Hussein, commonly referred to as "Black September." The Palestinian fighters were consequently expelled from Jordan and then moved to Lebanon ( Fisk 2001).

<sup>9</sup> The United Nations High Commissioner's refugee definition provides legal protection rights to refugees, but since the Palestinian are under the responsibility of UNRWA and its special refugee definition, this protection cannot be provided to them (Peteet 2005).

<sup>10</sup> The Phalange militia belongs to *one* political fraction of the Maronite Christian group in Lebanon (Fisk 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Namely: Tal el-Za'atar, Jisr el Basha and Dbayeh camp (Chatty & Hundt 2005) .

destroyed and never rebuilt again. In 1976, Syria<sup>12</sup> entered Lebanon with its own army in order to end the Lebanese civil war. The Syrians simultaneously defeated the PLO (Fisk 2001; Chatty & Hundt 2005).

### **Israeli invasions**

During the civil war, Israel invaded Lebanon twice, first in 1978 and then in June 1982. In the 1982 invasion, Israel besieged Beirut, occupied half of Lebanon, drove the PLO forces out of the country and destroyed the infrastructure in the country (Hansen 1999; Fisk 2001; Kimmerling 2003; Peteet 2005, p.151). During the Israeli invasion, around 20 000 Lebanese, mainly civilians, were killed. Israeli forces also destroyed several Palestinian refugee camps during this period (Fisk 2001; Peteet 2005; UN 2010).

Israel had stated that their ultimate goal was to destroy the PLO in Lebanon. The Israeli invasion finally pressured the PLO and their military forces to leave Lebanon. When the PLO left Lebanon, this created a security vacuum inside the Palestinian refugee camps and the people living there became exposed and vulnerable (Fisk 2001; Chatty & Hundt 2005).

In 1982, “the Kataeb”, Lebanese Phalange Maronite forces under the control of Israeli army commanders, committed a massacre on civilian Palestinian refugees. The massacre took place in Sabra and Cahuilla refugee camp, where 1500 to 3000 civilians, were brutally murdered<sup>13</sup> (Fisk 2001; Kimmerling 2003; Chatty & Hundt 2005, p.19; Peteet 2005). The lack of international and legal consequences, for those responsible of this massacre, increased the Palestinian refugee’s feelings of abandonment and injustice in Lebanon (Fisk 2001).

### **The Camp wars**

Between 1985 and 1987, a Syrian backed Shiite movement, AMAL, began a siege of Palestinian camps in Southern Lebanon and in Beirut. One reason for AMALS’s hostility towards Palestinians, were that they along with several Lebanese political factions, blamed the Palestinians for the previous Israeli invasion of Lebanon (Khalidi 2001; Fisk 2005; Peteet 2005). During the camp wars, militiamen from AMAL and other anti-Arafat fractions laid

---

<sup>12</sup> Syria and Lebanon have had a very strained relationship for a long period. The borders between the two countries were “created” by the former French colonial power. Syria has interfered continuously and in various ways in Lebanon, after the Lebanese independence (Fisk 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Robert Fisk is a British internationally acclaimed journalist. He is author of the book “Pity the Nation” where he writes extensively on the Lebanese civil war. He and the Norwegian journalist Odd Karsten Tveit visited Sabra and Shatilla immediately after the massacre had taken place, and they were therefore able to secure visual documentation of what had happened. They have also published books on the Lebanese Civil war. (Fisk 2001).

siege to Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut and Southern Lebanon. This brutal conflict has been described as one of the most difficult experiences for the Palestinians living the camps (Besson 1997; Peteet 2005, p. 154; Chatty & Hundt 2005; Al-Jazeera 2009). During the period of my fieldwork, the stories of these harsh periods often came up in conversations with the older generation of refugees.

### **Post war relationships**

In 1990, the Lebanese civil war finally came to an end and a central government was reinstated in the country. A process of rebuilding the Lebanese state then resumed. The Palestinians in the camps were left out of this effort and were socially and politically isolated. The Palestinian camps were now placed under Lebanese and Syrian control. All Lebanese political parties and politicians agreed that the Palestinians could not settle permanently in Lebanon. Some called for redistributing the Palestinian refugees to other Arab or foreign countries. The fate of the Palestinian refugees was also discussed at an international level, and several proposals on what should be done were published in reports and newspapers (Peteet 2005). During this period, the feeling of insecurity for the Palestinians was intensified. The experienced anthropologist Julie Peteet describes her impression of the emotions in the community in the 1990s:

*The residents of the camps were depressed and anxious, from years of warfare and living on the extreme margins of society. Societies where they had serious concerns about mass transfer and faced harassment, both subtle and overtly violent, in nearly every aspect of their daily lives. A deep sadness comes from working in a community facing a bleak future (Peteet<sup>14</sup> 2005, p. xii).*

The reference to a “bleak” future for the refugee community can also be found in comments on their present situation.

---

<sup>14</sup> Julie Peteet: is an Anthropologist who lived among the Palestinian refugees for several periods. She is also author of the book “Landscapes of hope and Despair” which describes the life and locations of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon (Peteet 2005).

## **Present situation for the Palestinian refugees**

Currently UNRWA<sup>15</sup> estimates the numbers of Palestinians in Lebanon to be approximately 422 000. FAFO, having done some of the most extensive research on the Palestinians in Lebanon, pointed to approximately 200 000, as a more realistic estimation (FAFO 2003). Approximately 53% percent of Palestinians live in 12 official camps, and about 20 percent live in “unofficial” camps in Lebanon (UN 2010).

As compared to other host countries in the Middle East region, the legal situation for the Palestinians in Lebanon is clearly the most challenging (Suleiman 2010; UNRWA 2010). In Lebanon<sup>16</sup>, the Palestinian refugees are denied social and civil rights and have very limited access to public services. They are also reported to experience extensive spatial, economic and institutional discrimination within Lebanon (Ramadan 2009; Suleiman 2010). The Lebanon field, still, has the highest percentage of Palestine refugees living in abject poverty in comparison with other host countries (Serhan & Tabari 2005; Hansen-Bauer & Jacobsen 2007; UNRWA 2010).

The main provider of services to Palestinians in Lebanon is still UNRWA, in addition to some local and international NGOs. Currently, UNRWA is heavily dependent on funding from donor countries, and has for a long time struggled under this arrangement. The agency was initially only intended to be a temporary solution to the refugee problem and now has a growing population of refugees to provide for (Besson 1997; Peteet 2005).

The UNRWA agency provides free education for Palestinian refugee children, and uses nearly half of its budget on this activity. Considering that there are now roughly 1.5 million young Palestinians registered as refugees the provision of basic education is a constant concern (Serhan & Tabari 2005; Jo & Boyden 2007; UNRWA 2010).

## **Palestinian political organization**

Presently, the two main decision making structures for the Palestinians across the Middle East region are; the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Palestinian National Authority (Khoury 2010). The central Palestinian leadership is now based in the West Bank and Gaza

---

<sup>15</sup> There are no accurate authoritative Figures from recent surveys of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (ACS 1998 in FAFO 2003, p.17). In 1998, the Palestinian Central Bureau estimated the numbers to be 382 594 individuals (Abu-Libdeh 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Lebanon is one of the countries that have not ratified the International 1951 refugee convention (UN 2010).



strip<sup>17</sup>. In recent decades, the Palestinian refugee camps and their inhabitants have mostly part become distant from the centre of gravity of Palestinian power and national decision making (Khoury 2010). There is now an increasing feeling of abandonment among the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, not only from the international society, but also from their own leaders. Inside the Palestinian camps of Lebanon, there are currently several political groups and armed fractions (Suleiman 1999 in FMO). According to Rougier (2007), it is no longer possible to talk about a Palestinian society in Lebanon's camps. So deep is the fracture between the PLO and its hardcore (Fatah/PLO), on the one hand, and the Islamic militants on the other. Many Palestinians view the internal split between their political representatives as one of the greatest threats to an improvement of their present living conditions.

### **Children situation in the camps**

The United Nations International Children's Rights Convention (UNCRC) of 1989 was the first binding universal treaty dedicated solely to the protection, and promotion of children's rights. The UNCRC elevated the child to the status of an independent rights-holder, and placed children's issues at the centre of the mainstream human rights agenda (Fotrell 2000, p.1). The Committee on the Rights of the Child (ICRC) is a body of independent experts meant to evaluate the progress of countries in keeping to their responsibilities in the UNCRC. This committee has commented as follows on the condition of the refugee children in Lebanon;

*The committee continues to be deeply concerned about the harsh social and economic living conditions of Palestinian refugee children in refugee camps, their limited access to public services, including social and health services and education, and their exposure to violence at home, in schools and in the wider community (UNICEF in Hodgkin & Newell 2007, p.314).*

This is a statement by the committee specifically on Palestinian children's provision rights in Lebanon:

*While noting with appreciation the maternal and child health-care services provided by UNRWA, the Committee is concerned about congenital malformation, acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea, which are also leading causes of child*

---

<sup>17</sup> After the last Palestinian national elections, where Hamas won victory, the Palestinian central government was split between the Gaza based Hamas and the West Bank based PLO government (Khoury 2010).

*death during the second and third years of life among Palestinian refugee children. It notes with concern that due to the poor living conditions in the camps children suffer from acute health problems* (The UN CRC committee 2006 report point 55, p.13).

The Lebanese authority, in response to these comments, has pointed to the UNRWA and other NGOs as the main responsible caregivers for Palestinian refugees (Lebanese state report 2003). In another survey of the living conditions of Palestinian refugee children, the Lebanese army siege of the camps was pointed out as a major concern by refugee children themselves. The need to improve the sewage systems which is causing diseases among children, and the inadequate housing conditions were also pointed to as issues in of necessary improvement (BADIL 2007). At the same time, the children living in the camps have easier access to UNRWA and NGO services than the refugee children living outside the camps.

Naher el Bared is a Palestinian camp located in the northern part of Lebanon. On the night of May 19 2007, Lebanese internal security forces entered Naher el Bared and surrounded a building in which a group of Islamic militants from Fatah-al-Islam, accused of taking part in a bank robbery earlier that day were hiding. The next morning the Lebanese security forces opened fire and the Fatah al-Islam militants responded (Chatty 2010, p.3). The Lebanese attack, lead to a total destruction of the refugee camp. Approximately 27 000 to 30 000 civilian refugees were then displaced from their homes and were forced to seek refuge again. (NABAA 2007; Chatty 2010; UNRWA 2010).

Children were affected in this sudden attack, and harsh conditions which followed the consequent displacement. Many children also had a disruption in their education following this displacement (NABAA 2007). For the wider refugee community in Lebanon, Naher el Bared has evoked some of the painful memories from the days of the Lebanese civil war. When one consider the past and present events and realities which have been outlined in this chapter it is hard to predict what the future will bring for Palestinian children.

## CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

As presented in the introduction, this thesis is concerned with Palestinian children in a refugee camp and their views on their present everyday life and perspectives on the future. This chapter will deal with theoretical perspectives and concepts, which have been relevant to my approach towards this research question.

### **Palestinian refugee children- some extant approaches and depictions**

The present life situation of Palestinian children and refugees in Lebanon is often presented in the publications of local and international Human Rights Organizations and NGOs. These organisations usually put focus on the human rights violations towards this group (Amnesty International 2006; BADIL 2007; NABAA 2009; DRC 2009). Considering the past and present conditions for Palestinians in Lebanon, which were dealt with in chapter two, this focus might not be surprising.

In media coverage Palestinian children are generally depicted through stereotyping dichotomies; as vulnerable victims or as a potential danger (Jabr 2004; Barber 2009). These children's political opinions are often seen as stemming from the brainwashing of their own community. The idea of refugee children in general as passive receivers of charity has also led to what can be termed "a depiction of pity" (Gullestad 2004). Such portrayals will often leave little attention for these children's own abilities in handling the challenges in their present life situation (Hart 2004; Boyden 2005; Chatty 2005). The implications of such depictions for the identity of the objects, and simultaneously for those who are objectifying should also be reflected upon. Simplistic depictions will often create invisible borders between "us" and "them" which have little root in reality (Said 1978).

Traditional theoretical and methodological approaches towards Palestinian children are often characterised by a general objectification of children, seeing them exclusively as victims. In traditional psychological research children in several different cultural contexts are still approached through western theories of which factors should be present in a good childhood (Boyden & Mann 2005; Chatty 2009). When applying such top-down theoretical approaches, the common characteristic of the Palestinian childhood, situated in exile or conflict areas, is

often viewed as an insufficient basis for a good future. What then, do Palestinian refugee children in protracted exile themselves have to say about their present life situation?

Some researchers have eventually begun to approach Palestinian children through what is termed child-oriented methods. By consulting and including Palestinian children themselves, several new perspectives have been found (Hart 2004; Chatty et al. 2005; Barber 2010). Research with Palestinian refugee children in Jordan have for instance dismantled the view of these children's social identities as limited to the strictly defined group identity, which their political leaders and charity organizations often wish to sustain (Hart 2004).

It was in relation to the various existing research approaches and depictions of Palestinian children that I positioned myself as a researcher. I proceed to further clarify my theoretical position towards the research question.

### **Choosing a bottom- up approach**

In connection with the briefly mentioned mainstream portrayals of Palestinian children, Said's (1978) classic theory on the Orient versus the Oxidant might provide a clarifying perspective. The interest in the Occident in images, rather than narratives from the underdeveloped Orient, can also be juxtaposed to the mainstream and adult-oriented depictions of Palestinian children (Said 1978; Gullestad 2004).

The general portrayal of children can also be seen as a form of orientalistic approach. As adults, we often apply certain characteristics to childhood, children are for instance seen as inherently vulnerable. Children in deprived or discriminated societies will often be regarded as the most vulnerable of all.

According to Tingstad (2007) any researchers theoretical positioning and methodological procedures, should be seen in connection. And as already mentioned, Palestinian children have often been researched and understood mainly in the context of the violent conflicts they have been exposed too. Whereas the more mundane aspects of their present everyday life seems to have been given less attention.

Stemming from my interpretation of some extant approaches towards the research phenomena, I wished to approach the present life of Palestinian refugee children with a more open, bottom-up approach. In applying a bottom up approach practically, the grounded theory

and emergent theory approach provided me with inspiration in the initial research process (Glaser & Strauss 1967 in Silverman 2006). The grounded theory approach essentially advocates that researchers should maintain closeness to the data-material, in opposition to a sterile reliance on pre-existing “grand” theories in social science. In order to achieve this closeness, one measure is to put ones preconceived ideas about the research phenomena in away. Although this in reality is an unachievable ideal, it is a helpful perspective when attempting to maintain a more open approach to any research phenomena (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000; Jaccard & Jacoby 2010).

The emergent approach in many ways overlaps with grounded theory. According to this approach, existing social theories can be applied in order to explain qualitative data material after the analysis (Pandit 1996; Eisenhardt & Graebner 2007; Hammersley 2007; Jaccard & Jacoby 2010). I similarly chose to approach suitable theories for explaining the data-material, *after* the collection of the data material had ceased.

In spite of using such methodology no researcher can claim to describe a complete, fully objective and authentic picture of a social reality (Gudmunnsdottir 1996; Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000; Jaccard & Jacoby 2010). Whereas, a research perspective I believe is necessary in order to gain greater accuracy in social research is to consult the group in focus of the study. This is a perspective which is also increasingly acknowledged in research which deals with children and childhood.

### **Listening to children’s voices**

The social studies of childhood is an interdisciplinary research paradigm, which essentially advocates that children have the right to be studied in their own right. The approach emerged, in reaction to the studies of children and childhood within traditional research, which mainly operated with understandings of children as passive and vulnerable people. In the social studies approach, childhood is understood as a social construction, which might differ greatly in time and social space (Lee 2001). This approach can be seen in contrast to developmental psychology, which evaluates children through a set of developmental stages (Hinton 2000; Piaget in Lee 2001).

Children have traditionally been seen as passive and without influence on their own lives. Child oriented research have eventually acknowledged children's agency and influence in their own lives, in spite of the largely adult control of social structures. Traditionally, children have been seen mostly in light of what they can become rather than what they are presently. The concepts *beings* and *becomings* capture such adult oriented and mainstream views of children (Lee 2001). Although, the theoretical dichotomy between children as beings and becoming has been criticised for being too simplistic (Prout 2005), I believe that it can be a helpful perspective when it is used simply to understand some common adult centric perspectives on children.

The International United Nations Children's Rights Convention (UNCRC) from 1989 gave children participatory rights (see. Chapter 2). The acknowledgement of children's participation rights has also been influential in the child-oriented research tradition (James & Jenks et al. 1998; Lee 2001). In recent years, several researchers within the sociology of childhood have been increasingly concerned with the views of children living in those parts of the world termed the global South. These studies have found that children living in very challenging circumstances also display considerable ability and agency in dealing with their everyday challenges ( Panter Brick and Smith et al. 2000; Punch 2003;Hart 2004; Boyden & De Berry 2004; Chatty & Hundt 2005; Ansell 2005; Abebe 2007).

According to the UN convention all people under 18 years of age are children (UN 2010). However, who is termed a child might vary from different cultures. Childhood can, therefore, be understood as a structural component of any society (James & Jenks et al. 1998). Alanen (2001) has for instance discussed whether childhood in itself can be understood as a segment in relation to generational structure.

Silverman (2007) has noted that many social scientist and policy makers assume that people are puppets of social structures. As an example, refugees have often been analysed as powerless victims in facing wider structures such as globalization and economic changes (Said 1978; Watters 2008).To acknowledge the link between micro and macro structures will take in to account relations between both structures. In the study of children this can also been used as a perspective, in order to understand and take into account that children do not exist in a closed off world, but are inevitably part of the larger structures (Katz 2004; Prout 2005; Abebe 2007).

## **Real vulnerability or depictions of pity**

Due to their youthfulness and lack of social power, children and adolescents are often amongst the most severely affected in adverse circumstances (Boyden 2005). The already mentioned extensive reports, of human rights violations of the children and adults, can speak for themselves (Huquq al Nas 1998; Amnesty 2006; Save the children 2007; NABAA 2009; Human Rights Watch 2010). Many of the books, documentaries, reports and eyewitness accounts on Palestinian refugee children have as an intention to uncover human rights violations towards this group (Usher 1991). As an example, the book” *Eyes in Gaza*”, written by two medical doctors, features visual documentation of children with severe war injuries after an Israeli attack on the Gaza strip in 2009 (Fosse & Gilbert 2009).

The reports, documentations and eye-witness accounts of children in violent conflicts, can often provide us with important empirical descriptions about the devastating consequences of violent conflict. Simultaneously, people and agencies working with children will often experience an extraordinary *mix* of resilience and vulnerability among these individual children (Boyden 2005; Barber 2009).

To approach children in violent conflicts as strictly vulnerable can therefore be said to be an accurate, but limited theoretical positioning (Boyden 2005; Ansell 2005; Barber 2009). Meanwhile, research has shown that these children often can function with great effectiveness on a day to day basis. Some of these children can even provide great support for their families for instance economically or emotionally. These “additional” perspectives are often not presented in traditional research (Boyden & Mann2005). Children and adult’s vulnerability has also been found to be dependent on factors such as culture, gender and class (Hart & Tyrer 2006). I now proceed to explain a theory which influenced me in the initial research process.

### **A Sense of Coherence**

As part of my preparations to do an ethical fieldwork, I wished to learn more about the challenges children face in conflict areas. A medical doctor I spoke with in this connection tipped me of the “Sense of Coherence” theory (SOC). This is a theory, which in contrast to the pathological orientation in psychology, seeks to identify factors which contribute to people’s well-being during adversity. The SOC theory consists of three components; Comprehensibility, Manageability and Meaningfulness.

*Comprehensibility* is a concept which refers to the extent a person perceives challenges, as deriving from the internal and external environments. Individuals with a high sense of comprehensibility expect that the stimuli he or she will encounter in the future will be predictable. If future events come as surprises they will be orderable, and explicable. Death, war and failure can occur, but such a person can make sense of them (Antonovsky 1987).

*Manageability* refers to the extent one perceives that the resources at ones disposal are adequate to meet the challenges one is faced with. Manageability can refer to resources such as social networks, friends and family, God, history, a party leader, a doctor –someone whom one feels that one can count on and trust. Basically, this implies that if unfortunate things happen in life, one will be able to cope and not grieve endlessly (Ibid).

*Meaningfulness* can explain the extent to which one can make sense of things that happen in life emotionally. Meaningfulness means that one seeks meaning from unfortunate events, and tries to do his best to overcome it with dignity (Ibid).

In order to maintain an “open mind” some grounded theorists argue that one should not read too much before entering the research field (Jaccard & Jacoby 2010). As already mentioned I do not believe that it is possible to attain a completely objective truth in research. My initial impressions of people and children living in refugee situations had focused primarily on the difficulties connected with life in exile and in conflict areas. Reading the SOC theory and child oriented research, therefore, helped in broadening up my initial perspectives and was also part of necessary preparations before fieldwork.

So far in this chapter, the theoretical approaches, which were influential to my initial theoretical positioning, have been dealt with. In the following section, some extant research approaches towards Palestinian refugee children and children in similar life situations will be further elaborated on.

### **Extant research**

As already mentioned, much of the existing research on Palestinian children has focused on the influence of political and armed conflict on their life. For instance, the two Palestinian political uprisings (*Intifada's*) have been given attention in research, considering the large amount of children which participated in and were affected by these turbulent periods (Usher



1991). Various researchers and disciplines have positioned themselves differently in their approaches towards these children's experiences of violence in past and present conflicts.

Mainstream psychological research, is primarily oriented towards the damaging consequences of violent conflict in children's lives. Consequently this has led to an interest in vulnerability and diagnosis testing of these children (Boyden & Mann 2005; Al Sarraj 2009; Chatty 2009). Psychological research on Palestinian children exposed to violent conflict has dealt with their experience of trauma and the prevalence of Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD). The common methods in this type of research are for instance standardised questionnaires measuring different diagnosis, or children's drawings (Usher 1991; Al Sarraj 2009). These studies have discovered high rates of anxiety and similar psychological disorders among Palestinian children in conflict areas (Baker 1991; Macksoud 1992, Baker & Kevorkian 1999; Moughrabi 2001; Heptinstal et al. 2004; Eyber & Ager 2004; Montgomery 2006; Giacaman et al 2007; Al Sarraj 2009).

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC 2009) published a qualitative report using Palestinian refugees and children from camps in Southern Lebanon as informants. Findings showed that children aged 7-13 from Ein el Helwe reported that they feared war and conflict. They were talking specifically of the street fighting in their refugee camp, and of seeing the TV images from the war on Gaza in 2009. NABAA did a qualitative study using child informants from Ein el Helwe, where children reported that they experience high rates of structural violence (NABAA 2009). Sociological and child-oriented research on Palestinian refugee children has also revealed a high prevalence of structural violence in the life of Palestinian child refugees across the Middle East (Chatty et al. 2005).

Some researchers have also positioned themselves towards Palestinian children as easily exploited by their own community and as potential violators (Usher 1991). Rosen (2005) has approached Palestinian children historically as child soldiers or suicide bombers. Palestinian children are in such works approached as past, present and future threats to their political opponents (Ibid).

In contrast existing child oriented research on children in different political conflict situations, displays that children can be very active in defining their own allegiances in conflict situations (Usher 1991; Boyden & De Berry 2004). Brian Barbers (2009) study of Palestinian youth who participated in the Palestinian uprising (intifada), approaches these children as

agents in their own life, fighting for their own nation and future. Barber also found that these children and youth in fact do score high on psychological stress. At the same time, Barber points out that this is only *one* component of their participation in the Palestinian resistance. It is further discussed if their active participation in the conflict might be of psychological benefit to them (Ibid). This has also been suggested by some Palestinian psychologists (Al Sarraj in Usher 1999; Baker 2000).

### **Everyday life in protracted exile**

Knörr et al (2005) study of immigrant and refugee children in Europe, using child informants and theoretical approaches on migration, found that children do want to be friends with those termed as “the others” by their parents. This research has also challenged the traditional view of immigrant children as “torn” between different cultural identities.

Children’s life in long term exile and their generational position has been investigated in child oriented research on Bhutanese refugees, exiled Chilean children, and Palestinian refugee children. Chilean children living in protracted exile do experience the effects of living in exile, in addition to a disjuncture between their own and their parent’s life (Flores-Borques 2000).

Bhutanese refugee children living in a refugee camp can be seen as social actors which contribute to the mental well-being of their parents and the wider refugee community. Traditional psychological approaches towards such groups as stressed and depressed are challenged. Children have been found to use cultural values such as religion as an asset in facing the challenges of the refugee-situation (Hinton 2000).

In case studies from conflict areas in Burma, Angola and Uganda children themselves reported that their preoccupation was with practical problems in the present and fear of the future, rather than with the traumatic past events they had experienced in the war (Boyden 2004).

Parents, political leaders and charity organizations often promote a fixed group narrative, of Palestinian refugee children as future advocates for a Palestinian nation. Palestinian children in Jordan have in contrast to this fixed narrative displayed individual opinions (Hart 2004). Another study which used Palestinian refugee children s informants, analyse their narratives

as stories of belonging to collective spheres and identities which is maintained by the larger refugee camp environment (Serhan & Bassem 2005).

The concept *generations* continually appears in various literatures on Palestinian refugees and children (Rouhana 1989; Hart 2004; Peteet 2005; Shaloub-Kevorkian 2006; Sa'di & Abu Lughod 2007). As an example Rouhana (1989) express her worries about the future of Palestinian children in the West Bank which she claims have ceased to respect the adult generation and teachers since the military occupation. What are the extant opinions on Palestinian children's future?

### **Looking for the future**

Various researchers have found that Palestinian children often are traumatised or experience violence in their daily life. These research findings have consequently led to a concern for what implications the present conditions will have for these children's future opportunities. The child oriented research approach has presented a more nuanced picture of children's life in exile (Hart 2004; Chatty et al. 2009; Barber 2009).

Hieronymi (2008) in his article on refugee children in protracted refugee cases pity Palestinian children, who accordingly are brought up with a "terrible view of the future" in the present. According to his view, generations young Palestinians are served a vision of the future which holds that "Israel needs to be destroyed" in order for them to gain a normal life. Until this goal has been achieved, new generations should continue to be refugees (Hieronymi 2008).

Hart (2004) has discussed whether the UNRWA lead education they are offered corresponds with the Palestinian refugee community's visions of the future. As he mentions, many Palestinian refugees go on to search for jobs in the Gulf or in the US after finishing their education. This might make them forget their nationalistic struggle for a future state. Other studies of Palestinian schools reported that teachers and students have difficulties concentrating, particularly if they had witnessed or experienced violence or had family members in prison or in hiding (Machel 1996).

There are several extant approaches and opinions on what implications the present conditions might have for Palestinian refugee children and their future. Will these children continue to experience the effects of past and present violence as they grow older? What implications will

the challenges in their present life have on their educational opportunities? In the context of the extant and often adult centric focus on this, my open approach toward this subject has been to primarily focus on the child perspective.

### **Analytic concepts which emerged in the data-analysis**

As a result of maintaining a modified version of the grounded theory approach to my data material, the majority of the analytic concepts emerged as I was doing the analysis. In order to make sense out of the data material some analytic concepts from human geography came to good use. Human geography has increasingly focused on the way in which people and children relate to and make sense out of their everyday places (Holloway & Hubbard 2001; Holloway & Valentine 2006).

*Space* and *place* are two concepts which have been used in different ways in human geography and social science (Holloway & Hubbard 2001). In this thesis I choose to use *place* when referring to the physical space which children relate to. And *space* when referring to people's social conceptualization of place. What we understand as social space in our everyday life is thus a recognition of social order (Holloway & Valentine 2006). In childhood studies the concept *spatiality*, has also been used in order to describe the way in which childhood is shaped, and controlled through adult created social spaces (Jenks & Prout 1998 in Holloway & Valentine 2006 ). Through social institutions, such as school, childhood is constructed, controlled and shaped. Social spaces also inhabit rules, and can be accessible or inaccessible for children.

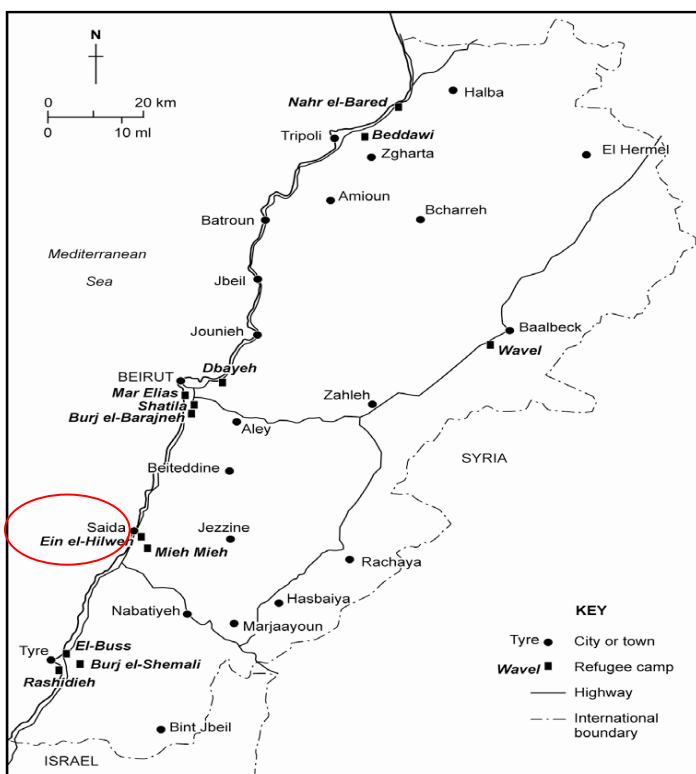
The geographical concept *relationality* refers to the reciprocity between people and place. People derive their identity from a place to a certain extent. People also influence places and assign meanings to them. The relationship between people and place is of a dialectical nature and it is constantly changing (Holloway & Hubbard 2001). I look at how children relate to their everyday place. Another place related, more specific theoretical concept is Porteus & Smith's (2001) concepts *dominicide* and *home*. *Home* is a concept and place which constitutes the most meaningful place of all (Porteus & Smith's 2001). *Dominicide*, in contrast, describes the act of deliberate destroying of someone's *home* in order to cause suffering to inhabitants.

The next chapter presents the methodological aspects of this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

The methodology and research procedures which have been applied in the work with this thesis must be understood in connection with my theoretical perspectives towards the research question. The context of the field site brought up additional methodological and ethical considerations. In order to clarify the dialectic relationship between the field site, the researcher and the research methods, this chapter begins with a general description of the field site location.

### Field site: Ein el Helwe camp



**Figure 4** Map of Palestinian Refugee camps in Lebanon. Source: Ramadan 2009. (My circle).

The name Ein el-Helwe originally means “sweet source” in Arabic. This large camp is located in the southern part of Lebanon, next to the coastal city of Sidon (“Saida” in Arabic). Presently, inhabitants in Ein el Helwe make up around 45 000 individuals, although some sources claim the numbers to be higher (approximately 75 000 individuals). Initially, the camp was set up by the International Committee of Red Cross in 1948 (NABAA 2009; DRC 2009; UN 2010).

The mother tongue of inhabitants is the Palestinian Arabic colloquial dialect from the Northern part of Palestine. Lebanese words and phrases have been adapted over the years, but it is still possible to distinguish Palestinians from Lebanese people in this linguistic difference. The inhabitants are mainly Sunni Muslims.

During the civil war, many Palestinian refugees, from other refugee camps in Lebanon were displaced to Ein el-Helwe. The camp then became the biggest, both in terms of population and area size. Between 1982 and 1991, the area was especially hard hit by violence. In 1982, Ein

el Helwe was invaded by Israeli forces which destroyed the camp area with over 70 percent. Later on, the camp was again rebuilt by the Palestinians (Fisk 1992; Khalidi 2001; UNRWA 2010). Gradually, concrete shelters have replaced tents and Ein el Helwe developed into an urban area. Today, shelters in the camp are small, very close to each other, and some still have metal sheet roofing (UN 2010). The geography in Ein el Helwe might seem chaotic to an outsider, but as other Palestinian refugee camps, it actually follows an internal logic. Refugees from the same regions of Palestine originally settled together, and this pattern is reflected in the geography of Palestinian camps (Peteet 2005).



**Figure 5: Photo of Ein el Helwe in 1982.**  
Source:UNRWA.org, accessed 7 December 2010

Since the camp area occupies a finite space, the only way to expand buildings is upwards. Growing families will therefore build another floor on top of their home, if for instance their sons grow old enough to raise a family of their own (Peteet 2005). However, legal restrictions from the Lebanese government prohibit much of this building activity (Raffionelli 2004).

The eight elementary schools in the camp are run by UNRWA, meanwhile, some of the local NGOs in the camp run various after-school activities. In addition, there are several kindergartens and a special school in the camp, which are run by different political parties or NGOs. There is a quite high drop-out rate in schools, and students are often forced to leave school early, in order to support their families financially (FAFO 2003; UNRWA 2010).

There is a high rate of migration from the camp, for those of the refugees who have this possibility (FAFO 2003; UNRWA 2010). Many inhabitants in Ein el Helwe now have relatives abroad, often contributing financially to the family economy (Peteet 2005).

Simultaneously, a few non-Palestinian residents have settled in the camp, for instance because of marriage or political affiliations.

### **Research design**

In connection with the theoretical framework I choose to operate with a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research typically deal with a smaller number of informants, and seek to go more in-depth into research questions, by using for instance open ended questions

(Silverman 2006). Meeting a smaller selection of informants over an extended period of time, enabled me to direct in depth questions to them, and gradually increase my understanding of the research subject.

In using a bottom up approach and a quite modified version of the grounded theory approach, a general research plan was sketched out (Jaccard & Jacoby 2010). I made use of this flexible research schedule, throughout the period of fieldwork in order to organise the various research activities. Initial research categories focused on everyday life themes and finally on the future.

### **Initial Research categories:**

1. Camp
2. Social Networks (family and friends)
3. Palestine
4. School
5. The Future

### **Research informants**

This qualitative study is based mainly on data-material from primary sources in the field. In connection with my child oriented focus, I wished to include children themselves in the research process. In addition to activities and meetings with children, I therefore planned to speak with some inhabitants and parents from the camp. I also wished to live in the field site throughout the research period. Interviews with NGOs working with children in the camp were also scheduled as part of the data-collection in the field. I planned this in order to gain a wider perspective on children's views.

The plan was to assign 24-30 children as research participants, during the approximately two months of fieldwork. I chose to work with children from 9 to 14 years old, as my previous experience had made me familiar with children this age as a relatively easy to communicate with. The children in focus were school age children, as education was directly relevant to the research question. The research questions were not directed towards youth, which as research has shown, often will have different perspectives and everyday lives than children (Barber 2009).

I further wished to avoid using children under the age of nine as research informants, as I doubted if this would be ethically justifiable in this specific field site. I was afraid that younger children might for instance feel more obliged to talk about painful experiences again which might re-create past traumatic events (Ennew & Boyden 1997). Such issues were difficult for me to predict before entering the field site, and I therefore choose subsequently. The research question might also have been too abstract for small children. And I considered

as Fraser (2008) has pointed out that both the children and the researcher must understand each other's concepts and vocabulary in order to communicate.

The research activities directed towards the child informants will be outlined in the next Figures. The children were in addition to these activities, given two separate and voluntary home assignments. In these home assignments, the task for the children was basically to draw, and take photographs of "that which you like." This part of the research design, was inspired by my initial reading of the Sense of Coherence theory, and its focus on meaningful aspects in peoples life. Finally, my own and the children's time constraints influenced the research schedule. I ideally wished to meet the child-informants more often, but as children were going to school/work or had other priorities at home, it was important to choose flexible methods and locations close by where they lived. The time used on research, should not inflict on the time children need to do their necessary daily activities (Boyden 2005). The focus group sessions, were chosen as method partly for this reason.

**Research schedule:**

**Core activities for each child participant:**

**Week 1: participating in individual interviews (once)**

**Week 2-6: participating in 5 focus group sessions (once weekly\*5 weeks)**

**Week 7: participation in individual interview (once)**

**Week 8: participating in final activity and photo project**

**Additional home assignments during the period:**

**1. Drawing assignment (once)**

**2. Photography assignment (once)**

**Individual interviews**

With the use of research interview, conversation is transformed into a research tool. To make the tool of conversation more "scientific", attempts are made to strip away some of the cultural aspects of the interview, and replace them so to speak, with a theoretical framework. In Mishlers work, the research interview is not only seen as a tool for information gathering, it can be a joint effort to create meaning (Gudmunnsdottir 1996, p.295).



As already mentioned, I interviewed both NGO workers in the camp and children. Parents were not interviewed, but I had many informal conversations with them as I was interviewing the children at home or as I became acquainted with people in the camp. I did not wish to intrude too much into the family sphere and, therefore, chose to not do interviews with parents. As mentioned in the ethical guidelines of the Oxford Refugee Study Centre (2010) a researcher should not know about everything. The organizations, which were working with children, provided me with valuable contextual information on children's and the adult generation in Ein el Helwe. The NGO interviews were primarily conducted in the end of the fieldwork process in order to saturate existent and emerging data categories in the project (Jaccard & Jacoby 2010).

In order to approach the child informants as individual beings I used semi-structured interviews as the initial method in our meetings. In the first meeting with children, some researchers view this method as inappropriate because the researcher might lack cultural knowledge which makes him or her conduct the interview (Hart & Tyrer 2006). Considering the simple questions, my low expectation to the duration of these interviews and the fact that I to a certain extent had knowledge about the culture I choose to maintain this as an initial approach. I made use of a voice recorder when conducting all interviews. This was a very good way of letting the interview flow naturally because taking extensive notes during an interview can be very distracting for both participants and researcher (Kvale & Brinkman 2009).

I choose to use what is termed "everyday-life" interviews, in order to gain more insight to children's everyday life. In these interviews the focus is on actions that are anchored in time and space and are repeated as a pattern (Haavind 1987; Andenæs 1991 in Tingstad 2007). Time and space are the organizing principles of the interview. This method is useful in order to obtain concrete and recently experienced actions (Tingstad 2007, p. 133). My interviews were conducted by using questions such as; *what do you do every day from morning until evening?* These questions served as an icebreaker, when meeting new informants, as this question was one that "everyone" could answer. This introduction also provided a basis for new questions about the children's everyday life.

I used these semi-structured interviews, twice; in the beginning and in the end of the fieldwork. As a result of a few children dropping out before the end of the project, and

additional time constraints, not all of the participants were able to participate in the second interview. The second interview was based on the same structure as the first interview, with questions focused on children's everyday-life. In the second interview, I was able to ask more questions as I had gained more trust from informants.

In the second interview, children's individual drawings were also used as an additional basis for our conversation. In many ways these interviews were better, and would often provide "*thicker descriptions*" of their everyday life. The duration of these interviews were also considerably longer as the participants talked more. This could mainly have been related to my increased experience in the field, and naturally, having gained more trust from participants over time.

### Focus-group sessions



**Figure 6** Photo from my focus group. By:L.R

With focus groups the primary concern is to encourage a variety of viewpoints on the research subject (Kvale 2009). After the first individual interviews, with the child informants, I organised them in separate groups according to age and gender. I choose to maintain separate groups for boys and girls because the girls were requesting this. Some girls, for instance, explained to me that they might be "teased" by boys in mixed groups and that they therefore would not be able to speak freely.

In addition, boys and girls went to separate schools and, therefore, I wished to adapt to what the children were familiar with in their social environment. After agreement with the parents, who feared for the security of their daughters, I assisted the girls participating in focus groups on their way home after the session was over.

Each of the four groups was made up of six child participants (Kvale 1997). During the approximately two hour focus group sessions, participants would be offered something to drink, for instance juice. As one of my friends in the camp said, even adults would have been offered this in a two hour meeting.

In the focus-group sessions, I organised group activities related to the research subjects. In the first focus-group sessions, I used child-friendly activities which have already been developed by other child-researchers. These activities usually involved drawing together on large

cartoons or making subject maps for discussion together (Hart & Tyrer 2006; Save the Children 2009). The informants were able to make drawings in groups and individually. Sometimes, the focus group sessions focused mainly on discussions. I also recorded parts of the focus group sessions with the use of the voice recorder.

As the project went on, I improved my skills and gave children increased room for participation in the focus groups. This was in many ways a process for me as a developing researcher. Simultaneously, children contribute with their critical views, opinions and wishes during the sessions. I also encouraged children to state what they wished to do for the next focus group.

When approaching the end of fieldwork, I asked the children to provide suggestions on what we could do together for the final focus group session. The informants themselves proposed that they wished to go on a small trip to the nearby amusement park. This trip was then planned, and after the children's parents had given their consent, we went on this trip.

### **Child oriented research**

It has been discussed, when undertaking research with children, if they need specifically designed methods (Solberg 1996; Ennew & Boyden 1997). Child-friendly research methods refer to research methods, which approaches children through activities they usually like; such as drawings or playing. I choose to apply some of these child-friendly methods in the research design. Allowing children to participate in, and influence the research process. Another advantage of using such methods is that the research process might be more enjoyable to them (Ennew & Boyden 1997; Fraser. et al 2004; Hart & Tyrer 2006).

Because these methods encourage children's own participation in the research process, child-friendly methods also have the potential to handle ethical concerns in a very satisfactory way. Children's own influence on the research process can enhance their protection. For instance, in using indirect approaches such as drawings, child-participants can themselves decide how much information they would like to reveal (ibid).

The participatory and child friendly research methods also allow for an equalization of the power imbalance between the adult researcher and the child participants. In this research study, the research objectives were shaped by me, and I also chose the methods. During the process, I continuously consulted children on their views on the research procedures. I choose

whether, or not to maintain these approaches, after having consulted with participants. Therefore, I cannot claim that children have fully participated in all the stages of in this study. If, for instance, referring to Harts lather of child participation (in Ennew and Boyden 1997), this research study have consulted and included children, but they have not been in complete control of the process, nor was this my intention.

### **Drawings**

Using drawing was a relatively easy method to organise in the field site. A pencil-case with coloured crayons was given out to each participant, and was then used in the proceeding focus group sessions, or by the child participants when at home. During the focus group sessions, children were also given coloured crayons, felt-tip pens, and glitters to use in the drawings which were made. Most child informants said they liked drawings, and I therefore choose to maintain this method. In the end of fieldwork, I gave the participants a home assignment to draw what they appreciated in their present life, as (I gave them notebooks for this).

### **Photography**

Photography can be a great way of assessing children's own perspectives, and it can also be an enjoyable activity for participants (Alderson 2004). In the end of the fieldwork, I arranged a small photo project. I explained the purpose of this project to the children, in the last focus group session, and an explanatory leaflet was handed out along with the camera (see appendix). Each child was given a Kodak single-use camera, which they were to use in order to "take pictures of what you like." The participants were then provided with their pictures in an album, after these photos had been developed. In the next section I describe further the initiation of and practical issues related to the research process.

### **Reflexivity**

In undertaking social research, I acknowledge that it is impossible to describe a complete and objective picture of the social world (Gudmunnsdottir 1996; Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000; Said 2001; Jaccard & Jacoby 2010). Any researcher must therefore be aware of his or her influence on the research process and outcome. Being reflexive, in the research process, is a step towards admitting to the continuous relationship between the research field and the researcher (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000).

In this study, my disproportionate power position as an adult in the meeting with the children, might for instance have affected the behaviour and answers from informants (Robinson & Kellet 2004). Simultaneously, the research questions and the observations I have made in the field cannot be separated from my role in the field.

### **Preparing the field work**

Initially, the field site was intended to be the Gaza strip. After I had contacted several NGOs, and practitioners with experience from this field, I learnt that it would be very difficult, if not impossible to enter this field site. The international section at my university kindly assisted me in applying for a visa to Gaza via the Norwegian embassy in Egypt and Tel Aviv. In spite of this, due to the strict travel restrictions my entry was denied.

After having consulted two medical doctors, who had previously worked with Palestinian refugees, I was advised to do the research project in Lebanon. I chose to follow this advice after I had adjusted the research schedule and objectives according to a Lebanese context. Before I left for Lebanon, I met with three contacts in Norway, who all had been to Ein el Helwe. One was a Child Psychiatrist having worked with Palestinian children, and had several years of experience. This meeting was informative and useful, and he was able to answer my questions on ethical issues previous to my travel; something I worried about.

I also spoke with a woman from the Norwegian Palestine committee, who had been to Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon several times and she shared some of her experience with me. On the basis of her previous experiences and knowledge, she advised me to buy a special insurance for Ein el Helwe camp. It is important for any researcher to consider personal security, when undertaking research in conflict areas (Hart & Tyrer 2006). The political situation in Lebanon, and occurring violent clashes in Ein el Helwe, were important factors in the consideration of my own security.

Prior to fieldwork, I finally contacted a personal friend in Norway, a Palestinian who originally comes from Lebanon. He had a personal contact in Ein el Helwe, a Palestinian man which was living in the camp, and I was offered to come in contact with this person.

Alternatively, I could have contacted a Palestinian organization in Norway, in order to meet a similar contact. Me and my friend, choose to initiate contact with this person by e-mail, explaining to him the purpose of my fieldwork. This man then agreed to be my contact in the camp. He was, therefore, my key to entering the camp in the first place. I could have chosen

to cooperate with an NGO in the field, but as I found this contact to be sufficient I chose to stick to this arrangement. I also had to consider that relying on any one, be it an NGO or an individual, will create challenges in connection to the expectations this might raise to the researcher (Hammersley 2003).

### **Access to the field site location**

How to access the field is a common dilemma, which any researcher must take into account when doing research (Hammersley 2008). After my arrival in Lebanon, I stayed in Saidon, the city in which Ein el Helwe is located. Here, I was waiting to meet with my contact from Ein el Helwe.

It is unrealistic to expect that one can conduct research without any of the relevant authorities being aware of it (Hart & Tyrer 2006). In order to enter Ein el Helwe, as a foreigner, one needs to attain a special permit from the Lebanese security forces. This permit is relatively easy to attain. I met up at the office of the Lebanese security forces in Saidon, with my contact and two copies of my passport. I here stated the purpose of my stay in the camp, and was then granted in the same day a two-month permission to stay in the camp.

After a few days, I was offered to live with a family member of my contact. This was a local woman and her daughter, who were living in the camp. This woman helped me access the social sphere of the camp, and she explained to me the cultural norms, history and social conditions in Ein el Helwe. Later on, she provided me with access to her social network, primarily local women, who later happened to be essential for the field work.

As already mentioned, my initial idea was to gain assistance from a local NGO in order to facilitate the research process, but as the social network of my landlady kindly offered to help me, and I personally saw this assistance to be sufficient, I chose to operate independent of an NGO in the field. In the final period of fieldwork, I was assisted by the NGO ANABAA in the process of interviewing NGOs. This organization assisted me in scheduling interview appointments with other NGOs inside Ein el Helwe. This was a very useful arrangement, as



**Figure 7: Ein el Helwe has developed from a tent camp into an urban area.**  
Source: Yalibnan.com. Accessed 1st May

ANABAA had overview of the relevant NGOs working with children, in addition to their contacts with the employees working there.

### **Initiation of fieldwork**

Because I initially was unfamiliar with the field site, I used a few days to settle in the field. During my preparations to go to Ein el Helwe I had encountered some negative attitudes towards this particular place. Some argued that many people in Ein el Helwe were particularly hostile towards foreigners, in comparison to refugees from other camps.

In addition to such subjective warnings, I found it hard to assess the general security situation in the camp, as the sources of reliable information limited themselves to occasional news reports. These initial “warnings” led me to be very careful, and observant in the beginning of my stay in the camp, as I had few ways of confirming or disconfirming such information, except to talk to local contacts.

The political and historical situation of Palestinians in general and in Ein el Helwe specifically, has naturally caused some caution towards outsiders in the Palestinian community (Fisk 1995; Pappé2006). At the same time, I personally knew the Palestinian community to be very open and known for its great hospitality. I also knew that as a woman (Hart & Tyrer 2006), and partly Palestinian, some of the alternative suspicion from people in Ein el Helwe could be eased. Gradually, during the period of fieldwork, I began to understand more of the social codes, and particularities of the camp.

A basic step of sending the right signals when entering a new place as a foreigner is to respect the local dress-code (Hart & Tyrer 2006). During a visit to an organization in the camp, this basic principle was confirmed in an interview with the manager. She stated that foreigners would not only cause problems for themselves, but also give her a bad reputation in the case of dressing inappropriately.

Ein el Helwe is a Muslim society, and many residents are quite strict followers of the Islamic ways which perpetuates modesty. Modest dress for men and women is important in this society. Some general rules for modest dress in most Muslim areas are not to show off any waist, let skirt and pants go under the knees and finally not wear sleeveless T-shirts.

I did not wear an Islamic headscarf (hijab) during my fieldwork as it is not a part of my normal dress. I had already seen that some women from the camp also did not wear hijabs.

However, it is still possible to send signals of modesty through choice of dress code. I did this by using covering clothes, and usually tying my hair up. Taking such local customs into consideration is vital if one wants to be taken seriously as a researcher. In addition, this avoided making problems for some of the local people associated with me.

### **Meeting with informants**

In order to find child informants, I chose to avoid working through the school system. For many children, the school space will often be associated with unequal power-relations and expectations from adults. This choice was also made for practical reasons, as the time of fieldwork was quite limited. And, in order to visit the UNRWA schools, I had to apply for a special permission from the UN.

The other place, in which I could have met child informants, was through a local NGO. Still, as many researchers have noted, working through a NGO can create many different expectations that I would not be able to fulfil as a researcher.

However, the social network of my landlady proved an efficient method of getting child informants. By simply working on the ground, I believe that this project did not seem very ambitious to the people I met in Ein el Helwe.

### **Choosing the sample**

Several local women kindly helped me find informants. I met many mothers who were willing to let me talk with their children. Sometimes, I also met children on the streets of the camp, who themselves were initiating contact with me, in order to participate in the project.

When I was told about a child that was interested in participating in the project, I went to visit their family with an informational sheet explaining the research activities. I was often assisted by a local contact, when visiting these families for the first time. This was probably a good method of gaining trust, as I entered the field site with few references connected to my person. Through this simple snowballing method, I found enough informants to start with the research activities and data collection.

It is important to have a variety of research informants, in order to present several perspectives (Fraser et al. 2004). I explained this to the women who were assisting me in finding informants. I also met with children from more than one woman's network. The



informants were living more than four different areas of the camp, in order to secure a diverse group of children.

### **Locations**

The individual interviews were taking place at children's homes with their families present. This was due to ethical research conduct. For the focus groups I did not have a designated working space where the fieldwork could be conducted. This could possibly have been arranged if I had cooperated with a local NGO.

Throughout the research process I used the flat roof of my landlady's house as a place for conducting focus groups. Other families were also offering me to use their houses. As Hart and Tyrer (2006) have noted, focus groups can also be held successfully in places which are not ideal for this purpose.

Ideally, a researcher should not have children coming to their house because for one this increases the already unequal power position between the adult researcher and the children (Fraser et al. 2008). However, since this was not my house I still perceived this arrangement to be sufficient. This was also an open-air location, and on top the roof neighbours would often and easily see us. The crowdedness of the houses in the camp made it easy to be spotted. The children were always in a group, and their parents had also consented to their coming there. Most of the children's families also knew this woman's and many of them knew her personally.

Because of these factors, I considered this arrangement to be ethically justifiable. This simple arrangement might also have helped to ease any expectations, which might have been raised if the meetings had taken place in a more formal and closed off setting.

### **Relationships in the field**

Researchers continue to have a power position, in the meeting with research informants. In relation to the adults I meet in relation to the research project, I was counting on several people to help me in the camp. I viewed them as the experts, and was depending on cooperation with them. Therefore, my outsider position might have helped in easing up unequal power relations between me and other adults.

To be reflexive in a research process is a further step towards admitting to the continuous relationship, between the research field and researcher (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000). As an

adult and researcher, in the field, I continuously tried to balance the unequal power position between myself and the child informants. Some initial factors helped this, especially the fact that I was an outsider in the camp, and that the child informants were insiders in their local environment. Hart & Tyrer (2006) have suggested that simple methods such as sitting on the same level as children might help in lightening up the power structure between adults and children. This was one method which I followed when I conducted interviews and focus groups sessions.

### **Ethical considerations**

In all types of research ethical concerns should be taken into consideration, in particular research which directly involves human beings. Using children as informants might raise additional ethical issues. Other factors such as for instance the child's socio cultural, background and gender should also be taken into consideration (Ennew & Boyden 1997).

In undertaking research, with children in vulnerable conditions, there are several ethical concerns to consider (Ennew & Boyden 1997; Boyden & Berry 2005). The fact that my research informants were living in a challenging setting, was a necessary consideration, in my choice of my methods and research conduct and I have attempted to include my ethical considerations in explaining my choices of research procedures.

For instance, I would ask the children to end the focus group session by drawing something "which makes you happy" if we had been dealing with a difficult theme. I experienced that children responded very well to this. For a focus group session, where the children had been asked to draw and imagine "Palestine", I ended the session by asking the children to draw a "happy drawing". One informant then said, "Yes that is a good idea, because thinking about this has made us so sad." It was as if he understood my intention very well.

### **Informed consent**

In order to conduct ethical research one has to inform the participants thoroughly of the purpose of the research project, in order to gain what is termed as *informed* consent. Initially, a written informational sheet in Arabic, giving information about the research project, was given to the families of the participating children.

When working with this informational sheet, I consulted some local parents first. This was to get their expert advice on what was necessary to include, and how I should formulate my

intentions in the local context. For instance, they explained that I had to change the word “anonymity” to the word “privacy”, because this could otherwise lead to unnecessary fear of what I was really out to investigate. This might be connected to the specific context of the field site, which is characterised by political activism and anonymity was supposed to be perceived as suspicious. This way of re-evaluating an informational sheet directed to local parents, proved to be very useful.

Initially, the children themselves were not given an informational sheet, but they and their family members were informed about the research. Before I began the first interview with the children, I asked the child to read a paper stating “your rights” before we started the interview, (Fraser et al. 2008). This paper explained, for instance, the child’s right to stop the interview process at any time. After the child had read this paper, I then asked if he or she had properly understood the content, before we proceeded with the initial interview. In a few cases the child could not read properly, and I would then ask a parent or sibling to read it for him or her.

### **Continuous consent**

To attain informed consent throughout the research project is a continuous process. In order, to manage this I would continuously ask the children, “why are we doing this?” when for instance we were doing research activities. After the third focus group session, I produced an informational sheet in Arabic for the children themselves to read (see Appendices).

This sheet was introduced to the children halfway through the research process, and we read and discussed the content of it together in a focus group. The children seemed to appreciate this information sheet very much, and it was also a great way of putting aside any possible misassumptions about the research.

### **Dissemination process and anonymity**

Ethical considerations must also be taken in the dissemination process. Ethical concerns will emerge at all stages of the research process, from the beginning to end. As an example; published research reports can risk to stigmatise whole groups of children, long after the data collection is done with (Alderson 2004; Hart & Tyrer 2006). The names of child participants will, therefore, be kept anonymous. The relative large number of children participating in this study has, fortunately, also contributed in securing a larger degree of anonymity.

In the photo-project, the child informants produced beautiful photographs, which for instance show their friend relations, their school mates and family members. These photographs give interesting insight into these children's everyday life, but for ethical reasons I will not publish any pictures revealing the identity of children having participated in this study. However, these photos have been useful in order to understand more of what children liked and showing me more of their "spaces." Some places, such as the Mosques and the schools, were not so accessible for me and it was therefore interesting to see the photos.

In relation to the politically sensitive nature of the field location, I have also left out any information which might be potentially harmful to any of the research participants or inhabitants in Ein el Helwe.

### **Transcription**

The data material from the field work in Ein el Helwe provided a rich and varied collection of children's experiences and views. Much of the data material like the interviews with children and NGOs, and focus group sessions had been recorded. According to Hammersley & Atkinson (2005) one should take into account if all of the recorded data material should be transcribed. Time restraints might for instance be a deciding factor in such decisions. Because I viewed the individual interviews as those providing the richest and most ordered data on everyday life I chose to transcribe these. Had I for instance transcribed recordings from the focus group session, in addition, this would have been too time-consuming. After the data collection was over, I had attained several recorded interviews.

I transcribed these recorded interviews completely from the recordings in colloquial Arabic to English. Kvale & Brinkman (2009) mention that researchers who do their own transcription might benefit in that they learn more about their interview style and also are reminded of the social and emotional aspects surrounding the interview situation. The researcher might then begin to reflect on what is being said in the interviews and make use of this in the analytic process. To have the recorded interviews in writing was, therefore, very practical in the analytic process which began after the transcription process.

### **The process of data analysis**

In the process of data-analysis the researcher needs to read and reread the data-material, in order to "find" emerging theories in the data-material. Within qualitative data, gathered with

qualitative methods, the data in itself usually does not fit in some standard categories. These categories need to be developed through the organizing, and analytic reading of the data. Patterns might form, and similarities between informants might appear through this process. Simultaneously, it is necessary to find the divergent cases which separate themselves from the others. It is also of great importance to find the different categories relationship to each other (McCracken 1988; Mason 1996; Hammersley 2003; Silverman 2006).

All research methodologies have limitations, to have this in mind, gives one a more realistic view on the information, which qualitative research can provide us with. The problem of representation is another issue, to be aware of when representing the informant's views in case studies (Sayigh 1997). Finally, as Gudmunnsdottir (1996) has discussed, a case study can only provide us with a limited picture of the informant's reality. It is this "limited" picture that I will present here, as best as possible. This picture will here be presented by organizing the empirical material in several sub-categories.

### **Validity**

I have also had to separate between what can be interpreted as backstage and front-stage statements, in this society (Goffman 1959). In the analysis I have valued the individual interviews the highest, as I regard them to contain less "front stage" statements than the focus groups. I have judged the focus group sessions as the second most valuable source on the children's views, as these after all were conducted with children. Additional data-material from meetings with child informants, such as, field observations, children's photographs, and drawings have been useful in order to saturate the research categories which emerged in the analysis of interviews. The three proceeding chapters will present the outcomes of this data analysis.

## CHAPTER FIVE: LIFE IN THE PRESENT

Within human geography it has been recognised that places can take on a far greater significance than to just simply be physical locations on the Earth's surface (Holloway & Hubbard 2001; Hammond 2004). In studies of children researched from a geographical angle, children's abilities as social actors within their significant social spaces have increasingly been focused upon (Holloway & Valentine 2006).

The analysis of my empirical material is based on children's descriptions of their everyday life within the camp. This analysis does not aim at disputing on the suitability of refugee camps for children. Neither will my analysis claim anything about these children's comprehensive social identities. The focus is rather to focus on children's *perspectives* on their present life in Ein el Helwe. How do children perceive their present life and their local institutions in the camp?

This research focus revealed three significant institutions in the child informant's daily life; the family, the belief-system and their school. This chapter will consist of four subcategories: *Camp*, *Social Networks*, *Belief system* and *Children's culture*.

1. *Camp*; in this category some general features of children's descriptions of the camp will be explored. This section might also function as background information for the readers understanding of the proceeding categories.
2. *Social Networks*; under this section children's social relationships and networks in the camp are dealt with.
3. *Belief-system*; the less "visible" parts of life in Ein el Helwe, such as a few of the unspoken moral codes and the significance of religion in the children's eyes, are explored under this category
4. *Children's culture*; in the end of this chapter children's play in the context of their daily life will be explored.

# 1. Camp

## A place to call my home

When I first visited Ein el Helwe, the Lebanese military checkpoints surrounding the camp area were the first visible reminder of how, this apparently urban part of Saidon, differed from its surrounding landscape. Upon entering the camp, Palestinian flags and symbols inside the camp area, also communicated this difference. Ein el Helwe, as many visitors have pointed out, seemed almost like a city in itself.

The camp seemed quite big and inside there were various different areas. Some parts of the camp reminded more of urban slums, with narrow alleyways, bad and crowded housing conditions, litter and fat cats running around in the corners. Meanwhile, some of the more open and central areas of the camp, such as the main streets, seemed in better condition and in a few places there were even some large and beautiful trees. In the main streets, there were shops which were selling all kinds of goods and it always seemed to be crowded with people, cars, and children driving small scooters. Fatah soldiers and also other armed men were also strolling casually around amongst the crowd.

After having lived in the camp for a short while, I realised how close the houses were to each other, as we could hear “everything” the next door neighbours were saying. One man jokingly remarked that the whole camp was his home and that the streets of the camp were just the “corridors” on the inside of this house.



**Figure 8 Photo of the vegetable market in Ein el Helwe. Source: child informant, aged 11.**

2009).

The physical closeness of houses and neighbours suggests that the borders between private and public space had become blurred and therefore could give a feeling of the whole camp as constituting “one home.” Meanwhile, reports and my own NGO interviews have shown that many residents in refugee camps often find it very stressful to live with the lack of privacy in these increasingly crowded housing conditions (FAFO 2003; DRC

People from Ein el Helwe often went outside the camp for work, school, trips, shopping or other errands. Meanwhile, some families living in Ein el Helwe rarely or never left the camp-area. In some cases low mobility was a result of from for instance poverty, or political problems with the Lebanese government (Peteet 2005).

Most of the child informants had lived in Ein el Helwe their whole life and the majority explained that they had also visited other places within Lebanon<sup>18</sup>. In our first meeting and also in the following session with the child informants, I would ask about their various perceptions of the camp. By asking questions such as; *what is a camp to you? How is your daily life?* This is an example of how one informant in our first meeting explained what a camp meant to him. Here I ask the informant; how would you explain a camp to someone who is not from here?

**Mahmud, 12**

*Mahmud: I would tell him that a camp is like a village.*

*L.R.: Like a village?*

*Mahmud: Like a village, like an area (deah). I know that the camp is small ... it's not like a country or like a city.*

Mahmud's answer gives a hint about how the camp could be perceived by some children. It seems as if he perceives it as different, but simultaneously as incorporated within the Lebanese landscape. As mentioned, most of the child informants had lived in Ein el Helwe their entire life.

**Mohammed, 13**

*Mohammed: Maybe I was born in Saida.*

*L.R.: Ah ... and later you came here? ... Do you like it here?*

*Mohammed: Yes, we got used to living in the camp.*

Mohammed's explanation of the camp as a place "we have gotten used to" suggest that there are aspects of life in the camp, which might need to be adjusted to. After having explored some of the basic perceptions of the camp we proceeded by talking about what children were doing in a normal day in Ein el Helwe.

---

<sup>18</sup> One informant originated from Naher el Bared and had come from this camp upon the destruction of this camp in 2007(see Background chapter).



## **A predictable everyday life**

The most prevailing places, when children explained their everyday life in the camp was their house, the neighbourhood and their school. For instance, Noor, in this excerpt explain: what children, in Ein el Helwe, do during the days:

### **Noor, 13**

*Noor: The children they just keep on playing in the neighbourhood, they just leave from that school, they study, eat and they play in the neighbourhood, in the Maghreb (evening) they come back home, watch TV and then they sleep.*

Noor here explains how she experienced that most children, including herself, spent their days in Ein el Helwe. “Normal” activities and predictable routines are described. In the basic descriptions of everyday life, school also emerged as a place in which where children spent a significant amount of hours during the day, often more than five or six hours. School, therefore, contributed much to the structure and predictability of children’s life which my informants talk of.

The children’s everyday life descriptions, of their days in Ein el Helwe, could easily be compared to the life of children in various social and spatial contexts elsewhere in the world. For instance, in a study of children in Britain (Percy-Smith 2002) children also spoke of the neighbourhood as place for play. James et al. (1998 in Valentine and Holloway 200) also present three everyday places in their study of children in a western context; home, school and the city. These basic descriptions of children’s everyday life, therefore, cannot be said to be *place-specific* for Ein el Helwe. The child informants described their everyday life with relatively few individual variations:

### **Aisha, 10**

*Aisha: Eh ... in the morning when I have woken up I’ll help my mother.*

*L.R.: Mm ... with what?*

*Aisha: Eh ... with making food and I’ll tidy the house.*

*L.R.: Mmm ...*

*Aisha: And when I come from school I’ll study and go to see my friend.*

Aisha explained these everyday activities, which were repeated throughout the week. The main difference between Aisha’s and Noor’s descriptions of their everyday is that Aisha introduces a new subject, helping with domestic chores at home. This was often mentioned, by girls, although boys would also explain that they helped their families with various chores, but often chores which required more mobility.

My data material show, with little variation, that there are few differences between what is perceived as a “normal” everyday life for my informants and children elsewhere, particularly in urban settings.

The following interview excerpt is not typical of among my informants. This is an example of how the everyday life could be for children which were full-time workers:

**Fadi, 14**

Fadi: *In the morning I go and work.*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Fadi: *From eight o'clock to eight o'clock.*

L.R.: *Mm ... and then? After eight o'clock, what do you do?*

Fadi: *I come home and take a shower, sometimes I go outside a little bit like, I walk around or I'll stay in my home.*

As this informant explains, he worked for twelve hours each day, with the exception of Fridays. Whereas this description of an everyday routine is untypical of among my informants, UNRWA (2010) reports that children in Ein el Helwe often drop out of school at an early age and work in order to support their family.

This informant contributed to his family economy and as he further explained this was a quite defining part of his life. He would often more or less directly communicate, in focus groups, that he perceived his life as different from that of the school-children. For instance, the interviews reveal that he did not use as much time playing in the neighbourhood. He also, more or less directly, expressed that he perceived himself as more of an adult than the children still in school.

The descriptions of everyday life in Ein el Helwe provide a basis for further exploration of the camp and home of the child informants. In children's descriptions the camp site also encapsulates several other places such as the neighbourhood. The camp is also constituted by some real and perceived borders. Children's perception of these borders will be explored in the next section.

**We're not used to it outside**

Children's declarations of a strong *relationality* and belonging to Ein el Helwe often appeared in our conversations and focus groups. The strong familiarity and solidarity between residents in the camp kept reappearing in stories about the camp. This was also an aspect of the camp, which became quite apparent to me as I was living in the camp. I experienced that neighbours

and family were visiting each other often, and in the shops in the main streets acquaintances of the shopkeeper would often take some time and drink coffee together.

Children often visited Saidon. Boys often went outside the camp alone or in the company of peers from the camp, whereas, girls were mostly accompanied by their family. Some children would also visit relatives in other refugee camps or in other areas across Lebanon. In these outside places, the children explained that they were enjoying themselves, seeing new things and playing in more or less new surroundings. In the following interview excerpt, the informant talks about some of the aspects of life in the camp which he appreciates:

**Rashid, 11**

Rashid: *I play with them (my friends) in the neighbourhood and I am close to my relatives, I mean it is not so nice outside and like that, we are on our own there.*

L.R.: *Okay ... why isn't it nice outside?*

Rashid: *Here, it is nice because we got used to it ... outside we'll need five years to get used to it.*

“Five years”, is just a Figure of speech in Rashid’s statement, to express that he believes that he would need a long time in order to get used to the environment outside. Whereas, inside the camp he is familiar with the surroundings and it is also the place in which he finds his closest social network. This explanation could be framed in Antonovsky’s Comprehensibility term (1987). Ein el Helwe and its social environment, is described as a comprehensible place. He can make sense out of what takes place here.



**Figure 9 Photo of the Main street in Ein el Helwe.By: child informant, aged 10.**

When children described places outside Ein el Helwe, they would often also point out how boring it was that they had “no one else” to play with

outside the camp. The “outside” place which was referred to most often was Saidon. Some informants explained that outside, in Saidon; the social life did not appear to be as good as within Ein el Helwe. The following excerpt is a quite typical description of the social environment *outside* Ein el Helwe:

**Tareq, 12**

L.R.: *But ah ... what is the difference between the camp and the city, what is the meaning of a camp I mean?*

Tareq: *The camp is something nice.*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Tareq: *And outside ... there is not that many people like here, I mean here you'll have more fun, in the camp.*

This informant often went to areas outside the camp with his friends. He oftentimes made use of the “Cornish”-the seaside in Sidon, as a place where he could play. Here, he makes reference to the good social networks inside the camp, which he noticed to be missing in the outside environment. This statement expresses a particular *relationality* to Ein el Helwe, which seems to be evoked by his physical movement to the nearby, but still “other place” outside of home.

The facilities and different landscapes which the outside could offer seemed to be appreciated by more or less all of the children. Outside, there were shopping malls, amusement parks, the seaside and other “fun places” to be explored. These were things that might have been perceived to be lacking within the camp space. One informant told me of how she had appreciated the beautiful trees and mountains in Nabatia, a city in Northern in Lebanon, because she compared it to the bad streets in her neighbourhood of Ein el Helwe.

The children’s descriptions of Ein el Helwe were varied. It was a place which one could feel strongly connected to, but also as a place which was not as “nice” as the rest of Lebanon in regards to for instance psychical appearance. Such ambivalent description of the camp kept re-appearing in my interviews and meetings with the children.

Boy’s relationality to the camp often appeared as more outspoken and clear. Girls, in general, did not express their relationality to the camp in an equally strong language. This difference might be understood in the context of the all over lower mobility of girls which meant that “the outside”, of the camp, might still have seemed more unexplored and possibly more promising.

The mobility of child informants also depended on factors such as their family’s economical situation. Still, girls had less of a possibility to go outside alone, whilst boys seemed to be more able to independently decide when to go on a trip outside. Parent’s explained their restrictions on the mobility of girls, as a result of their worries about girl’s security.



**Figure 10**Photo of a mall in Saida. By: child informant, aged 12.

I also meet adult residents of the camp who were saying that it was important to occasionally leave the camp for a change of environment. Some families had one particular day of the week where they left the camp for an outside trip.

For the final focus group session, we went on a trip to the Lebanese amusement park, located next to the camp area. After having spent some time there, some of the boys started an argument with some employees in charge of guarding the swings in the park. The boys wished to ride some swings which they were told that they were too young to use. After unsuccessfully having tried to argue his way on a swing, one of my key informants turned to me with a frustrated expression and said; “they only do this because we are Palestinians.” Such statements can critically be read as “acting” towards the researcher. However, I interpret this as an awareness of having minority status inside Lebanon and the unjust treatment this status might lead to. Again, moving to “another place”, although physically very close to the camp, seemed to evoke a sense of being *out of place*. Children’s perceptions of being strangers in Lebanese spaces could also be expressed in simple comments, which did not involve physical movement from the camp:

**Lina, 11**

L.R.: *So ... but you ...mm ... do you, so that means you think ... are you happy here, in the camp?*

Lina: *if it was our land I would enjoy it more.*

This reply displays a quite outspoken awareness and gratefulness of residing in Lebanon. Lina later on explained that she was grateful that Lebanon is hosting “us”, which in this context means Palestinian refugees. She is *locating* Ein el Helwe, within a wider Lebanese landscape. The different status, between Palestinians and Lebanese ownership of the land, evokes a gratefulness for “letting us stay” in a place within a wider landscape,” which is not really ours.”

Knörr et al. (2003) studies of immigrant children have shown that children have a considerable ability to adapt to new environments and often more so than their older peers. The display of openness and the ability which children often have to get new friends in any place was as children explained here not unproblematic. Children often said that they would rather leave outside the camp with friends. One informant explained that he and 8-9 of his friends would leave the camp together. This must also be connected to the fact that most

Palestinian children in Lebanon attend UNRWA schools and therefore do not meet many Lebanese children during this time of the day.

On refugee children, it has been noted by several researchers, that they often face issues similar to those of many minority children (Florez-Borquez 2000; Watters 2008). Whilst, there might be many similarities between these groups, additional factors might also influence the way in which refugees relates to their significant places. To hold refugee status is not merely to hold an official label. The feelings of displacement which often accompany this refugee status can, as research has shown, be inherited and continued over generations (Florez-Borquez 2000).

Children's relationality to a more homogenous Palestinian environment inside the camp area seemed to be influenced by their visits to locations outside. These visits sometimes lead to reflections of belonging to somewhere separate from the Lebanese majority society. Children's "inherited" feelings of residing in exile, might therefore have been reinforced in their meetings between "the inside and outside" places of their home. This dialectical relationship between *home* and *outside* is illustrated by Porteous and Smith (2001):

*Home is a notion that is universal to our species, not as a place, house, or city, but as a principle for establishing a meaningful relationship with the environment.* (Porteous & Smith 2001, p. 30).

This "meeting" with the majority society can, as Kamel Dorai (2002) notes in his work on Palestinian refugees in the Diaspora, also be referred to as a reactive ethnicity. The concept of "othering" also refers to the way in which individuals and groups alike understand one self and others in *relation* to someone of a different group or ethnicity. This reactive identity is often the reason for maintenance of transnational identities (Porter 1999 in Kamel Dorai 2002).

The relationship between the camp, its outside environment and children's perception of differences between these two locations, is a multifaceted subject. This could be better understood by looking, more specifically, at how the outside looked upon the camp and how this was interpreted by the children.

## **Wrong perceptions of our place**

Lebanese media representations of the camp were also noticed and reflected upon by children in Ein el Helwe. The sympathy the Palestinian case often will get among many political factions within the Lebanese society is often based on religious and political affiliations, in addition to an emphasis the bond between them as Arabs. One example, the Lebanese Shia Muslim party, Hezbollah, which often declare their support to the Palestinian cause (Fisk 2001). Meanwhile, among many fractions in Lebanon the scepticism and even hate of Palestinians will appear equally strong. Because of its internal conflicts, Ein el Helwe has often come to be described as a “lawless zone” in the mainstream Lebanese media. This camp also has gotten attention, in media and research, as a site for Islamist activities and even the alleged presence of Al Qaida inspired political fractions (Rougier 2007).

I also encountered common perceptions of Ein el Helwe as dangerous place among people living in Sidon and in other parts of Lebanon. For instance, I would often be told by someone in Sidon that “there is something going on in Ein el Helwe now”, which usually meant that there might be some shootings going on inside the camp area. I would usually return to the camp and find it as calm as before. How then, were these perceptions interpreted by the children living in the camp? In this interview with Bilal, we talk about some outside perceptions after he himself has brought it up:

**Bilal, 12**

Bilal: *For example if something happens in the alleyways of Sidon*

L.R.: *Ehmm ...*

Bilal: *And the Television news crews show up there, they won't announce it on the news; they will keep it between themselves.*

L.R.: *Ah ...*

Bilal: *But we ... if something happens here at ours ... in the camp ...they'll immediately announce it on the News, because they don't want us to live here in Lebanon, they don't like us, they.*

L.R.: *Who?*

Bilal: *They! The ones that live here, the Lebanese.*

In this interview, Bilal displayed clear frustration in his tone of voice and body language. He mentions *if something is going on in the alleyways Sidon*, when referring to what he thinks of as the unwillingness of the media to report on any acts of violence in the nearby Lebanese dominated neighbourhoods. He further explained how this framing was done by the Lebanese media intentionally, because *the world should believe that the camp is not a nice place*.

Bilal's statement exemplifies how some children perceived and faced outside re-presentations of their camp. The "othering" concept can be applied again, but this time with reference to the mainstream society as the architect of inaccurate differences. As Bilal points out, there are *also some things going on in Saida*. Ein el Helwe, in his opinion, is not necessarily a worse place than Saida. I also interpret Bilal's frustration as being directed towards the majority society's control over the common presentations of places such as Ein el Helwe. The meeting between the "outside" and the camp is brought up again in this discussion:

**Lina, 11**

L.R.: *Ah ... okay ...eh ... I mean now, for example imagine that someone from outside came here.*

Lina: *Yes.*

L.R.: *She is ... this is the first time she comes here.*

Lina: *Yes, yes, sometimes ... I sometimes I'll tell the truth and sometimes I'll notice that she is thinking too highly of herself and then I'll tell her that here (in Ein el Helwe), we are responsible between "our four walls" in the camp.*

Lina's statement suggests that she has defended the camp before, in meetings with people who are not from Ein el Helwe. Faced with the outside's "othering" of the camp, positive aspects of the camp became increasingly important. The belonging and *relationality* to Ein el Helwe, which the outside's presentations evoked appears again. In these last two excerpts, the children describe their meeting with what they interpreted as unjust stereotyping and representation of the camp, on two different levels. The first stems from the media and the second from a dyadic face to face meeting. In both these meetings the Lebanese acts as "the other."

In Serhan & Tabari's (2005) study of Palestinian children living in the refugee camps, informants, similarly, expressed that they felt the Lebanese majority society to be hostile towards them. It should be noted, that general social attitudes towards a minority group can also affect minority children and even constitute a risk to their well-being (Connolly 1998 in Montgomery 2005, p.15). Children's perceptions of "unfair representations" seemed in general to influence them, but how they would handle this issue seemed to differ.

When attempting to understand, the effects of the verbal insults of outsiders on the camp, children's perceptions of this as their *home* should be accounted for. The verbal attacks on the place they perceived as their *home* were described as very upsetting. In the two last descriptions, the children describe that their *home* is contested by the Lebanese majority



society. These meeting might be illustrative of the disjuncture the camp inhabitants and the Lebanese majority in the perception of what a camp means. The outside seems to emphasise the violent aspect and the children here place value on other aspects of the camp. This disjuncture made it necessary to clarify, defend and negotiate the camp. Children often displayed agency in this defending of the camp space. They did not meet what they perceived as misconceptions about Ein el Helwe passively. Rather, they engaged in discussions and provided arguments against stereotyping.

Meanwhile, some child informants talked of other Palestinian children who were trying to act “Lebanese.” For instance, some children were changing their Palestinian dialect, into a Lebanese dialect. This was seen as a sign of weakness, by others and no one would admit that they themselves were acting in this way. Such attempts to avoid negative depictions from the majority society have also been noted among minority children in other contexts, for instance among the minority group the Veddas in Sri Lanka (Lund 2003). However, contrary to what the children were saying here, the act of playing “Lebanese” or attempting to adapt to the Lebanese culture, could also be interpreted as a display of agency. I will now go on to explore some the aspects of the camp, which the children themselves pointed out as challenging.



**Figure 11**  
**Drawing of a boat on the seaside of**  
**Saidon, next to the camp, by child**  
**informant aged 11.**

### **There are no shootings outside**

The violence and street shootings which sometimes broke out, between conflicting political factions in Ein el Helwe, was not very noticeable during the period of fieldwork. The local council in Ein el Helwe had successfully managed to arrange a lull between the political fractions in the camp and people of all ages were walking seemingly carefree around. Among some of the parties contributing to the political mosaic in the camp are; the Fatah movement, Hamas, several Islamist parties such as the Osbat el Ansar and communist parties. I was told by a woman in the camp, it was quite common that even within one family one would find several and even quite conflicting political views. It seemed as though different political opinions were quite accepted and common amongst ordinary people. At the same time these ideologies could lead to serious conflict between those who were more politically

active. The internal political conflicts, between the rivalling political factions inside the camp are infamous. These conflicts have also lead to street shootings, were civilian lives have been lost (FAFO 2003; Rougier 2007; DRC 2009).

It was primarily the stories of people from Ein el Helwe, which made me aware of the nature of the violent outbreaks in the camp. My landlady sometimes wondered if an outsider, as myself, would be tough enough to “stay with us in the camp, or flee” if shootings broke out again. During these internal shooting episodes, some residents stayed and those who had the opportunity usually left the camp area she explained.

I often met of people who had lost close family members and relatives in shootings from the internal fighting. One mother I spoke to had lost her daughter, of around two years, in these street shootings some years ago. While she had been walking down the main street, carrying her daughter, the daughter had accidentally been shot by unidentified gunmen. Such stories gave a glimpse into a place which could change from calm to violent relatively fast. There were also talks about the stories of violence which had taken camp area from the outside conflicting parts. My landlady would often recalled the “youm al isthia” in 1982, when she was fourteen and the Israeli army had entered the camp and destroyed her school building.

During the “Harb el Tamouz”, Ein el Helwe had been air raided by Israeli planes on two occasions (Save the Children Sweden 2007). Some informants stated that they had woken up to the shaking of their house as a result of this bombing. In conflicts relatively few children are killed or injured, but many are secondary victims or observers, for example experiencing damage to family property, or death or injury to relatives (Montgomery 2003; Ansell 2005). Both girls and boys expressed frustration over their various experiences of violence in the camp, but boys to a larger extent tried to show their tough side when talking of this. Children’s experiences of violence incidents in the camp were not my initial research focus. This was a subject which came up when children explained the different aspects of life in the camp. This is an excerpt from the interview with Wisam in which we discuss the everyday life in Ein el Helwe:

**Wisam, 10**

*Wisam: Hm, outside the camp, there are no problems, no crowding that makes people fight with each other and kill each other. Over there ... it is “nidam” (system), like ... not like here, like crowding and things like that. Ah ... over there, there is police, like that.*

*Friend of Wisam: can I say something?*

L.R.: *Yes if ...*

Friend of Wisam: *Like around this time, for example today when I went to visit Wisam, like about this time ... I saw a boy ... like ... my age and he was carrying a knife and wanted to stab a boy, which was also my age.*

Wisam and her friend both spoke with low and sad voices when talking of the violence within the camp. In this interview, Wisam was interviewed in the company of her good friend, which briefly interrupted to speak her mind. Wisam's friend explained that she was upset because she had witnessed that *even* children could display violent behaviour towards each other. The way in which she speaks of this account signifies that she does not believe that this is a normal or good way for a child to behave. Their descriptions are also another example of how children would contrast sharply between the conditions inside the camp and the outside environment. The outside is often described as a place which is better in regards to less violence. At the same time, it seemed as if these two friends could talk about these upsetting issues, between each other. Peer-relations can be particularly important as a support in facing such challenging experiences (Ungar 2005).

In the next interview I asked the informant what the difference between the city and the camp would be, spontaneously Rashid replied; *Saida is nicer*. I then proceed by asking him why this might be true:

**Rashid, 11**

L.R.: *Saida is nicer ... why?*

Rashid: *The ones that live there ... here at ours, it is all shooting and I don't know what, over there (in Saidon), nothing happens.*

Rashid here makes reference to the violence in the camp and his dislike of it. In other conversations about the camp, he would like most informants, emphasise the good social relations, between inhabitants of the camp. This statement, in sharp contrast, displays what comes across as an ambiguous relationality to the camp. The children's descriptions of life in Ein el Helwe often seemed to consist of diametric opposites. The violent aspects in Ein el Helwe were described as extremely upsetting. Sometimes to the extent that it made children say that they wished to leave as soon as possible. On the other hand, the social relations within the camp were described as irreplaceable.

Home is in our conceptions supposed to be a place for safety and familiarity (Porteous & Smith 2003; Holloway & Hubbard 2001). In these last descriptions, children describe a place

which is home, but when violence breaks out it ceases to be described as a home. The relationality to Ein el Helwe as a physical place is no longer in focus in these descriptions. Some children would proceed to explain that these experiences made them dislike the camp strongly. Porteous & Smith's (2003) concept *dominicide*; describes the act of deliberate destroying of someone's home to cause suffering to inhabitants. Although the inter-fighting which children were talking of was not intended to cause suffering to civilians, it obviously caused suffering for the children. The children's home *space* can be said to be destroyed because the feeling of safety which should constitute any home is lost more or less temporarily.

During focus groups, we would sometimes hear sounds that could have been either gunshots or fireworks. Sometimes I would jump up to these sounds and in particular the boys would explain that my reaction was amusing. They on the other hand had become used to this they assured me. Repeated as a mantra during interviews, focus groups and meetings, when talking of the violence in the camp was *auwadna, auwadna*, which can be translated into; *we have gotten used to it, we have gotten used to it.*

One parent told me that this tough attitude was necessary in Ein el Helwe. "A wimp" could not survive here in this place." It was therefore, she told me, we send boys outside to for instance fetch something after dark. Especially boys needed to learn how to be tough if they were to successfully encounter the occasional conflicts which in the camp. A research study on Palestinian children in the West Bank, similarly, found that the daily violence and fears that they encountered increased their resilience (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2006). This statement, which is a comment on the violence in the camp, can be understood in this context:

**Rashid, 11:**

*The guns here ... us, we got used to it, when we go to sleep we won't wake up, even if they start to shoot.*

Both boys and girls emphasised the resource friendship relations were when talking about violent incidents. This can be interpreted as a resource or *Manageability* (Antonovsky 1987) which children found within the community. The social networks in the camp often appeared as a support in facing violence and proceed to elaborate further on the social relations of children.

Many children stated that they wished adults on the street would stop arguing, as these fights would sometimes become so heated that the men would bring guns and start to shoot at each other. Such description by children, of the adults in the camp, must be placed in the greater context. During my two months of fieldwork, I too witnessed a few tense arguments in the camp streets. If taking into account at the general difficult situation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon “a tense mood” among some camp inhabitants might not be surprising (ref. Background chapter). I was personally surprised that I would not meet more tenseness among people.



**Figure 12** Photo of Naher el Bared refugee camp. By:child informant, aged 9.

In the Palestinian culture, the man is traditionally supposed to be the main breadwinner in the family. Without a steady income, it is also quite hard to get married or maintain a family. During my fieldwork, I met several people who had great difficulties in getting a job in Lebanon. Many of

them had higher education and all spoke the same language as the Lebanese. In the afternoon, one would often see several young men (*Shabab*) standing around in the streets without anything to do. The frustration stemming from the discriminatory work policies against Palestinians, in addition to the condition of exile in itself, might explain more of the tense attitude one can expect in coming from such conditions. I now proceed to children’s descriptions of their social network in the everyday life.

## 2. Social networks

### **My beautiful neighbourhood**

The children’s social relations emerged as a natural subject in conversations about what went on in their every-day life. During the third focus-group session, we discussed the social networks. The exercise was done by letting each child draw a “spider” which illustrated his or her personal network. The task was to write names of close friends and family members on the “feet” of the spider. Judging from this exercise, all of the children had relatively large networks, consisting of friends and family members they could meet on an everyday basis.

This impression was further supported in my individual interviews and in informal conversations with older residents of the camp. In the photo-project, the portraits of family-members and friends were also the most common depiction.

Children, who had lost close family members, also stated that they had good social networks. The quality of networks in the spider-exercise was simply determined by questions such as “*Who can you really talk to?*” and “*Which friends are close to you?*” As previously mentioned, the good networks and the social life in the camp, was constantly singled out by children, as the main important component of life in the camp. Here I ask Noor, what do you appreciate most of all in the camp?

**Noor, 13**

Noor: *Our camp is beautiful.*

L.R.: *What is it in it that makes it beautiful? Everything ... or ... okay ... what do you like most of all here in the camp?*

Noor: *What I like?*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Noor: *That we sit together happily, that we go up and down here happily, we are always happy.*

As many informants, Noor explains that the good social relations inside the camp is the best feature in Ein el Helwe. She proceeds to explain the lack of these social relations in Saidon;

**Noor, 13:** *Over there ... in Saida, no ... everyone has their own house ... and we here in the camp, you know, it is all floors on top of each other, we have the market (souq). The people will be sitting and talking with each other outside, that's how it is at ours. Play, girls and the neighbourhood. They (in Saidon) have their own house, that's all; like that ... and is silent there.*

Here, Noor makes a reference to the crowdedness in the camp. Whereas, several of her friends stated that they would have wanted to live in a better and bigger house, Noor placed more value on the good social life in the camp than on a “nice house.” In saying that *it's silent* in Saidon, she also refers to the lack of the vibrant social life present in Ein el Helwe. She also expressed this opinion in focus group sessions. Another girl, who generally disliked many aspects of the camp, also expresses her appreciation of her social relationships:

**Manal, 10:** *I ... eh ... like the camp ... our neighbours, I am used to them, I play with them, I go out with them and stay up late with them, like that. We play together and sometimes they come to me, sometimes I go to them. And that's all.*

During fieldwork, I also observed and participated in the vibrant social life in the camp by visiting several of the women I met during fieldwork. The solidarity and communal bond, between those having grown up together was also quite visible. For instance, I woman I came to know in the camp was running a clothes shop for children and often gave credit to her many female customers, often mothers to several children. She did this, knowing about the financial situation for many families within the camp.

Hart (2004) has observed the similar pattern of vibrant social life in the Palestinian camps, in contrast to the poor urban areas in Jordan, where Palestinian refugees have also settled. Hinton (2000) has similarly noted that Bhutanese refugee children themselves emphasised the social networks and closeness to family and friends, which they could play with in the camp. She also notes the dialectical relation between children and adults in a refugee community. Children for instance, contributed in keeping up the moods of parents in difficult times (Hinton 2000). From my limited observations in Ein el Helwe, I got the similar impression, when I visited families. Children seemed to contribute with joy and laughter within the close family sphere. Their descriptions of social life in the camp can simultaneously be interpreted as describing a *home* space. Children's strong *relationality* to the camp is very evident in the same descriptions. The familiarity between residents, which children describe, constitutes a home in the conceptual form of the word. I will now go on to elaborate more on children's nuclear and extended family structure and then finally to children's friendship relations.

### **The nuclear family**

Children contributed to the family, sometimes a financially, but also emotionally. One mother, who had a disabled husband, explained to me that her oldest son of thirteen was like her best friend and helped her in many chores. Several of the female children, were also helping their family, for instance by doing domestic chores. Simultaneously, for many parents the future of their children, in particular concerning education and jobs seemed to be a constant worry.

According to Fernea (2002, p.3) in Middle Eastern narratives, the importance of family, over the importance of peers seems an overall characteristic. Meanwhile, within the social studies of childhood, children have been seen as more than just products of the family (James et al 1989). However, in my data, family life appeared as natural part of everyday-life for the

children. Grandparents as well as cousins, uncles and aunts often lived close by the children's home, because of the geography of the camp.

Grandparents often had a special relationship to the children and often played an additionally important role in the maintenance of Palestinian culture and narrative. This interview is an example of a simple conversation about nuclear family life

**Ismail, 12**

L.R.: *Who is your family?*

Ismail: *Here, in our house, me and my sister and my mother and my father and my brothers and like that.*

L.R.: *Ah ... you like ... so they are important for you?*

Ismail: *Yes a lot, a lot! Me ... if I travel a day or two days or a week without them, I am finished, I will go crazy!*

In this interview Ismail, talks about how much he would miss his family if he leaves outside the camp. Strong relations to family might not be a particular feature of children in Ein el Helwe. Whereas, considering leaving the camp and family at a young age, for another place, might be a subject particular for refugees. Ismail for instance considered working abroad in the future. The way he emphasises how he would miss them was quite similar to what other children said about families. Many of the children spoke about emigration. In this context, they would often mention how the distance from the family would be the only problematic part of this.

My findings coincide with what Serhan & Tabari (2005) found in their study of Palestinians in Lebanon. Children in the camps reported strong family ties and felt that they could depend on both their nuclear and extended family. I continue with children's talks of the extended family.

**The extended family**

As mentioned, extended family and people who originated from the same areas in Palestine often lived in the same areas of the camp. Geographical distance from extended family members sometimes came up in interviews. Many of the residents in Ein el Helwe had relatives living outside the camp, in other parts of Lebanon or abroad. However, many of them, including the children had contact with these to some extent. Lubna here explains how it was to have her grandmother living in the same house:



**Lubna, 12**

Lubna: *So my grandmother is living under us.*

L.R.: *Mm.*

Lubna: *So every time something happens, every time we get sick, every time something happens with us ... she'll come up and she'll stay with us and she'll ask us what the matter with us is.*

This part of the interview brings in aspects of having the extended family members living close by, in the everyday life. This is what I interpret as a very positive statement and again brings in what I interpret as the *manageability* which social networks were to children. In this second excerpt Lubna explains this further:

**Lubna, 12**

Lubna: *I mean outside shootings never happen. Here ... I mean ... every second day shootings happen ... they'll argue and make problems.*

L.R.: *Ah ...*

Lubna: *So we will go to my grandfather close by.*

L.R.: *Ah ... so you feel that you are more relaxed at your grandfathers?*

Lubna: *My grandfather will start to say that; you are in safety here. They (the ones that make problems) will be over there; over there they will be shooting a lot. But we are living in (excluded).*

This excerpt again makes reference to the violent clashes within in the camp. Lubna continues to explain how her grandparent(s), the extended family, could be a support in facing the adverse parts of the camp-life. *Manageability*-that one feels that there are resources at one disposal, in order to handle the challenge (Antonovsky 1987). Here the extended family is clearly evaluated as a resource.

The family is considered a moral pillar in Palestinian society and takes on a central place within Palestinian popular culture. Traditionally and now most especially in the refugee camps, the Palestinian families ability to endure, successfully recover from wars and reorganise the social fabric after dislocation is critical to the survival of its members (Sayigh 1976 in Ungar 2005, p.422).

What seems to be a quite universal feature of the Palestinian and Arabic family structure is the access to several alternative caretakers. Additionally, these networks can be social lifelines, providing support difficult times, such as economic problems or armed conflict. The importance of family in Ein el Helwe coincides with the general Palestinian and Middle Eastern culture. Arguably, the potential for support from such networks can become more visible in adverse circumstances, but are generational relations also affected negatively?

## **Generations in the camp space**

In the case of my informants, the relationship between generations seemed to be a mainly positive asset for them. However, there were, as in any place, differences and similarities between the age groups. As an example, during one of my interviews, a boy was overheard saying that he wished to go to America. Why? It was nicer there and he had seen this on the TV. The adults that were present at the interview overheard this statement. This sparked an emotionally loaded discussion, between his mother, the woman that had brought me to his house and the boy. For methodological and ethical reasons the boy had to be interviewed in his home, however, the consequences of overhearing such opinions, can be difficult for children.

Such incidents also relates to what is expected of children to say, in order to fulfil the expectation from the larger adult society .The woman that brought me to this boy's house was clearly upset by the boy's remark. She was reminded of a common dilemma for Palestinians in Lebanon; many choose to immigrate to the West, in search for a better life. As this woman pointed out, leaving the camp and its Palestinian and Muslim environment, might lead to the following generations leaving the camp. "One cannot avoid remembering Palestine when living in the camp, outside, one can choose to comfortably forget it" I was told.

This could be interpreted as a generational conflict, as for instance Hart (2004) has pointed out in his study on Palestinian children in Jordan. Children had the same dreams of immigrating to the West. Ironically, these women both had relatives of the same age as themselves residing in the United States. Palestinian immigration to the Western countries is not a recent phenomenon. Whereas, children did seem to want to obey their parents it seemed, at least that was what they choose to show in the front stage (Goffman 1957), meeting with me as an adult. This is an example of such statements:

### **Nael 14**

L.R.: *Who is your role model if you have one?*

Nael: *My father.*

L.R.: *Why, what is that makes you think that?*

Nael: *He is nice and generous and what's it called ... he doesn't hit us and he talk to us calmly, because of that I like him. And even if he would beat us and be bad with us, I would still love him, because he is my father.*

This statement refers to the love that Nael holds for his father. His mentions of wanting to love his father even if he was "bad", is what I interpret as a continuation of a culture where

the father should be respected immensely. This excerpt also states a certain sense of obligation to the older generation in the camp:

**Kadija, 12**

Kadija: *That the small ones, like us and smaller, I mean this jeel (generation) we have to study.*

L.R.: *Ah ...*

Kadija: *And when we get older we can then help our family ... and there is the older ones, the difference, is that they work and get salary as opposed to us.*

Children in Ein el Helwe are inevitably born with hopes of bringing change for the future. There has been noted that there is generational conflicts within the refugee camp, however this is not particularly noticeable in my data. My informants were also quite young, from 9 to 14 years old. What I did observe as a certain tension between generations were the discussions about wanting to go to school or not.

What also seemed clear from observations and interviews was that the authority of adults *outside* the family, such as teachers, was surprisingly un-intimidating to many of the children. My data collection cannot say anything extensive on these generational relationships in the camp and local school. I will now proceed to children's relationships.

**Local friendships**

Children's friendship relations, was like the family relations, described as strong and good. I also observed this in my fieldwork. Again the spider exercise referred to earlier was just one way of noticing this. Children could be easily and often spotted playing together in the streets, neighbourhoods and houses. Children themselves also reported to "local" friendships to be better than in places outside the camp. In this interview, Rashid talks about the friendship relation he has in the camp. I ask him about what children in the camp do.

**Rashid, 11**

Rashid: *we children ... we are very good friends with each other ... and we keep on playing.*

L.R.: *mm ...*

Rashid: *And we don't fight ... not once have we fought.*

L.R.: *Yes? That's nice.*

Rashid: *And we go to the sea with each other in the summer.*

Interestingly this informant underlines that he and his friends "never" fought. His emphasis on this lack of conflict within the friendship *space* can be seen in the context of the previously

described internal conflicts in the camp. Where children creating their own *space* of friends in the camp which all agreed that they disliked conflicts? This might be an analysis, because children would always very clearly express that they highly disapproved of the internal conflicts between some of the adults in the camp. If so, their peer relations could have been a *manageability* factor in dealing with “adult conflicts.” This next excerpt explains another friendship relation within the camp:

**Kadija, 12**

*Kadija: We ... there are some of my friends; we have fun because we will be together, because we are friends and we stay together and we like each other. Me, in my class, there are some girls, I don't like to make a difference between girls*

*L.R.: Mm ...*

*Kadija: Everyone, the good ones (at school) and the not good ones, I don't like it like that ... to make a difference between the good one and the not so good one.*

The informant here explains that she will stay friends with girls who are not good at school. Within the school *space*, good grades were valued highly. And as this informant hints at, some girls did differentiate between “good” and not so “good” students. In Kadija’s explanation, of the friendship *space*, solidarity should be valued over success in school.

I have described a small aspect of the local friendship relations between the children and I will proceed to describe another aspect of local children relationships. In the next section I elaborate more on children’s perceptions of unequal economic status between people in the camp.

**The differences in between us**

A feature of the camp which I had not expected appeared in some interviews were the informants placed focus on class differences between residents of the camp. It is easy to think of the residents in a refugee camp as completely egalitarian and as being “in the same boat.” The refugee label makes it easy to forget the individual differences between people labelled in that way. Much have happened since the Palestinians in Lebanon have lived in the country for over sixty years. Whilst still remaining a discriminated minority within Lebanon, the picture is not simplistic. Almost everyone I met in the camp had some close relatives living abroad. The financial support they would receive through this, in addition to people having well-paid positions in NGOs UNRWA, is part of the reasons for such real or perceived class differences (Peteet 2005). Some children would, independently of how they perceived their own economic

status, talk about the need to help the less fortunate. In particular the orphan children were an admirable receiver for alms, which again stems from the Islamic culture.

**Kadija, 12**

Kadija: *And ... and me, some of my friends ... their situation is not so good, here in the camp there is a lot of people that get help.*

L.R.: *Mmm ...*

Kadija: *For the poor and we have a lot of people at ours that like to help.*

This explanation I interpret as the informant's sense of *manageability* within the camp area. People help each other in the camp; therefore, the challenging conditions in the camp can become manageable. This is also one of the continuous references children made to solidarity between residents in the camp place. It can also be seen as a perception of the Ein el Helwe as a *home*. *In this place, there is solidarity between people.* (Porteous & Smith 2001).

However, some the children seemed to perceive themselves as poor and they often regret that they did not possess the same material items as that of other children. Here I talk with Nael, just after he had introduced the expression "rich children." I wished to explore how he defined this label himself, in the context of Ein el Helwe.

**Nael, 14**

L.R.: *But the rich children, what do they have then?*

Nael: *They will have a computer and play station, they will go outside (the camp) and play, they will have a car and a bicycle, they will enter special schools to become good in school, it's not UNRWA schools, special schools.*

L.R.: *Ah ... so where are the special schools?*

Nael: *In Saida and Beirut.*

L.R.: *Ah ... but do you talk about the children of the rich here or outside the camp?*

Nael: *No ... there are some in the camp and some of them are outside the camp.*

This excerpt shows the class differences which Nael points to. Going to private schools, rather than local schools was also perceived as something that "rich" children had the ability to do. In this explanation of the camp place, the solidarity between residents is not mentioned. Within the social *space* of the camp, there are differences between residents. Ein el Helwe might not always be understood as different from the "outside" spaces.

Many parents told me, that the materialistic issues and lacks of the refugee life, was not perceived as a problem in their childhood. They were happy, in spite of being poor. Whereas

now, some parents found their children's desire for expensive toys and similar items too demanding on their limited economical resources.

It should also be noted that Lebanon is a society where several class divisions is a relevant feature, which also might be influencing the camp area. Finally, global influences also seemed to play a part in children's awareness of being less financially fortunate. Seeing images of other places on TV was for one global influence. Another observation I made during fieldwork, was that some of the children's TV channels, constantly poured out commercials on toys etc, directed towards children. This awareness of economical differences also shows that the camp has not been shielded from global economic changes. Children are simultaneously exposed to global influences, through media such as TV and the internet.

### 3. Belief-System

#### A space for spirituality

The religious aspect of Ein el Helwe was not one of the initial research objectives in meetings with the children. However, the importance of the religious aspect of everyday life in Ein el Helwe seemed to reappear, the longer I stayed and the more I met with various informants. There was however, what I view as a plurality of religiousness and religious interpretations, in the camp community.

I also noticed clear individual differences in the how and when religion mattered to different children. Generally, religion has been acknowledged as one of the factors which shape childhood (Ansell 2005). Children's general spirituality (religiousness), has recently become more acknowledged in research of and with children (Hay & Nye 2006; Hyde 2008)

Meanwhile, in the traditional Palestinian society, religion has always had a central role. And as noted by Habash et al. (2005) there has been a rise of Islamic religious observance, among several Palestinian groups. This rise of religiousness has in some cases resulted in support to Islamist groups within society. However, such perspectives on the meaning of religion within society, also give a reductive

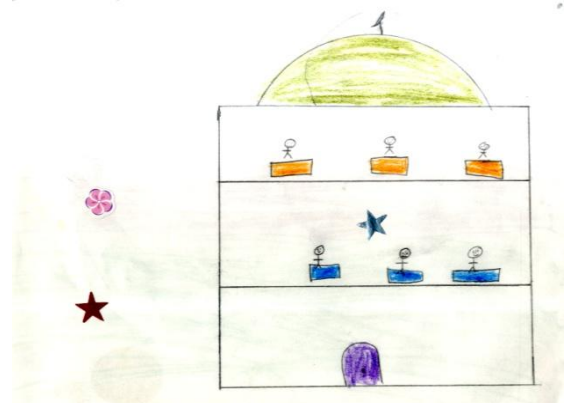


Figure 13 Drawing: The Quran School in the Mosque. By: child informant, aged 10.

meaning to a complex theme.

In contrast to such reductive views, other studies have found that many Palestinians consider religion as major source of inner strength, particularly during difficult times. I similarly experienced, during my stay in Ein el Helwe that many talked of the calming and positive effect praying and belief in God had for their inner peace, especially during stressful times. Some women also told me that they were proud to be *good Muslims and* therefore felt dignified in spite of being poor.

The way in which religion appears in the data can be separated into three groups. Firstly, religion comes up in activities in the children's descriptions of every-day life. Such activities would for instance be praying, singing religious songs and going to the mosque. Some children would also attend Quran-lessons in the local Mosques of Ein el Helwe.

In other religious activities, the immediate and extended family structure and even the larger camp community, would be involved. For instance in activities such as fasting during Ramadan and celebrating the Eid feast.

Secondly, children used religion when they answered questions about their present and future aspirations. This suggests that their belief in God was part of or shaped their larger worldview (ontology). Lastly, in some cases, religion was used to answer questions about their right to return to Palestine (*Haq al Awda*) and other political issues

The way in which children used religion in order to answer certain questions, can be understood through Antonovsky's concept of *Meaningfulness*, which refers to factors which help people cope in stressful life circumstances (Antonovsky 1987). I will proceed by presenting how religion appeared in conversations about everyday-life and then go on with the other categories. This interview is conducted with a drawing from the home assignment where the task was drawing what you like.

Mona drew herself conducting the Islamic prayer and another of her fasting. Next to these two drawings she wrote: *I like to pray* and *I like to fast*. I looked at these drawings together with Mona and asked her questions about them.

**Mona, 9**

L.R.: *And now ... tell me a little bit about what you do when you fast and what you feel?*

Mona: *Before they call out for (Ramadan) prayer.*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Mona: *We wake up and we will eat the Ramadan breakfast, then after sunset we will eat again, we will have a very nice time.*

L.R.: *What is it that is so nice?*

Mona: *You will stay tired until the end and then you can finally relax. (smiling)*

Here, Mona expresses her appreciation of doing the religious activity, in this case fasting and achieving the goal of it. She also talks of the importance of doing this activity together with her family. This activity can also be seen as a connecting factor, between family members. This first interview with Bilal is a similar example of how religious prayer was brought up as part of every-day life.

**Bilal, 12**

Bilal: *As soon as I come back, the Adan calls out for prayers in the evening I mean ,after a little while it will call out for afternoon prayers ... I will then go and pray and then return to home.*

L.R.: *Okay, eeeh ... .do you go to pray with your friend or on your own like that?*

Bilal: *Sometimes, I will bring my friends with me.*

L.R.: *Ah ...*

Bilal: *Eeeh ... I will bring them with me, I'll meet them on the road and I will tell them: "come and pray with me."*

Again this excerpt brings in the aspect of religious activities, as an incorporated part of the normal every-day life. The way in which children spoke of the Mosques in the camp, suggested that these were quite open space to them. Bilal statement also brings up the aspect of doing religious activities together with friends, or as in Mona's statement, with family. It also rejects the common assumption that children are religious, only as a result of pressure from parents (Rosen 2005).

Religious activities can also be to recite the Quran. In one of the focus groups of the boys brought with him his cousin which was very good at reciting the Quran. Such acts can be interpreted as expressions of Muslim identity. One of my girl informants also explained, very proudly, that she was so good at Quran recitations that she would be invited to recite at several places.



Religion is here not only associated with a belief in God, but connected to certain activities which in themselves promote well-being. It could also be suggested, that for some of the children, the religious activities, created stability in their every-day life. Several studies of Palestinian children and has youth similarly found that religion is important for them (Barber 2001 in Wessel & Strang 2006; Hart 2005; Chatty 2009). Religion as a source for resilience for children, in difficult life-circumstances, has also been noted in studies from other contexts. For instance, Bhutanese refugee children's religious ideologies reject the idea of an individual self and therefore made it easier for them to endure challenging situations (Hinton 2000).

As the two last interview excerpts exemplify, religious activities, are often preformed in community. Going to spaces as the Mosque or other religious spaces is sometimes children's first meeting with the larger community, outside their immediate family and neighbours. In such spaces children can learn several things, about their own value as human beings and what binds them together with the wider religious society (Wessel & Strang 2006). I was also told during focus groups that in the Mosques children would hear about the community's hopes for them as the new generation. In the religious community, children seemed to be regarded more as beings than becoming.

Another interesting aspect of religion was how it seemed to be used in communication between the different generations. During one of the focus-group sessions with the boys, one of the boys was known to be illiterate. Some of the boys eventually started to tease him about this. I asked my landlady for advice about this situation, as I did not want this to continue in focus groups. She spoke to one of the boys who was teasing and considered himself to be "a good Muslim." She then asked him; "aren't you a good Muslim? Don't you know that the Prophet Mohammad himself was illiterate?" This short question, made my informant agree quite quickly, that he should immediately cease to tease my other informant for his illiteracy.

### **Moral codes**

The importance of religious values also seemed to be connected with moral values, which again seemed embedded in the place of Ein el Helwe camp. Places can also embody moral orders of what is accepted or not (Holloway & Hubbard 2001). The religious part of the everyday-life which has been presented so far, seemed to form parts of the children's world view and also followed certain moral views about went on in society. This is not to say that

Islamic values created all the views of what was “proper”, these were also partly cultural views.

Children expressed their views on what was regarded as proper and improper behaviour to them. Many of them had clear opinions about how one should or should not conduct oneself in the camp. The standards of the children were displayed mostly in stories of dissatisfaction with certain people in the camp. These standards were also revealed when talking about themselves and how they wished to conduct themselves. In this category, the gender dimension of the society also became evident.

There were several expressions of this, which for instance can be divided into views about one self and then views of others. The “zhoroan”, which can be translated into “hooligans”, were children or youths, seen by some to be defying the moral order. Such children, would act “immoral”, by for instance smoking, drinking, using drugs, swearing, abusing the name of God, be too interested in the opposite sex. Adults swearing or misusing the name of God were also criticised by the children. The children did not seem to accept more of this behaviour of adults than any other group.

This excerpt is taken from an interview with girl 10 years old, where she initially started to talk about a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. She here explains here views on the community in Ein el Helwe:

**Lina, 11**

Lina: *Yes, but we are Muslims*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Lina: *our whole life we will be Muslims, we don't consider becoming nonbelievers (kuffar) or something. Like now in the “Hara” (Neighbourhood) some people (lowering her voice) swear and Allah shut their mouths ...*

Firstly, this excerpt continues with the presented religious aspect, namely that some children had a quite religious outlook on the world. It then continues to exemplify how religious views and morality was closely connected. Lina for instance rejects improper behaviour in the camp such as swearing and she continued to tell me that people in a certain area of Ein el Helwe swore particularly much. The morality presented here also leads to questions about gender.

**Jameela, 12**

*Jameela: here, in the camp, everything is “not allowed.” Outside it is normal. Outside you find many young women walking with young men and it is normal there. It is not disgraceful that one has a friend that is a boy.*

Jameela here contested what she perceived as unnecessary moral restrictions on girl’s behaviour, within the camp *space*. She also refer to the focus on boys and girls not spending too much times together. The camp is also described as a place where “everything” is not allowed for. Outside, in outside *spaces* there are other rules and she is aware of this. This informant also display’s agency, she is able to think for herself and does not accept everything she has been told by others.

In general the mobility of mothers and daughters, in the camp, stood in contrast to that of boys. According to the more conservative cultural view, women should not spend “too much time outside”. Simultaneously, I noted that the restrictions on women’s mobility in the camp varied. Some women seemed to enjoy a quite large amount of freedom and mobility, depending on their work situation and family relation.

I also observed a large number of boys playing outside, in the camp, whilst girls would not play too much. Chatty’s et al (2005) study of Palestinian children has similarly shown the same patterns of different mobility for girls and boys. The gender difference in mobility has been noted in several other studies such as Hammonds (2004,) study of Ethiopian returnees in Sudan. This could be due both to cultural and contextual reasons. Female children were for instance seen as more vulnerable and in need of more protection. In the next section, I proceed to look at some of the children’s forms of play, an aspect of children’s life where there were also some gender differences.

#### 4. Children’s Culture

##### Missing out on play?



**Figure 14 Photo: Children playing in Ein el Helwe. By: child informant, 12.**

As James et al (1998) have questioned, one should consider how sensible or credible it is to argue that children’s everyday life can be considered as completely separate from their surroundings, or the adult world. Whereas, children’s play might come as

close to a separate children’s world, as possible.

It has also been noted that “In the Moslem Middle East play is considered a waste of time” (Fernea 1995, in Ansell 2006). This statement might implicate the position of children within the family, as perceived becomings, whom should use their time on working in order to become “beings.” It also suggests challenging conditions, which do not allow much time for play. In the minority world childhood is associated with school and play, whilst in the majority world the time for play is limited (Punch 2003).

Several studies with Palestinian children in camp refugee have noted that they regretted the lack of playgrounds in the overcrowded refugee-camps (BADIL 2007; Chatty 2009). In my data and field-notes, the lack of play space is often mentioned in my meeting with parents and NGO-workers. In this context, they would often point to the “Right to play” article in the UNCRC. I was also told that the children were chased away by angry neighbours if they played too loudly in the streets.

Meanwhile, I hardly ever heard this complaint in the children’s descriptions of play. On the contrary they displayed considerable fantasy and ability to play in spite of the crowdedness in the camp. Other studies have had interest in how children value space differently from adults and find *spaces* for play within places that are not ideal in adults eyes (Punch 2003). In the more recent context of the Palestinian society, it has often been claimed that the ongoing conflicts do not give children a chance to be children and play (Jabr 2004). In Ein el Helwe, I meet both attitudes among parents. Many parents were worried that their children “were playing too much” and that they were wasting time which otherwise could have been used on their homework. Other parents regretted that there were no real playgrounds in the crowded camp. Many of the NGOs located within Ein el Helwe focused on doing playful activities with children, as this was perceived as a deprived area in the camp. This excerpt exemplify a girl’s view on play:

**Lubna, 12**

Lubna: *I like when ... I like to finish my homework early. Because I mean I’ll relax.*

L.R.: *Ah ... but do you play too? With your friends?*

Lubna: *Usually we’ll keep studying, I mean we have a lot of homework to do, I mean we are in seventh grade.*

Here is what I interpret partly as “acting” towards the researcher, as an adult. Lubna suggest that she is too big, old, est. to play, displaying pleasing behaviour for an adult. In the second interview she would admit to that she used some time to playing with dolls too.

**Nael, 14**

L.R.: *Okay and the children here, how do they think in general? What do they like to do?*

Nael: *They like to play and they like to study.*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Nael: *They like to play and study and they also like to play with computers and on bicycles.*

In this excerpt, new ways of play are introduced, like computers and bicycles. Many boys used some of the small local computer halls. This, however, seemed to be quite gendered spaces, as it was mostly boys who used these places. It seemed possible to play and study in the camp. This informant displays *agency* because he seems to be able to study and play within the crowded camp setting. The informant himself also did not identify the lack of place as a problem. I now proceed to elaborate more on the gender differences which were displayed children’s different descriptions of their everyday play.

**Play, gender and movement within the camp**

The different mobility of girls and boys was an aspect which also inflicted on their play. It is not the only aspect, because it boys and girls and individual children seemed to appreciate different play activities. In Ein el Helwe any one could easily spot boys of many ages playing in the alleyways and in the main streets. Play in the “Hara” (neighbourhood) was therefore a common activity in the everyday-life, for boys. As this informant explained, in this excerpt:

**Bilal, 12**

Bilal: *I’ll go to play, I play ... I go to my neighbourhood, we play ... we play football.*

L.R.: *Ah ...*

Bilal: *We play basket, we’ll just play.*

This excerpt is very typical of the answers I would get, when boys told me about their play. Whereas I never got such replies from girls, this is typical of a boys statement.



**Figure 15 Photo: Children's toy guns.**  
**By: child informant, 12.**

Hart's (2008) study of Palestinian refugee youth in camps in Jordan notes how the masculinities are formed there. The family and the neighbourhood (Hara), here functions as an extension of the family. The lack of formal

institutions, for Palestinian refugees, the family and neighbours played an important role. As it is the case with Palestinians in Lebanon, they do not partake in the mainstream society; therefore masculinities might be formed by immediate role models. This was sometimes reflected in the play of the children, which often was conducted with toy guns. It was also clearly stated to me in interviews that girls, could not play with guns.

As mentioned gender differences and differences in mobility, came to show in the playing which both girls and boys conducted. For instance quite few of the girls did any sports outside the gym in school. Both girls and boys stated that they enjoyed, for instance drawing. In any study of it is important not to become overly concerned with gender difference. However, girls talked to me about dolls and characters from children's TV. Whilst boys did not put so much emphasis on toys, except the toy-guns which were hugely popular, especially around the holydays seasons. "During my childhood we used to make our own toys" one of the parents told me. Just one of my child informants explained to me that he would also make his own toys, with his friends.

### **Children's TV**

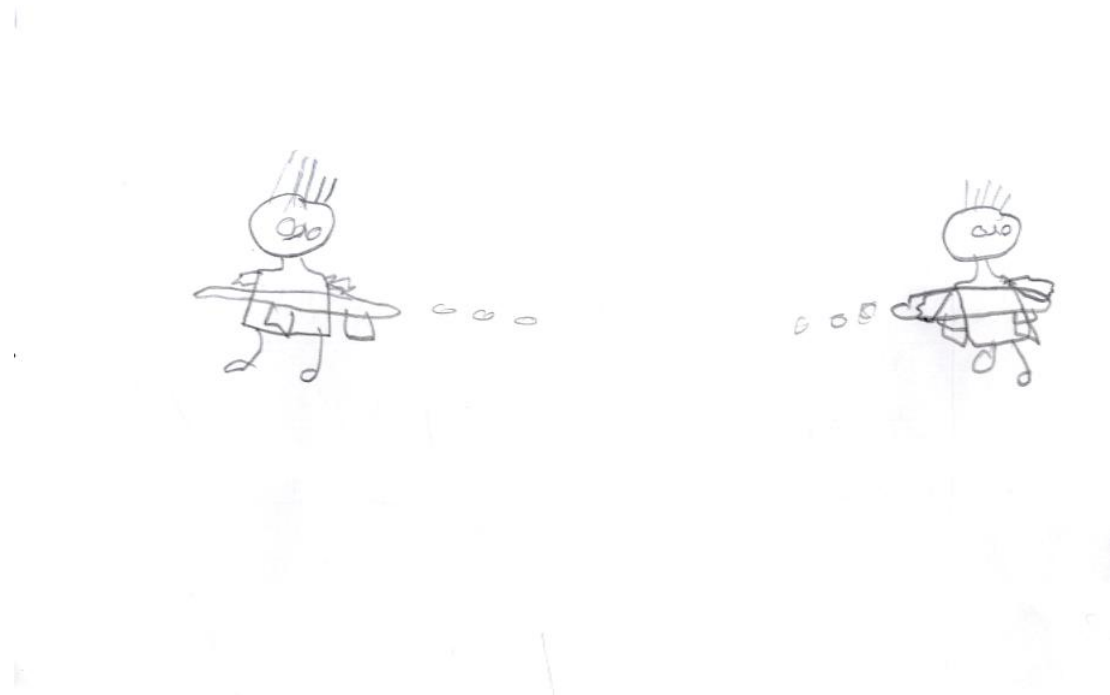
The children's TV is also an important part of their childhood culture. In my data material girls seems more active in watching TV, perhaps since they were more confined to the home space. The children in the camp would also watch international children's TV such as: Disney and Dora, Hanna Montana and other global children's TV. In this sense they were exposed to globalized children's culture. In addition to these "international" children's programs the children sometimes watched a TV-channel connected to their region, called the "Tujur al Jenna". This was a children's channel which promoted Islamic values, by having religious children's songs and preaching good moral.



**Figure 16 Photo of a doll.**  
**By: Female child informant, 11.**

Many of the channels that the children watched, including the “Atfal Tujur al Janna” channel, had commercial directed towards the children. Many parents, in relation to this, regretted that the children in general had such a desire for material items, whilst during their childhood was not present. This might signify that the society although economically marginal, was quite influenced by the global media culture. Researcher Cindi Katz (2004) has also found in her work that children within quite different contexts are subjected to global contexts.

Hart has noted that in the Palestinian camp in Jordan, children similarly used TV for a source of information about Palestine (Hart 2004). In Alzaroo’s (2005) study of refugee children in the West-bank he notes that the effect on children of seeing the confrontations of soldiers on was significant. At the same time, the TV pictures my informant’s talk of conveyed pictures of alternative life styles, from Lebanon and from the USA and other Western countries.



**Figur 17 Drawing: Children playing "takh takh" with toy guns. By child informant, aged 9.**

## CHAPTER SIX: LOOKING BACK AND VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

The previous chapter explored some of the children's descriptions of everyday life in the camp. Their perception of the camp borders, the Lebanese spaces outside it, their social relations, their belief system and children's culture were dealt with. This chapter will continue to focus on children's everyday experiences in the camp. On the basis of their present life in the camp, the children can look in back in time and remember past experiences. The camp could also be understood as a starting place for talking about the past and imagining the future.

This chapter will be presented in three new subcategories:

1. *Home is the Place We Left*: deals with children's various relationality to Palestine in the context of their everyday life.

2 *The school*; under this section children's perspectives on their education and the school space is dealt with.

In the last section; 3. "*The future.*": I continue to explore a few of children's perceptions of and hopes for the future, in relation to their education and in the context of the camp setting.

### 1. Home is the place we left

#### **Displaced children?**

It has been noted in studies of Palestinian refugees and other refugees alike that refugee camp spaces can function as symbols of the homes which were left behind in exile. The visual symbols and images within a refugee camp are intended to maintain the refugee's relationship to their homeland in exile (Petee 2005; Ramadan 2009). The symbols which have come to represent the Palestinian nation in exile are, for instance, the Palestinian flag, Hanthala, the map of Palestine of 1948 and the Al Aqsa<sup>19</sup> mosque. These symbols were often reproduced by the child informants in their drawings. They would draw these symbols even though they were not requested to do so.

---

<sup>19</sup> The Al Aqsa Mosque and the al Zahra mosque are both located in Jerusalem and represent significant symbols for Palestinians as both national and religious symbols. It is also the third holiest place in Islam and is therefore also a significant site in the Islamic world.



Some researchers have noted that in many societies, childhood is understood as a time to prepare for the future (Prout 2005). As the official Palestinian refugee agency claims the future is embedded in a hope of repatriation, children are expected to learn about and yearn for their original homeland. Nevertheless, children's relationality to a place to which they have never been, but to which their wider community is so clearly connected, may not always live up to the wider refugee community's expectations.

In the initiation of the fieldwork process, I asked children where they originated with a somehow oblivious attitude. In spite of the obviously Palestinian environment with the camp, I did not automatically assume that children immediately would state that they were from Palestine. In the following excerpt I ask a child informant where he is from:

**Sami, 12**

L.R.: *Mm ... ehm ... but I mean are you from here or where are you from?*

Sami: *I am from here; my "ballad" (village) is called Rabsia.*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Sami: *From Palestine.*

Rabsia is a village formerly in Northern Palestine which some of the inhabitants in Ein el Helwe originate. This informant seems to use the village name as a reference to the present village site. The following excerpt shows a similar response from another informant:

**Lina, 11**

L.R.: *Ah ... okay ... eh ... and where are you from?*

Lina: *You mean from which ballad (village)?*

L.R.: *Ah ... yes.*

Lina: *From Teitaba ...*

L.R.: *Eem ... and you're originally from here, in Ein el Helwe?*

Lina: *no, I am from Palestine.*

In this interview, I try to tease out the informant's answer by intentionally feigning ignorance. As in the last interview excerpt, the informant also states an obvious connection to Palestine. However, this informant explains that the camp should not be confused with the actual country of Palestine. All of the child informants, in one way or another, explained that they originated from Northern Palestine and with a few exceptions they would also mention the specific Palestinian village from which they and their families originated.

These replies might be expected in a front-stage setting in a child's meeting with an adult stranger. The children might have expected that this was what I wanted to hear. Such replies

can, therefore, only scratch on the surface of a child's relationality to Palestine. On the other hand, the high prevalence of these answers makes it possible to state that all children were aware of their common bond to another place.

During my fieldwork, a girl of 10 years of age was asked by a woman in the camp from which exact village in Palestine she originated. Most children were able to answer this "essential question", but this girl could not recall the name of the specific village where her family originated. The woman then turned to me and explained that this girl's performance was "no good" and she told the girl to go back home and ask her parents about her original village.



**Figure 18**  
**Drawing of a map of**  
**Palestine and its flag by**  
**child informant, aged 12.**

Other informants displayed a stronger awareness and relationality to this "other place." Some informants explained that they had been on trips with a local NGO to a mountaintop in the far south of Lebanon.

From this mountain post in the south it is possible to see the northern areas of Palestine (now Israel) across the border. This part of the Israeli-Lebanese border is called "*Boab Fatime*" (Fatime's door) by the Lebanese. One of the informants had relatives who were still living inside areas of original northern Palestine under the Israeli state. This informant and his family sometimes travelled to a third country in the Middle East, in order to maintain a connection his family. I now proceed to further explore how children learnt about this "other place" in their everyday life.

### **Learning of another home**

New generations of refugees are, in the Palestinian refugee narrative, supposed to maintain the plight of the exile and never forget what happened in 1948. The expectations of the larger community, towards children can therefore be understood somehow in this context. Some children also talked about the fact that they had heard older people in the community in their family or in the Mosques talking of their hopes for the *current generation*.

Simultaneously, I observed a more casual tone among many parents when we spoke about a return to Palestine; after all, they might have been through the same issues as the present generation in regards to these expectations. One adult informant of around 40 years told me

that his parents from the 1948-generation told him when he was still a child that they would soon return to Palestine. “Nevertheless, I knew within myself that this was not really going to happen; I did not believe them” he told me. Could children in such prolonged exile then maintain a relationship to Palestinian identity, to a home they had never seen?

The child informants, who still had their grandparents alive, often spoke about listening to stories of Palestine. In one interview, a mother of around 30 years was present; she made sure to point out that she taught her son about their family village and their right to return. She showed me a framed black and white photograph, which was standing in their living room, apparently of their village. This woman and her son also interpreted the holy Quran as having passages where the right to return was promised. Many informants also explained to me that sometimes their parents or grandparents would let the whole family sit down and talk about Palestine. Children were talking of these stories with much enthusiasm and emotion rather than (as one may have expected) as a mundane duty.

A refugee I met during fieldwork also talked of how teachers in school used to tell children about Palestine, although this was not really allowed according to the UNRWA-law. Today, he told me, the new generations of teachers know “nothing” of Palestine and therefore, cannot teach anything about Palestine. In my data-collection however, children still reported to be talking about and working with Palestine in school. One informant told me that she had a subject in school called “The geography of Palestine.” In the following excerpt the informant has just told me that she originates from a Palestinian village called Saffad. I proceeded by asking her how she came to learn about this:

**Iman, 13**

*Iman: I asked my mother and she answered me and also from my grandfather, because my grandfather used to live in Palestine.*

*L.R.: Ah ...*

*Iman: And when they threw them out ... em ... he started to tell me about it ... I used to ask him and he would answer me ... once they gave us a task in school, if we had someone in our family who had been to Palestine.*

*L.R.: Mm ...*

*Iman: To write about them, I wrote about it. I started to ask my grandfather and he would answer me.*

In this explanation, the family *space* is brought into the discussion on Palestine. More specifically, the 1948-generation appears as significant force in maintaining a relationship with their homeland Palestine. Child informants who had living grandparents were able to hear stories of life in Palestine from people who had fled in 1948. This is an example of how one informant recalled that his grandfather had taught him about Palestine:

**Bilal, 12**

*Bilal: I love her, that's my land. Palestine is my land ... I mean, she is my land and my grandfather, may God bless him ... he died when he was more than 100 years old, he used to keep telling us about Palestine, he used to keep telling us about Palestine, about how Palestine used to be.*

*L.R.: Ah ...*

*Bilal: Of how they used to live there ... how I mean, the occupation took Palestinian land and things like that ... and ... and things like that. And my grandfather ... he used to tell me that the Israelis occupied Palestinian land and the Palestinians were resisting, but they don't ... they were like they are now ... they still have to resist the occupation.*

*L.R.: Mmm ...*

*Bilal: They're still not able to defend their land.*

Bilal talked about Palestine in a very engaged fashion. He displays a very strong *relationality* to this other place. His relationality is according to this explanation a result of his grandfather's stories. This boy also claimed that he regretted that many of his peers in Ein el Helwe did not care about Palestine to the same extent as he did.

As displayed here, the family and in particular, the grandparents, played a great part in storytelling about Palestine. Storytelling within the family space is described as a pleasant experience. It is now widely acknowledged that the testimonies of those refugees who are now grandparents or parents both did contribute to the extension of Palestinian identity in exile (Abu-Lughod et al. 1999). Another significant place where stories of Palestine came up was within the local school space.

Malkki (1997 in Lund et al. 2003) has criticised traditional refugee studies for taking for granted that people and cultures necessarily have to be rooted in certain places. This traditional view implies that being displaced is the same as being uprooted and uncultured. Such perspectives could be applied in order better to understand how people (including children), continue to maintain a relationship to place even in highly protracted refugee situations. Although residents in Ein el Helwe are not physically in the place they claim to be

their home, they still maintain a connection to that place. The storytelling within the family sphere is one example of this. Many analysts now treat the Palestinian community as a transnational community which continues to maintain its cultural existence in exile and without borders (Dorai 2002; Schultz 2003). This has also led many of the Palestinians in exile to pay close attention to the news coming from the Palestinian areas. At the time of my fieldwork, I observed that people in Ein el Helwe would follow the news from the West Bank and Gaza very closely.

### Media depictions of Palestine

The child informant's descriptions of Palestinian space can be separated into two main categories. In the oral transmission by the older generations, Palestine is often described as a place which is better than the present camp setting, but which had to be left because of an



**Figure 19**  
**Drawing: The dome of the rock is in danger - where are the Muslims? by child informant, aged 13.**

Israeli expulsion. News pictures coming from the West Bank and Gaza gave a quite contrasting picture. The Palestinian issue has received much media attention over the past decades. International channels such as also Al Jazeera continue to show uncensored pictures of suffering Palestinian children. Following the news

from these areas, demonstrations would often be arranged in the camp in support of fellow Palestinians. Children were often

participant in these demonstrations.

In the last period of my fieldwork, many children were telling me that they were upset about a conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians around the Al Aqsa Mosque . The children saw this conflict on TV and some children had also discussed this with their teachers in school. At the time, this became a very prevalent subject in their drawings. I came to understand this was a part of the life in the camp for many children. Meanwhile, a few children told me that they purposely did not wish to watch news, as they were upsetting to them. Similarly, an employee at the local NGO, Beit Atfal el Summud, I was told that the

children in Ein el Helwe had become more restless after watching the news from Gaza, where children had severe war injuries (Gilbert & Fosse 2009).

In one focus group, the children were to imagine Palestine. They were not given any hints from me about how this should be done. The informants primarily choose to draw pictures of war and conflict, between Palestinian armed men or Palestinian children and an Israeli army. Only one girl, choose to draw a picture of her grandmother in the traditional Palestinian dress from the Galilee region. In Montgomery, for instance (2003, p. 161 and p. 162) similar drawings of Palestinian children, living in the West bank are displayed. In this interview, the informant explain

**Lubna, 12**

L.R.: *Ah ... you okay you ... when you think about it, what do you ... I mean feel about Palestine?*

Lubna: *Eeh ... I don't think a lot about Palestine, but when I watch TV ... you get affected.*

This could be interpreted as a backstage statement, as it admits to a generally low concern and with Palestinian issues. The above excerpt is not what I understood that a child was supposed to answer. This is another explanation of the media depictions of Palestine by an informant, which usually did not talk too often about Palestinian issues:

**Tareq, 12**

Tareq: *We'll see everything, like the war and what happened ... when they attacked Gaza.*

L.R.: *Okay so this means that you saw what happened in Gaza on the TV?*

Tareq: *There was this boy, they shoot a qaddifaa (bullet) at his head*

L.R.: *Ah ...*

Tareq: *Then it wasn't connected to his body anymore and his brain was hanging out.*

L.R.: *Ah ... huff ... but when you saw this, what did you think I mean? Where you ...*

Tareq: *I was thinking about ... how they are living.*

L.R.: *Mm ... .but did you think a lot about this? I mean how was during that time, did you talk with your friends or ... ?*

Tareq: *Ah, yes ... all of us got upset.*

Again, this excerpt show how children's thoughts of Palestine were evoked by the media. Any child and adult might be emotionally disturbed, by seeing such images. However, as this

informant explains “*all of us got upset.*” This means that this news dissemination is discussed among children in a group within the camp *space*.

It might be that media in this sense creates in a *time-space convergence* (Holloway & Hubbard 2001) for the children. This geographical concept refers to how the world has becomes smaller and places become closer to each other. This time and space convergence can be helped by communication tools such as media. I interpret the role of the media, as a continuator of the children relation to Palestine. As mentioned in the previous chapter, media’s role in transmitting global childhoods and material products such as toys also influenced children.

I never heard children saying that parents told them to watch the news, but on a couple of occasions I was told that the children choose to defy their parent’s orders to not watch TV, because they just “had to watch.” Lubna further comments:

**Lubna, 12**

Lubna: *Yes ... .. eeh ... when something happens in Palestine ... they start saying on TV “don’t let children in Palestine, ... the children of Palestine the ones that are in Lebanon or in any other country ... ”*

L.R.: *Yes*

Lubna: *“Watch” (don’t let them watch TV)*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Lubna: *This is because half of Palestine should be; half sad and half happy. I mean for example us here (in Lebanon), we should be happy. Us here, ... half of Palestine is here, the other half is in Palestine. That means; we are Palestinians from Lebanon and we are a part of Palestine.*

Lubna here explains one way in which she conceptualises Palestinian space. According Kamel Dorai (2002), a transnational nation is a nation which stretches beyond borders. Lubna’s description seems as a transnational space, this way the camp is made comprehensible to her. Her statement, takes account of, but also defies the set and physical borders. Again, as Malkki (1997 in Lund 2003) has pointed out, one does not have to be present in the significant place to belong to this nation.

**Am I in Palestine?**

What role then, did the camp and what took place here have for children’s relationality, to another place? One father, from Ein el Helwe, told me that he once brought his small daughter

with him to a camp in Beirut. When she finally entered the camp, with its characteristic appearance, she asked her father, “is this also Palestine”?

The geographical closeness of the camp and the refugees, to what they claim to be their original homelands, might often be left out in our understandings. The Southern part of Lebanon, where Ein el Helwe is also located, has been in conflict with Israel for decades. Ein el Helwe is located in the Southern area, which has been in conflict with and has been occupied by Israel up until 2000. This has naturally created some awareness of this conflict among emerging generations of Palestinian refugees (Fisk 2005). Some children and adults in Ein el Helwe told me that we could hear Israeli airplanes flying over the camp. And in one focus group, where we were to draw maps of the camp, one girl suggested that we draw an Israeli military plane flying over the camp. I first doubted if this was true and expected that this was just a part of “the enemy-picture”, but I have later found that Israeli sources can confirm these flights<sup>20</sup>. In spite of the children’s life in exile, it can be noted that the northern parts of Palestine/Israel are in reality quite close to where they live (refer to map in background chapter).

This excerpt is taken from a second interview with a child informant, aged 12. He began to talk to me about his memories from the June war in 2006. He was then 9 years. The subject came up, as Rashid was talking about a drawing he had drawn, a conflict between the Israeli army and the Palestinian’s in Jerusalem and the Al Aqsa mosque.

**Rashid, 12**

*Rashid: The first day ... they started to bomb and we went up on the roof to watch and the second day I went to bring to my uncle a packet of cigarettes and then it started to light up like that ... and then the plane started to shoot ...*

*L.R.: Mm ...*

*Rashid: The third day they just started to shoot on “that place over there” and the last day they bombed the Kadia el Amma (the security office) and we were sleeping at my aunts.*

*L.R.: Ah ...*

*Rashid: We were sleeping when they bombed and a lot of stones started to fall apart, a lot.*

*L.R.: Mm ...*

*Rashid: It started to dust so much that we couldn’t see anything ... everyone started to say that the rocket had fell down at ours.*

*L.R.: Hmm ... and what did you feel when that happened?*

---

<sup>20</sup> See Ravid, B(2007) in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* (2007).



Rashid: *What did I feel? My heart didn't ... beat and we knew that it was coming from the Jews (Israelis).*

L.R.: *Mm ... and do you remember what you were thinking? I mean what you were thinking when that happened?*

Rashid: *I thought that we should leave here and go to Palestine, immediately.*

L.R.: *because, I mean ... why ... why did you think about going to Palestine?*

Rashid: *Because we should free Palestine, our country.*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Rashid: *The place where my grandfather and grandmother and my mother and my brother were born.*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Rashid: *No ... not my brother, my father and my cousins on my mother side and my uncle on the mother side's children.*

This informant explains how a violent attack on the camp strongly evoked his relationality to Palestine. The *dominicide* concept can be an appropriate comparison here. Home is a place which should be embedded with physical security and familiarity (Porteous & Smith 2001). This boy's home suddenly had been transformed into a landscape of fear. The attack on his home forced him recall that the camp should only be a temporary home and not his *real* home. Palestine, in this specific context, has been interpreted within his family as a better and safer place than the camp, even though it is in the latter that the important family space is located. I interpret this recollection of Palestine as a better and safer place as being derived from the stories of Palestine which were told within the family space.

As this section has dealt with, Palestine as a place which is imagined, can encapsulate several and even contradictory characteristic. It can fulfil several purposes in the everyday life of children, as storytelling, within the family space and as a community issue, which was corporately witnessed on TV and then discussed between friends, in school and played out in demonstrations within the camp space. In now go on, to deal more extensively with the educational institution, a place where many of children's everyday hours were spent.

## **2. The school**

### **A place to see my friends**

The school was identified as a significant institution by the children themselves. All but one child informant attended one of the nearby UNRWA schools, except one child who was enrolled at a Lebanese private school. The school days usually lasted from around 07.00 to 13.00 for those who attended the morning shift. Fridays and Sundays are official holidays

Lebanon; as a consequence the children did not attend school on those days. They attended schools located in the camp area whilst some would take a school bus to the UNRWA-schools located outside the camp area. An important question for this study has been formulated thus: What is the significance of the school in the children's life? As with earlier questions, the answers received have not always been completely straightforward. An exploration of children's perceptions of their school follows.

When I posed this question above, the children they would describe their school not only as a learning institution, but also as a place where they could see their peers. Many children described the enjoyment of talking, eating or playing with their friends in school. Girls (more often than boys) described school as a social meeting place. Again, this is a difference which I believe may be connected to parents' restrictions on their daughters' mobility in comparison to the boys. Children explored their friendships in school by playing together and, for instance, helping each other with solving school-tasks. Children explained that friendships were a support when they were frustrated with teachers, or when they were having problems at home.

Many children enthusiastically described their school as an alternative playground. This may be connected to the fact that Ein El Helwe did not have any real spaces for playgrounds. Both boys and girls would mention these aspects of school time as enjoyable parts of their day. The following is an excerpt of an interview with Kadija, who explained to me how she experienced these parts of the school days:

**Kadija, 12:**

L.R.: *Ah ... okay ... and you I mean, so you're happy in school then?*

Kadija: *Mm ... we like it, because when we have a holiday, we'll sit at home and except when your friends will come around, we'll be a bit bored.*

L.R.: *Ah ...*

Kadija: *In school we'll see our friends, have fun and play in gym.*

This excerpt is a good example of how school functioned as more than simply a place for academic instruction. Researchers have noted the importance of school as a social meeting place where children can socialise and play in other research with refugee children (Watters 2008, p. 98). However, this function does not necessarily have to be connected with refugee-status, but rather with the importance of peer relations. The social network that the children created and explored at school can also be interpreted as the creation of *space* within the school.

Prout (2005) has noted that the school is a space which operates with its own set of rules. As shown here, moving in to other spaces can come to signify the relaxation of rules which may be present in other children's spaces, such as in the family space. In particular, girls made a conscious effort to define space for themselves in the school. My interpretation of the children's views on the teaching in school is the focus of the next section.

### **School: A form of oppression**

The informants often gave surprisingly critical descriptions of the teachers who did not measure up to their expectations. These critical attitudes towards adult authorities came as a surprise to me, as I am familiar with Palestinian culture traditionally inculcating great respect for its elders. The fact that children were so critical may be connected to the fact that in situations of war or conflict, the traditional patterns of respect between the generations can be destroyed (Rouhana 1989; Usher 1991; Jabr 2004).

When discussing school teaching, the large majority of children emphasised that it was important to understand the content of subjects taught. This was identified as a key-issue, by the informants when they described the school institution. The presence or lack thereof of understanding in the teaching in the school space was always emphasised in some way. Some of these children's parents also approached me and said that they were very concerned about their children's schooling.

Children who felt that they did not understand their teacher described this as a highly frustrating experience. Boys, in particular, would describe this frustration. During the focus group, which dealt with school as a subject, one informant said that he became so upset when talking about school that he did not wish to continue to talk about it.

These children explained that when they asked teachers for help to understand particular subjects, they were often simply ignored. They furthermore spoke of teachers that would yell at them and use hurtful and abusive language towards them; Teachers who had no time to review homework were also described in negative terms. In many instances, the children were dissatisfied with the teacher's ability to teach. Many teachers were described as: "angry and nervous" and in conflict with these teachers the children would often experienced that teachers would swear at them.

In some cases the teacher's frustration would go as far as beating the children. Physical beatings were only described to me by the boys and they said that this was quite common in school. Girls would only give me vague hints of physical punishment in school. The problem of such punishment in UNRWA schools has been reported by children in other studies of Palestinian refugees (Chatty 2002; Serhan & Tabari 2005). The common use and problem of disciplinary punishment within UNRWA-schools was also confirmed to me in informal conversations with NGO-workers, teachers and parents. The following interviews exemplify how the violence in school was perceived by some children.

**Tareq, 12**

*Tareq: I feel that it is oppression that he beats the children.*

*L.R.: Eh ... but if the teachers beat you, what can you do about it? I mean, can't you complain to anyone and tell them?*

*Tareq: No ... today there was a teacher that hit a boy from my class.*

*L.R.: Mm ...*

*Tareq: He hit the boy from my class on his eye here (pointing to his eye). So then blood started to come out of his eye from inside [behind the eyeball].*

The word oppression was often used by children who were talking about school. The previous informant discussion describes a particularly violent episode, which he claimed, however, was untypical. This second excerpt describes another form of violence:

**Aisha, 11:** *There are some teachers ... once I told her that I didn't understand, she came and started to shout at me and told me; "why didn't you understand you are stupid" ... and like that she started to tell me.*

Here the assault, toward this girl, is verbal. Using verbal assaults to hurt children can also be termed as a form of violence (Montgomery 2003, p.147). The final excerpt helps to clarify what the student and informant perceives to be happening before the conflict between the subject and the teacher begins:

**Nael, 14**

*Nael: If someone just said to another, "give me a pen", he will beat him, he starts to scream and swear and abuse the name of God ... they are not nice.*

*L.R.: Why?*

*Nael: I mean they will let a teacher enter and he will keep talking and talking, but we will not understand him, because he will keep talking faster and faster. We will come and ask him, if we ask him, "help us", he will beat us.*

In this account, Nael describes what he perceives as over-reaction to his attempt to borrow a pen from his friend. He also explained that he just did not understand what was being taught

as there were no opportunities allowed for enquiry. However, in another part of the interview, he would admit to that when he got the feeling of not understanding the lesson he would “maybe start to make noise and talk more.” This would, perhaps understandably, provoke the teacher.

Some reports have shown that teachers in UNRWA schools often are over-worked, are required have to handle large class sizes and in general struggle with the societal challenges. Children’s explanations of these parts of their school days coincide with the *placing* of children within the school-structure (Meinert 2003). The control aspect of the school-space is therefore, at least in the children’s statements, felt in experiences of verbal and psychical assaults from teachers. As Jenks (1999, p.46) explains; children are subjected to discipline within the social space which is constructed in order to control them. However, these negative descriptions of the school “placing” children do not describe all of children’s school experiences.

According to the UNRWA-law corporal punishment is illegal. Some children were also aware of this, but the beatings still appeared to proceed regardless. A local NGO worker explained to me that UNRWA had employed a new system of detecting this beating which apparently did not function very well. Some teachers I met informally I also claimed that they could not see any other way of calming the children, who were described as “impossible to control.”

Children would describe “bad” teachers, but also talk about the teachers they appreciated and most importantly, who would make them *understand* subjects and treated them well, even playing games with them. In the children’s descriptions, the difficult aspects of school included the following as the most common factors: not understanding lessons, not communicating well with the teachers, not being heard and even being beaten.

### **Understanding schooling**

Children who described positive views on the teaching they received in their school, also emphasised *understanding* the subject that were taught in school as a main component of these positive feelings. They were satisfied with their teacher’s effort to help them and their classmates understand the curriculum. It is worth noting that these students did not describe the disciplinary actions discussed in the previous section. The lack of perceived necessity for such disciplinary actions on the part of the teacher seemed to be obviated by better

communication between the student and the teacher. Teachers that played with their class and listened to them were described as being the children needed and wanted.

Some children rather mentioned particular teachers whom they liked and sometimes emphasised how good they were at making certain subjects understandable. This is another example of *placing*. Placing children within a social space such as their school could give children self-perceptions as either “successes or failures.” In the first case, where the child gains an identity as a “success”, the school is viewed as more positive place to be for that individual (Jenks 1996).

This can be true, even when teacher –student communication is not particularly good. For instance, informant Iman (13) told me that she did not approve of the teachers use of bad language, or verbal assaults towards students. Still, she enjoyed school because she mastered it well. She described it to me of it as being the “only nice place” in the camp, perhaps because she did not like anything else in the camp. This is an excerpt from an interview with Lubna, a girl which was very focused on her education. She was also attending an UNRWA school for girls.

**Lubna, 12**

Lubna: *Eeh ... the teachers are very nice ... I mean they teach too, you feel that they won't let you leave the class, unless you understand. The teacher will teach you a thing and if a girl doesn't understand, she has to tell him that she didn't understand.*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Lubna: *If you have understood and if the whole class lifts their hands and says that they have understood ... the teacher says “take out some paper, we are going to do a quiz.”*

Lubna clarifies here how her teacher helps her to *understand*. The teacher has enabled the learning process and makes sure that everyone in the class has understood. The quiz which followed was a kind of test in order for the teacher to really make sure that the students had understood.

The expectations and views of how a good teacher should act was a subject that I explored together with the children. This exploration was a result of the dissatisfaction I had noted that many informants displayed. According to the children, a good teacher should not yell and shout at the children. The “good teacher” should also make an effort to ensure the children

understand subjects and otherwise show care for the children. The following excerpt is taken from an interview with Fadi, who stated that he had never really liked school.

**Fadi, 14**

Fadi: *The right thing is that the teacher respects the boy, talk to him in a civilized way, make him like the school ... he should tell the boy; “when you become older the school will become useful for you”, that for example; “working is not good,” “we want to teach you so that tomorrow you can learn of something other than us.”*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Fadi: *That’s how it should be, that is how the right way is. For example, that; “we will teach you, us the teachers, so that you learn to wear clean clothes” things like that ... you see how?*

Here Fadi brings up several aspects which he wishes should be present in the school *space*. The teacher should be *concerned* with the child, *explain* and help him to understand. This close attention to children in school was perhaps not possible to achieve for many teachers, given the high number of students. The previous sections have presented the children’s descriptions of what took place within school and their views on it. I now proceed with the presentation of children’s agency in facing their educational challenges.

### **Responding to educational challenges**

As described in the last section, many children often spoke of a challenging situation in school. As suggested by both parents and NGO-workers in the field, the problems in the UNRWA-schools were caused by structural and economic factors.

The main issues were:

- Lack of good quality teaching, usually caused by difficulties in understanding or communication with the teacher.
- verbal and physical violence from the teacher

How did the children then respond to these educational challenges?

- Homework

Most of the children seemed to spend many hours during the day on their homework. Some of the most dedicated children told me that they would wake up at four or five in the morning to study before their classes started. Even the children that displayed a strong dissatisfaction explained that they needed to study hard to succeed and that this was their duty.

**Lubna, 12:** *So when we are in the bus, sometimes when we have us a test (the same day). So I'll sit and repeat. Sometimes when I don't have a test I'll sit normally on the bus. We'll reach the school, so then we'll start to ask each other about the homework ... and stuff. So when enter the class, I mean, we will sit and learn and study and stuff like that. When I go back home, what time do I come home? I come home at five o'clock ...*

- Protesting against the teacher

Some children explained that as a reaction to a violent teacher, they would start to disobey them. For instance, they would make noise and talk in class. Some boys described situations where teachers were attacked by students. The children in this instance did not respond to disciplinary action, or do the school system as wished, but rather acted in oppositional ways to protest.

- Support from social networks:

Another way of facing educational challenges which was employed by children was to use their social networks. Peers would often help each other when facing with challenges with school work. As an example, Bilal (12) expressed that he was generally unsatisfied with his teacher's ability to help him understand subjects in school. He would describe to me how he was given notes by his cousin, who was in a class above him. In this way he would be able to understand the following year's curriculum. Some children, the majority of them girls, would also tell me about meeting up and studying together in each other's houses. In this way they could help each other.

**Bilal, 12**

*Bilal: Ah ... all of them, those ones ... we play on Sunday and Friday, we'll finish (from school) and we'll play. If we have test coming up, no, then we won't play. We won't play.*

*L.R.: But eh ...*

*Bilal: For example, how? Kadija, the daughter of my aunt, now she is one year older than me. I'll take the papers from her test, the test ... eh, tests and I try to understand them, because I want to succeed, I understand them, so that I can succeed. She'll give them to me ... and I, when I grow older I'll give them to Hussam and when Hussam grows older he'll give them to someone smaller than him. That's how we do it.*

*L.R.: Ah ... so it means you are helping each other?*

*Bilal: Exactly.*

This exemplifies how the informant used his social network, in this case another child in his extended family, in order to gain more help with his homework. This suggests an active attitude and displays agency in challenging the situation. Social networks are also used as a



*Manageability* factor (Antonovsky 1978). This was just one way in which the social network, mores specifically the friendship and family *space* was useful in handling challenges in school.

- Seeking alternative local institutions:

Another way children used to face challenges in school was to visit the programs of the NGOs located within the camp, many of the children reported that they went there after school. They would receive help from “good teachers” with their homework in these centres. In particular, boys reported that they went to Mahads, NGOs which offered after school help. I also learnt from my observations that it was also quite common for children to go to private teachers in the camp, in addition to attending the ordinary school.

### **Comparing schools**

The quality of UNRWA schools in comparison with schools in Lebanon was often stated as a concern by some of the children. The children described the Lebanese private schools as being better. Some children would also bring up the issue of “wasta” in their own school. This term refers to the way one requires contacts to get help within the system. It is a problem which is often mentioned in research with Palestinian refugees (Hart 2004). If students were acquainted with the teacher, for instance through family ties, they could get better marks on tests. The children who had observed classmates getting such privileges expressed that this was deeply unfair.

The education within the camp was further compared to education outside, in other words, education in Lebanon or abroad. These concerns about school quality suggest that the children were quite aware of their minority status within the Lebanese society. And as Watters has argued, struggles faced by refugees can be paralleled with those of other ethnic minority communities (Watters 2009).

As mentioned in the background chapter, the long term Palestinian population is denied most rights by the Lebanese government. Palestinian refugee children are not integrated into the Lebanese school system. This is also a denial of the refugee children’s rights stated in the IUNCRC. The children perceived this legal discrimination as a limitation of their educational opportunities. In the following interview excerpts, we see two perceptions of school quality within the UNRWA structure.

**Rashid, 11**

Rashid: *And it's like that, it is not anything extra with their education, but there are for example UNRWA schools that are good ... for example now ... in Hattiin (school), the teachers are good and the others ... for example, there is a teacher that can control the class and he is the one that I understand the most. The best one I mean, he makes you understand a lot.*

L.R.: *Ah ...*

Rashid: *For example if one didn't understand something, he will make him understand.*

Rashid points out the good quality of a school, and it is again contrasted with what children described as the most prevalent problem in school. "The teacher will make him understand," therefore refers back to how children defined quality in schools. The next excerpt also describes the Lebanese schools, as better than the local UNRWA school.

**Lubna, 12:** *I mean, I mean ... we ... here we learn ... we don't have strong schools like the government schools or special schools (Lebanese). The schools outside (the camp) they are very strong, I mean here and in Saida and like that ... there is a lot of strong schools. So, sometimes they won't let us enter the government schools.*

Lubna described Lebanese school spaces as desirable and simultaneously as almost inaccessible. In spite of some children having such worries about school quality in UNRWA, as opposed to inaccessible governmental or private schools in Lebanon, this did not seem directly to affect their future goals. Lebanese private schools are accessible for Palestinian children if they can pay. However, it did seem as though children understood that they had to make an effort for themselves if they were to succeed in school. Furthermore, it seemed as if many parents were talking about the quality in UNRWA schools. Additionally, I met many parents who had wished to enrol their children in Lebanese private schools.

**"School as oppression - work as fun"**

A few of the children had various work experiences. Boys had the most work experience, which was done mainly during holidays. In Ein el Helwe camp, it was apparently quite common for children to leave school to work for financial reasons (UNRWA). Some children were contrasting their school experiences with work experiences. Girls more often helped with domestic chores inside the house, with the exception of a few girls who helped their families with working in family-owned shops located next to their home in the camp.

Girls did not put much emphasis on work in our interviews, but they seemed to meet other children when they were working in the shops. The boys, who had some experience with work, described this as a positive experience. The children would often point out that as opposed to school, where they might experience difficulties with the teacher, they felt as if they mastered their work tasks. Again, this can point back to notions of children as “successes” or “failures”, which can be created in school (Jenks1996). Being given an identity as a “failure” in school can increase children’s interest in alternative fields where they experience a sense of mastery over their activities.

**Salahedin, 13**

L.R.: *But eh ... you like to work then?*

Salahedin: *Yes ... I like to work.*

L.R.: *Okay, what is it that you like about it? Do you feel that you I mean ... ah ... yes, what do you feel when you work?*

Mother: *How does it benefit you to work?*

Salahedin: *Everyone in the world works, I like to work, and it is nicer than the school.*

L.R.: *Ah ... okay, why is it nicer than the school?*

Salahedin: *In work ... nobody talks to you, beats you or anything.*

L.R.: *Ah ...*

Salahedin: *In school you have to keep sitting down and they will beat you.*

In this interview, Salahedin clearly contrasts between his negative experiences in the school space and his good experiences with working. Working in Salahedin’s experience is “more fun” because he does not experience the strict control which is imposed on him in school. He seems aware that working can be an alternative to attending school, because as he says here; *everyone in the world works*. Perhaps, the informant himself finds that his experiences with work presents a greater source of *Manageability* for the future than his experiences with the school (Antonovsky 1982). I will now proceed to more specifically deal with how children spoke of the future.

### 3. “Imagine the Future”

“The future “often did not seem to be of the greatest concern for the children in our discussions, hence the title of this section “imagine the future,” which stems from my recurrent requests for children to imagine the future. However, in statements children naturally used their present and past experiences in talking about this (Palestine) as a basis for

considering the future. As Boulding (1995) has stated; *knowledge of the future is perhaps the most important fruit of our knowledge about the past.*

The above sections focus upon the present everyday lives of children in Ein el Helwe. This final section will therefore deal with their thoughts of the future within the space and time context of Ein el Helwe. The following interview statement shows a clear pattern of preparation for the future:

**Jameela, 12**

L.R.: *Would you like to tell me anything else about the future ... or?*

Jameela: *Right now I am not thinking about it ... all my thinking is on now and on school and on succeeding in it, that's all.*

As this informant explains, she is not very preoccupied with the future. At the same time she has chosen to highly focus on the present in order to succeed in school. This might after all suggest an awareness of the future, as she does mention a future goal; to succeed in school. Again, the school *space* is mentioned as a means to succeed and manage ones future life. In the next section, I present children's views on a return to a Palestinian state in the future.

**Return**

The permanent settlement of the Palestinian refugees has been rejected in the Lebanese Taif agreement of 1990. Meanwhile, Lebanese citizenship is often not of the highest priority for the Palestinian refugees. Most Palestinian refugees reject naturalization because this would put a legal right to return to Palestine at stake. According to the 194 UN general assembly's resolution, the Palestinian refugees have a legal right to return to their areas of origin. However, the prospects of this happening in the near future, seems bleak, considering several factors. One obvious factor is the remaining unsolved political situation between the Palestinian government and Israel (Khalidi 2001).

During a focus group, a boy told us that his father had heard on the radio, that the refugees might gain Lebanese citizenship. But everyone agreed that they would "never" wish to become Lebanese. Some children also critiqued others who were trying to act Lebanese and also did not care about the return to Palestine. In the following excerpt, Kadija talk about her view on a return to Palestine.

**Kadija, 12**

Kadija: *Eh ... if we can we'll return to Palestine and soon we'll return, we'll return if God wants it.*

L.R.: *Ah ... but you, you what do you think? Do you think that this is possible I mean.*

Kadija: *Mm ... it's possible that we will return yes.*

L.R.: *Aah ...*

Kadija: *Me ... my friends are saying a lot that, "we were born here and that we will not return to Palestine and we will stay in Lebanon."*

L.R.: *Is there a lot of your friends from here, from Ein el Helwe saying this?*

Kadija: *Mm ... that "we will stay here in Lebanon and that we won't return" to Palestine and "khallas", we were born here.*

L.R.: *Mmm ...*

Kadija: *Mm ... no, in the end we were born here, but Palestine stays my country.*

Here, it seems as though the informant is contesting her friend's attitude. She claims that we will return if *God wants it*. Religion or more specifically a belief in a higher power is referred to as an asset in believing in a future goal. The uncertain situation of a return to Palestine can be understood through the SOC theory's *Manageability* component. Antonovsky (1987) also mentioned religion as a factor that can be used in order to deal with insecurity about the future. Another interview, which initially dealt with the present condition of the camp community displays a more pessimistic attitude:

**Jameela, 12**

Jameela: *Mm ...I mean, everyone here say that they don't have any rights.*

L.R.: *Mm*

Jameela: *Because what we want to happen, doesn't happen.*

L.R.: *Doesn't happen ... .mm ... like what?*

Jameela: *For example to return to Palestine, it is not happening.*

L.R.: *Ah ...*

Jameela: *It doesn't ... this is impossible, that we'll return to Palestine. Later on, I don't know what will happen.*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Jameela: *But that we'll return now ... .that won't happen. I don't think so.*

As this exemplifies, children were often very aware of the political situation connected to their exile, but did not always believe in a future return to another homeland. This next excerpt refers to the religious aspect again. I have asked the informant what he thinks about a return after he himself had brought up the subject.

**Bilal, 12**

*Bilal: I mean something out of my hands, I am watching and eh ... I mean during prayer time I read the Quran and then I sleep. I keep praying that we will return to Palestine and like that ...*

As this informant explains, he puts his faith in religion when it comes to a *future* solution on the exilic condition. Again, this can be interpreted as a comprehensibility, which is provided a religious belief.

**Education as steadfastness**

While displaying enthusiasm about reaching educational goals and improving their life conditions, the children would simultaneously display critical attitudes towards teaching styles or towards school quality in UNRWA. Bilal (12) told me that he wanted to become an engineer “to help Palestine”, to reach this goal he said that he wanted to “imprison” himself in his house and study very hard. However, he had conflicts with some teachers in school, which he felt did not listen to him, nor teach subjects very well.

The fact that Bilal still wanted to work hard to reach his goals, suggests a considerable will on his part. The ambiguity between goals and the means to attain them was quite commonly expressed among the children. Such ambiguity has also been expressed in studies with children in different contexts (Meinert 2003) where children have high future aspirations and maintain them, in spite of the fact that they are unsatisfied with the school system’s capacity to provide the help for this.

“Sumud” is an Arabic word that means “steadfastness” or “steadfast perseverance.” The concept of “Sumud” has been used by Palestinians in several ways. For instance, “Sumud” can refer to the resistance and endurance of Camp life, where attacks on Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon are often upheld as prime examples of resistance. It can also be seen as non violent resistance (Teeffelen et al. 2005). To do an education, in order “to help Palestine” can be interpreted as a sign of Sumud and of contributing to the community. This was often expressed by children in interviews about future goals. Most of the high status professions which children could see adults working in, within the camp, were as teachers or doctors in the UNRWA system. In the previous sections, children pointed out what they disliked about their present place. In the context of talking about these challenges, immigration from the camp was often proposed a solution.

**Nael, 14**

L.R.: *Okay, but do you also think that you will be here, when you get older?*

Nael: *No I am not thinking about staying here when I get older.*

L.R.: *Where would you like to be?*

Nael: *I don't know, but not here.*

This informant had previously pointed out several challenging aspects of his life in the camp and in school. In this excerpt he explains, that because of the present camp conditions he wishes to leave the camp.

**Doctor or engineer**

Most children responded that they wished to become doctors or engineers in the future. Many children also wanted to become teachers, but many children stated that this was a second wish, in case they did not become what they really wanted.

A few children also explained that “this belongs to in the future”, meaning that they felt it too early to decide themselves. These specific professions; might be connected to the fact that the children were observing that doctors and teachers were working within their close environment. The same children that had clear views on future goals responded that they had to work very hard in school to reach their goals. In this sense, the children often displayed agency and aspirations. This enthusiasm about education has also been documented among Palestinian children, in other studies in UNRWA fields (Chatty 2009).

**Mona, 9**

L.R.: *Okay ... I just want to ask you last of all ... what would you like to become in the future?*

Mona: *A doctor.*

L.R.: *And why?*

Mona: *Because my mother wants me to and ... because I would like to become a doctor*

L.R.: *Okay ... why would you like to?*

Mona: *So I can heal the sick ones.*

This informant explains that she wants to become a doctor. She displays a clear idea of how she wishes the future to become. She also explains that her mother is in support of this choice which brings up the social network again. The next informant also has a clear idea of which education he wishes to attain in the future:

**Bilal, 12**

Bilal: *I mean, maybe here maybe outside, I don't think about things like that.*

L.R: *Mm ...*

Bilal: *But I mean I've put it in my mind that I want to become an engineer.*

L.R: *Ah ...*

Bilal: *I mean I've put it in my mind, I mean, Innshallah ("if God wills it") I say.*

L.R: *Mm ...*

Bilal: *But if I didn't become one, it will have been because it was the will of God and this was what was written for me, I mean it doesn't matter.*

This informant has a future plan to become an engineer. However, as the Comprehensibility component in the SOC theory explains one can make sense out of unfortunate future events. As Bilal explains his religious conviction helps him when he consider that he might not achieve exactly what he hopes for in the future. As many Muslims, he believes that mans faith is predestined.

**A better future- for everyone**

What visions did children then have for the future if asked to imagine a future life in the camp?

**Nael, 14**

L.R.: *How would you like the future to become?*

Nael: *I would like it to be, like the poor gets his rights and also that the rich one will have rights ... and that the teachers will become nice and that the whole world will be nice.*

L.R.: *And how is the situation now?*

Nael: *Right now nobody is nice, nobody is nice.*

L.R.: *Hm ...*

Nael: *The rich one thinks he is better than everybody and the poor walks around jobless.*

Nael brought up some of the negative aspects within the camp space. The economical difficulties and inequality in the camp and the teacher's are specifically mentioned. Still, Nael, hopes for equality mong the people in the camp, because as he explains; he also wishes for the "rich ones" that they will keep their rights. Nael also hopes for an improvement of these present conditions within the camp, but also for an improvement of the "whole world". Lubna, in the next excerpt also, brought up particular aspects about the present state of the camp



**Lubna, 12**

Lubna: *I don't know ... in the future ... there are a lot of children that are now saying; "I want to become an engineer, I want to become an engineer, I want to become ..." so because of that I expect that the camp is going to become better than it is.*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Lubna: *That they will return and re-build the buildings that are like ... not nice. Eh ... they keep shooting, so that sometimes it becomes a problem because of the explosions.*

L.R.: *Ah ...*

Lubna: *So there are a lot of like buildings that are like, that the inside of them are small and many people can't take it. So, I expect that the buildings are going to become bigger.*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Lubna: *Aand that they will improve the streets. Because the streets at ours aren't good at all. Yes and things like that ... . That the children will become engineers and repair them. This means that the camp will develop a bit.*

L.R.: *Ah ... hm ... so you imagine that they are going to become like that engineers and that they will return here and that they will help the camp?*

Lubna: *Mm ...*

L.R.: *Mm ... okay and ... eh ...eh ... and maybe you will have the same answer to this question, but you ah ... what do you hope for in future I mean?*

Lubna: *Mm ... that in the camp and that in any country that it stops to be wars between anyone, that all the people will support each other.*

L.R.: *Mm ...*

Lubna: *And that they'll cooperate ... and that the country becomes better, that it develops more. That people becomes workers and engineers and cooperate, with each other. More than they do today.*

This excerpt shows that Lubna has hopes of many aspects of the camp improving here. She puts her hope into the next generation and displays hopes of improvement. She also shows a somehow global awareness, when she talks of her hope that people, everywhere, will stop fighting and start to cooperate with each other. It seems as though she believes that the children in the camp can manage to produce something positive for the future. Again, this could be interpreted as the informant's perceived *Manageability* (Antonovsky 1987) of the local community in Ein el Helwe. The children, in the two last statements, both mention that they also hope for an improvement of conditions outside the camp spaces and its borders. Such statements might suggest that many of the challenges within the camp simultaneously contributed in expanding the global awareness and horizon of children. This also suggest, that the children did not believe that all the places outside the camp space, necessarily were better than their own.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the analysis which has been presented in the previous chapters is summarised and further contextualised. Children's accounts of their present life in Ein el Helwe have been the basis for the analytical categorisation. Within the camp; the family, the school and the belief system emerge as what has termed significant local institutions for children. Some of these emerging categories corresponded with the initial research categories outlined previous to my fieldwork. Other categories, such as the "belief-system" in Chapter five, emerged solely from the data-collection and analysis.

It is appropriate that the limitations of the scope and focus of this thesis be reiterated briefly. In the methodological chapter, my own subjective and ongoing influence on the research process and generation of data material was discussed. This indicates that in the analytic process I did not necessarily operate with a quest for an objective truth within the statements of the child informants (Kvale & Brinkman 2009).

Instead of presenting an extensive analysis of each local institution present in the children's everyday lives, this analysis has presented a more holistic overview of a few significant institutions which children themselves identified as important in their everyday lives. The fact that the data collection only reflects on a certain amount of time and place in these children's lives should be noted. Other local institutions working with children, such as NGOs, have therefore allowed only superficial attention.

### **A bittersweet place**

Children have described Ein el Helwe as a place that has many of the qualities which Porteous & Smith (2001) connect to the concept of *home*. Home is often the place which is the centre of our life. This is the place where we find our family and friends. Home is also a place which is connected to personal security, intimacy and safety (Ibid). Such descriptions of Ein el Helwe are also common in many of my informant's descriptions.

Family, friends and play are also a natural part of a child's everyday life. Children display agency and make spaces for play in the camp, be it in the corridors of the camp, in a family shop in the Souq or in the neighbourhood. They also play in areas outside the camp.

Children's everyday life in the camp is, maybe surprisingly, *normal*. Children go to school; they describe good social relations among their family and friends. Ein el Helwe's refugee

tents have turned into homes over the years. Children attend school. Life goes on even in protracted exile. The children and their parents often stated that “we have gotten used to this.” Life in the camp is also described in terms of *Comprehensibility*; it is “normal” and it is predictable for many of the children with whom I spoke (Antonovsky 1987).

However, from time to time the normality of life in Ein el Helwe is contested. My informants are reminded that on the outside their home in Lebanon is not perceived as a normal home after all. Perhaps people living on the outside do not understand that a refugee camp can also be a home? The camp has to be defended in such meetings. This seeming normality also breaks down when the camp is bombed, or when shootings between tense political opponents break out within the camp. Some of the children claimed that they had “gotten used to the shootings” too. I have interpreted this as a sense of *Comprehensibility*, a term which signifies that these were events that were expected to happen (Ibid).

Other children would say that they just wanted to leave the camp, although a positive component in camp life, which children did not wish to leave, was their own family. In my interpretation children describe an ever-present everyday context of diametrical opposites and ambiguity. Many things, such as the violent hostilities within the camp were described as difficult and frightening. At the same time, children displayed a feeling of communality and a strong emphasis on corporate cultural values within the camp. Children would say that they had “gotten used” to these positive aspects of their camp too.

Some of the general challenges child informants identified may be summarised thus:

- Difficult economic situation and social inequality;
- Stressed and nervous adults in the streets;
- Low integration into host country; for instance not attending Lebanese schools;
- Challenges in understanding the local school;
- The experience of violence at different levels; in school and in local arguments and street shooting.

Childhood from an adult perspective has traditionally been understood as a time to prepare for the future. Many believe that children more or less internalise the knowledge transmitted

through generations (Lee 2001). The role of children as future advocates of a specific culture in exile has often been seen as vital (Hart 2004). Some analysts, therefore, claim that Palestinian refugee children are offered a future which is only based on a return to the past. This future is offered to them by their own older generation and their so called friends in the Arab world (Hiernomy 2008). This might be seen as a possible scenario, but in reality it scratches only at the surface of the Palestinian refugee situation and their claims to a right of return to their ancestral home.

However, I suggest that there are some factors missing from such traditional perceptions of children in exile. Firstly, the children's independent agency is left out of such analysis. As this thesis and other child-oriented research has shown (Hart 2004; Chatty 2005; Shaloub-Kevorkian 2006), Palestinian children display agency and do not always blindly follow their peers or relatives. As stated in the background chapter, the vision of a future Palestinian nation appears at present to be more divided than ever. The Palestinian leadership can no longer offer a single image of a future as they possibly could during the time of the Palestinian revolution. Nationalistic movements are offering a return to the Palestinian geography that was lost in 1948. At the same time, older generation might feel increasing hopelessness of return with passing years.

Transnational ideologies such as Islamist-oriented movements, which increasingly are gaining support among young Palestinians, also offer a return to Palestine, although in the context of a global Umma (Rougier 2007; Engell 2010). Palestinian refugees at large are not a politically homogenous group. Palestinian children are also politically aware and manoeuvre between the different ideologies in their own environment. The child informants were also able to look critically at some adults in the camp in regard to internal conflicts in the camp. Other issues which these children consider include the possibility of immigration or to conceal their Palestinian identity in order to feel less like an outsider in Lebanon.

The sum of the different local institutions and the relationships between them makes life somehow manageable and seemingly normal in Ein el Helwe. Perhaps a good family structure is a necessary prerequisite if life is to be *manageable*. However, sometimes my informants themselves contest the normality of their life based on their own perceptions of their exile and minority status in Lebanon. They compare their lives to those of people in Saidon where

conditions are seemingly better. In Saidon, many children stated, perhaps with envy, that “they have nice streets, they have good schools and there are no shootings there.”

### **An education to manage the future?**

Palestinian refugees have been known to appreciate education highly and often have higher education than non-refugees in the Middle East region. These refugees traditionally have invested in education for their children (Hansen-Bauer & Jacobsen 2007). Education has been seen as a possibility to gain a better life in exile. However, in the Lebanese camps, this statistic appears to be changing in a negative direction. In these camps, 60% of the adult population had not finished their basic education (FAFO 2003; Hansen-Bauer & Jacobsen 2007).

The continuous international and Lebanese treatment of the Palestinian “refugee problem” as a temporary issue has over the years lead to a decreasing quality of their institutions, such as schools. The struggle of UNRWA to maintain its basic services as well as the teachers’ own struggle to do an increasingly challenging assignment also affects the everyday lives of the children. The Palestinian refugees have been grateful for their UNRWA services (Peteeet 2005). Meanwhile, in my meetings with parents, the deteriorating educational services and their children’s future opportunities to gain work were often mentioned as their greatest concerns. Some parents and NGOs conjectured that the decreasing quality of school might create a new generation of Palestinian refugees who could not read and write.

UNRWA-school is another place to which the wider Palestinian refugee community at large is ambivalent in attitude. From my discussions with parents and NGO workers in the camp, education seemed to be a very great concern for them. There was considerable pressure on children to succeed early on in school. One NGO worker even stated that she felt that parents were putting too much pressure on their offspring. For instance, she mentioned that some kindergartens even wanted to teach children English before they could speak their own mothers tongue. Extracurricular activities, such as extra teachers and after school help, seemed to be sorely needed in the camp.

As already mentioned the Palestinians refugees in Lebanon come under the jurisdiction of the Lebanese labour law for foreigners of 1962. This law places restrictions on the right to work

in as many as 70 professions for Palestinians. Examples of such professions are law, medicine, pharmacy and engineering (Besson 1997; Halabi 2004; Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee 2010). In addition, the general discrimination and dislike of Palestinians in Lebanon has made their educational situation quite difficult. This is in contrast to other host countries of Palestinians refugees, where many refugees have gained a better economic situation by attaining higher education. In Lebanon, UNRWA is dealing with this situation by providing education and instructional trade courses where Palestinians there have better prospects of getting a job. The school experiences of the majority of my informants can be interpreted as symptomatic of wider structures and is reflected in the fact that refugee status for many Palestinians is a continuing problem.

This analysis also shows that the outside environment of the school structure in Ein el Helwe is by many accounts can be disturbing and challenging. How could this be a good learning environment? Crowded housing conditions, large classes, double shifts, a difficult economic situation and internal conflicts are some of the commonly stated difficulties in the lives of these children (Amnesty International 2006; NABAA 2007). This has been confirmed by many NGO workers in Ein el Helwe.

Simultaneously, children show agency in handling challenge with local institutions in their environment. They make considerable use of their social networks and their capacities for attracting local support. In addition, when facing these challenges, the children's statements can be interpreted as *manageability*. The children's challenges in the education sector are not completely recent phenomena. In the 1960s the Palestinian political writer Ghassan Kanafani took a job as a teacher at a UNRWA school while a young man. He noticed that many of the children slept during class and often arrived late after they had been working the night before.

*"I realised that the children's drowsiness did not stem from scorn for me or dislike of their studies, nor did it have anything to do with my capacity as a teacher. It was simply the reflection of a political problem."* (Kanafani 2000, p. 3).

As referred to here, children's challenges in their everyday life outside school also affected their capacity in school. Kanafani here connects this problem to wider societal problems. Children stated school attendance as an important part of their everyday life and future

possibilities. As the findings show, children show great interest in their education. It is not a duty which was forced upon them.

### **Beyond borders**

Children's perceptions of their local spaces should also be contextualised in the wider structures of their society. As many researchers have theorised, children cannot be separated completely from society at large (Katz 2004; Prout 2005; Abebe 2007). As the child informants on many occasions revealed, children are often aware of some of the wider societal structures which can affect their personal lives. In the wider context of Lebanon, Palestinian refugee camps are still subjected to exterior hostilities and their inhabitants are aware of their home as a place where hostilities are a continuous threat. Such a threat forces a constant re-evaluation of their home as a stable and safe environment.

Children in Ein el Helwe have shown how they are influenced by global factors to quite a large extent. Watching news reports may evoke sadness and solidarity when their Palestinian peers are subjected to violence. Children then begin to think outside the borders of their camp and Lebanon to their peers in Gaza. Attacks on the camp, by outside perpetrators, may also evoke a feeling of wanting to go to a certain "other" place. Palestinian children therefore might experience an "expansion" of their geographical *everyday space*. As Prout (2005) has noted, childhood is now becoming increasingly analogous across the globe. This signifies that children also experience the effect of globalisation in vastly different areas across the globe. At the same time, TV images show other, perhaps idealised, places and lifestyles. This creates an awareness of alternative places to Ein el Helwe.

Children's awareness of the differences between the camp space and Lebanese society also crosses the physical boundary of Ein el Helwe's physical borders. Flores-Borquez's (2000) field-work with Chilean children in protracted exile in Britain found that these children's movement into a British majority culture often sparked ambiguous feelings of belonging to somewhere other than their present location or environment. Although Flores-Borquez (2000) does not use the space concept herself, her empirical material shows that school was a place where Chilean children would be reminded of their different ethnicity and origin by the British children.

The geographical closeness of Northern Palestinian areas to Lebanon and the camps, where my informants' grandparents or great-grandparents once used to live, should also be considered in order to understand the continuation of Palestinian identity in the emerging generations. They are inevitably a part of these events, but as this analysis has shown, they position themselves differently within this political context. Finally, the religious outlook which many children had can also be said to transcend borders. In my interpretation of the statements of informants, their religious worldview gave them a certain *sense of coherence* and belief in *Manageability* in their present and future (Antonovsky 1987). The SOC theory has not, as Antonovsky (1987) explains an intention to explain "everything" about a person's thoughts. In this research I too have no intention of explaining children's identities or feelings on the basis of my limited data-material. However, used as a limited theoretical tool the SOC theory can provide an explanation for some of these children's present and future perspectives.

This study has dealt with the present life of my child informants in Ein el Helwe. Their experience of everyday life and local institutions has been the primary focus. The informants generally stated that they had good relationships to their local environments and nuclear or local family. Children also experienced good things in their life such as school, friendship and playtime. Religion is a part of the daily life of these children and appears to contribute to a sense of *Meaningfulness* and improves interpersonal relations. The challenges in their lives are primarily experiences of violence on different levels and places and various difficulties in understanding curriculum and teaching at school.

### **Recommendations for further research**

Based on my fieldwork observations and on the necessary and imposed limitations of this study, two recommendations for future research are appropriate.

- **Educational services**

During fieldwork, the deteriorating quality of education was by far the most common concern I was informed of by parents, NGO workers and children themselves. Children are provided with educational opportunities; however, this is within a challenging environment, an environment which may be detrimental to the teaching quality itself. Teachers are faced with a highly challenging task and require special resources and training to cope with the latent



difficulties in this situation. This study has not dealt with the educational factors in any comprehensive form.

- **Divorced mothers and their children:**

In the course of this research, I met several divorced women in the camp. Common amongst them was a difficult economic situation. In a conservative society, divorce is permitted but not respected. Local capacities, such as the Islamic charity organisations and NGOs did not offer specific programs for these women. Divorced women and mothers have limited economic security other than their own earning capacity or family network. In a just society it is desirable that the legal and economic rights of all citizens are treated equally (Rawls 1972, p. 113).

- **Limited health service**

During my fieldwork I observed that some of the child informant's had many difficulties in assessing health services. This might be a necessary research assessment for other researchers. The limitations on UNRWA's health services is an increasing problem in Lebanon, and it might be of use to investigate how this affects children, for instance in the light of their rights in the IUNCRC.

- **Children's culture**

My study has revealed an interesting, but limited insight in to children's play and leisure activities in protracted exile. This might be an area for further study, as this part of these children's life often is given less attention in research. Perhaps the reason is that many researchers, naturally, will find other areas of these children's life of more primary necessity. Whereas, more insight in to refugee children's play might be of use for organizations which are working with these children, but might also reveal similarities across cultural contexts.

## References

- Abebe, T. (2007). Changing livelihoods, Changing Childhoods: Patterns of Children work in Rural Southern Ethiopia. In: *Children's Geographies*, 5(1-2), pp. 78-93.
- Abu-Lughod, L. & Sa'di, A. (2007). *NAKBA. Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Al-Ali, N. (2009). *A Child in Palestine-the Cartoons of Naji al Ali*. (ed. Al-Ali, Khalid). London: Verso New Left Books.
- Alanen, L. (2001). Explorations in Generational Analysis. Chapter 2. In: Alanen, L. & Mayall, Berry. (Eds.). *Conceptualizing Child-Adult Relations*. London: Routledge Falmer, pp. 11-22.
- Alastair, A. (2006). What is Family? The Nature and Functions of Family in Times of Conflict. In: *World Turned Upside Down: Social Ecological Approaches to Children in War Zones*. The United States: Kumarian Press, pp.39-62.
- Al Sarraj. (2009). In: UN. 2009. The United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict. Retrieved: [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/specialsession/9/docs/UNFFMGC\\_Report](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/specialsession/9/docs/UNFFMGC_Report). Accessed 5 December 2010. p.349.
- Amnesty International. (2010). Lebanon: A Human Rights Agenda for the Elections. Retrieved: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE18/003/2009/en>. Accessed 5 December 2010.
- Amnesty International. (2006). Lebanon: Limitations on Rights of Palestinian Refugee Children: Briefing to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Retrieved: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE18/004/2006/en>. Accessed 5 December 2010
- Alvesson, M. & Sköldböck, K. (2000). Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research. In: *Data-oriented Methods: Empiricist Techniques and Procedures*. London: Sage, pp. 12-52.
- Alzaroo, S. (2005). Palestinian Refugee Children and Caregivers in the Gaza Strip. In: *Children of Palestine*. Canada: Berghahn, pp.122-149.
- Ansell, N. (2005). *Children, Youth and Development*. London & New York: Routledge Perspectives on Development.
- Antonovsky, A. (1987). *Unravelling the Mystery of Health-How People Manage Stress and Stay Well*. (1st ed.). California, USA: Jossey-Bass Inc Publishers.
- BADIL. (2007). *Palestinian Refugee Children*. Retrieved: [www.badil.org/en/documents/.../35-publications? ... 100%3Arefugee-children](http://www.badil.org/en/documents/.../35-publications?...100%3Arefugee-children). Accessed: 10 October 2010.
- Baker, A. & Kevorkian, N. (1999). Effects of Political and Military Traumas on Children: the Palestinian Case. In *Clinical Psychology Review*, 19 (8), pp. 935-50.
- Barber, B. (2009). *Adolescents and War, How Youth Deal with Political Violence*. New York, USA: Oxford University Press.

- Bates, D. & Rassam, A. (2001). *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) United States of America: Courier Companies, Inc.
- Bierwirth, C. (2005) Europe and Beyond: The Convention on The Rights of the Child and its Impact on Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Child. Observations From a UNCHR Perspective. In: Anderson, Hans et al. eds. *The asylum seeking child in Europe*. Göteborg: Centre for European Research.
- Bishara, M. (2002). *Palestine/Israel. Peace or Apartheid. Occupation, Terrorism and the Future* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). South Africa: Spearhead-New Africa Books.
- Besson, Y. (1997). UNRWA and its Role in Lebanon. In: *Journal of Palestine studies*, 10 (3), pp. 335-348.
- Brynen, R. & El-Rifai, R. (2007). *Palestinian Refugees: Challenges of Repatriation and Development*. Great Britain: I. B. Tauris & Company Limited.
- Boothby, N. et al. (2006). *World Turned Upside Down: Social Ecological Approaches to Children in War Zones*. United States of America: Kumarian Press.
- Boulding, E. & Boulding, K. E. (1995). *The Future Images and Processes*. United States of America: Sage Publications.
- Boyden, J. & Mann, G. (2005). *Children's Risk, Resilience, and Coping in Extreme Situations*. In Ungar M. ed. *Handbook for working with Children and Youth: Pathways to Resilience across Cultures and Contexts*. London: Sage.
- Boyden, J. & De Berry, J. et al. (2004). *Children and Youth on the Front Line-ethnography, armed conflict and displacement*. United States: Bergnah Books.
- Bullock, H, Wyche, K. et al. (2001). Media Images of the Poor. In: *Journal of Social Studies*, (57) 2, pp. 229-246.
- Butenschøn, N. A. (2008). *Midtøsten- Imperiefall, Statsutvikling, Kriger*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Cairo, A. & Tahabieh, M. (2006). Education and Hope - a Psychosocial Assessment of Palestinian Children. In: *World Turned Upside Down-Social Ecological Approaches to Children in War Zones*. The United Nations: Kumarian Press.
- Chatty, D. (2010). *No refugee: Palestinians in Lebanon*. Retrieved: [www.humansecuritygateway.com/ ... /RSC\\_NoRefuge\\_PalestiniansinLebanon.pdf](http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/.../RSC_NoRefuge_PalestiniansinLebanon.pdf). Accessed: 10 November 2010.
- Chatty, D. (2009). Palestinian Refugee Youth: Agency and Aspiration. In: *Refugee Survey Quarterly*. 28 (2-3), pp. 318-338.
- Chatty, D & Hundt, G. et al. (2005). *Children of Palestine- Experiencing Forced Migration in the Middle East*. New York: Berghahn Books.

- Chatty, D. Grivello, G. et al. (2005) Theoretical and Methodological Challenges of Studying Refugee Children in the Middle East and North Africa: Young Palestinian, Afghan and Sahrawi refugees. In: *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 18, (4), pp. 387-409.
- Abu Sharar, S. (for DRC).(2009). *Community Perspectives on Protection: Acknowledge Attitudes and Practices Analysis of Palestinian Communities in Southern Lebanon*. Lebanon: The Danish Refugee Council.
- Dorai Kamel, M. (2002). The Meaning of Homeland for the Palestinian Diaspora. In: Al-Ali, N. & Koser. K. (eds.) *Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home*. London: Routledge.
- Eisenhardt, K. & Graebner, M. (2007). Theory Building from Cases: Opportunities and Challenges. In: *Academy of Management Journal* .50 (1), pp. 25-32.
- El Bedour & Bastien et al. (1997). Identity Formation in the Shadow of Conflict: Projective Drawings by Palestinian and Israeli Arab Children from the West Bank and Gaza. *Journal of Peace Research*, 34 (2), pp. 217-231.
- Engell, T. G. (2010). Islamsk Emiratt i Gaza. In: *Babylon*. 8(1), pp. 25-32.
- Fernea, W. E. (2002). *Remembering Childhood in the Middle East-Memoirs from a Century of Change*. United States of America: University of Texas Press. (1<sup>st</sup> ed.).
- Fisk, R. (2005). *The Great War for Civilization-the Conquest of the Middle East* (1<sup>st</sup> American ed.). New York: United states: Random House Inc.
- Fisk, R. (2001). *Pity the Nation-Lebanon at War*. New York: Oxford University Press. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.).
- Flores-Borquez, M. (2000). Children of Protracted Exile: Where do We Belong? In: ed. Panter-Brick & Smith T. Malcolm. *Abandoned Children*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 213-223.
- Fottrell, D. (2000). One step Forward or Two Steps Sideways? Assessing the First Decade of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In: (Fottrell, D., ed.) *Revisiting Children's Rights. 10 Years of the UN convention on the rights of the child*. Kluwer Law International, pp. 1-14.
- Giacaman R, Abu-Rmeileh NM, Hussein A, Saab H, Boyce W. (2007). Humiliation: the invisible trauma of war for Palestinian youth. In: *Public Health*. 121(8), pp. 563-71.
- Gilbert, M. & Fosse, E. (2009). *Øyne i Gaza*. Oslo: Gyldendal forlag.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. England: Penguin books.
- Goodwin-Gill & Cohn et al. (1994). *Child Soldiers-the role of Children in Armed Conflicts*. The United States: Oxford University Press.
- Gudmunnsdottir, S. (1996). The teller, the Tale and the One Being Told. In: *Curriculum Inquiry*. (3) 2, pp. 293-306.

Gullestad, M. (2007). *Misjonsbilder- Bidrag til Norsk Selyforståelse- Om Bruk av Foto og Film i Tverrkulturell Kommunikasjon*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Hansen-Bauer & Jacobsen (FAFO). (2007). Living in Provisional Normality. The Living Conditions of Palestinian Refugees in the host countries of the Middle East. In: Brynen, R. & El-Rifai, R. (eds.) (2007). *Palestinian Refugees: Challenges of Repatriation and Development*. Great Britain: I. B. Tauris & Company Limited, (doc.12 of 14).

Hansen, G. (1999). Children in Civil War: Programming Towards Peace in Lebanon. In: A. Mary B. Red. *Do No Harm: How Aid can Support Peace – or War*. London: Lynne Reinner Publishers Inc, pp.91-103.

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, A. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge.

Hammond, C. L. (2004). *This Place will Become Home- Refugee Repatriation to Ethiopia*. United States of America: Cornell University Press.

Harrell-Bond, B. (2000). *Are Refugee Camps Good for Children?* Retrieved: [www.unhcr.org/3ae6a0c64.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3ae6a0c64.html). Accessed: 20 August 2010.

Hart, J. & Tyrer, B. (2006). *Research with Children Living in Situations of Armed Conflict: Concept, Ethics & Methods*. Retrieved: [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/PDFs/workingpaper30.pdf](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/PDFs/workingpaper30.pdf). Accessed: 20 August 2010.

Hart, J. (2008). Dislocated Masculinity: Adolescence and the Palestinian Nation-in-exile. In: *Journal of Refugee Studies*, (21)1, pp.64-81.

Hart, J. (2004). Beyond Struggle and Aid: Children's Identities in a Palestinian Refugee Camp in Jordan. In: Boyden, Jo and de Berry, Joanna et al. *Children and Youth on the Front Line-Ethnography, Armed Conflict and Displacement*. United States: Bergnahn Books, pp.167-186.

Hieronymi, O. (2008). Refugee Children and their Future. In: *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 4 (27), pp.6-25.

Hodgin, R. & Newell, P. et al. (2007). *Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Switzerland. Geneva: UNICEF, Atar Roto Presse. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.).

Holloway, S and Valentine, G. (ed.) (2000). Spatiality and the New Social Studies of Childhood. In: *Sociology*, 34(4), pp.763-783.

Hinton, R. (2000). Seen but Not Heard: Refugee Children and Models for Intervention. In: Panter-Brick & Smith T. Malcom. (ed.) *Abandoned Children*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.199-212.

Holloway, L. & Hubbard, P. (2001). *People and Place-the Extraordinary Geographies of Everyday Life*. Great Britain: Henry Ling Ltd.

Holloway, S. L. & Valentine, G. et al. (2000). *Children's Geographies-Playing, Living, Learning*. USA and Canada: Routledge.

- Human Rights Watch. (2010). Lebanon: Seize Opportunity to End Discrimination Against Palestinians. Retrieved: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/06/17/lebanon-seize-opportunity-end-discrimination-against-palestinians>. Accessed: 5 December 2010.
- IRIN Middle East. (2007). *LEBANON: Haven for Foreign Militants*. Retrieved: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=72218>. Accessed: 5 August 2010.
- Jaccard, J. & Jacoby, J. (2010). *Theory Construction and Model-Building Skills-A Practical Guide for Social Scientists*. New York: Guildford Press.
- Jayyusi, L. (2007). Iterability, Cumulatively, and Presence: The Relational Figures of Palestinian Memory. In: *NAKBA. Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.107-133.
- Jenks, C. (1996). Constituting Childhood. In: *Childhood*. London: Routledge, pp.1-31.
- Kanafani, G. (2000). *Palestine's Children-Returning to Haifa and Other Stories*. United States of America: Lynne Rienner Publisher Inc.
- Katz, C. (2004). *Growing up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children's Everyday Life*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Khalidi, M. A. (2001). *Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon 2001*. Beirut: Mediterranean Press.
- Khoury, G. R. (2010). Sixty Years of UNRWA. From Service Provision to Refugee Protection. In: *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 28 (2-3), pp. 438-451.
- Knörr, J. (ed.) (2005). *Childhood and Migration-From Experience to Agency*. London: Transaction Publishers.
- Kobti, L. (1999). *Arab Christian and Arab Muslim: Invested in Brotherhood*. Retrieved: <http://www.al-bushra.org/latpatra/invest.htm>. Accessed: 9 November 2010.
- Kvale, S. & Brinkman, S. (2009). *Interviews, Learning the craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Los Angeles, SAGE Publications.
- Kimmerling, B. (2003). *Politicide - Ariel Sharon's War Against the Palestinians*. London: Verso Books.
- Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee. (2010). *Labour Law*. Retrieved: [www.lpdc.gov.lb/Sections/STopics.aspx?id=19&displang=en-us&Type=4](http://www.lpdc.gov.lb/Sections/STopics.aspx?id=19&displang=en-us&Type=4). Accessed: 10 May 2010.
- Lee, N. (2001). *Childhood and Society-Growing up in an Age of Uncertainty. (1<sup>st</sup> ed.)*. USA: Open University.
- Lund, R., Shanmugaratnam, & Stølen, K A. (2003). In the maze of Displacement. Conflict, Migration and Change. Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget. ISBN 82-7634-5409, chapter 1 & 4.
- Macksoud, M.S. (1992). Assessing War Trauma in Children: A Case Study of Lebanese Children. In: *Journal of Refugee Studies*. 5 (1), pp. 1-15.

Machel, G. 1996. Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. Retrieved:  
<http://www.unicef.org/graca/>

Mannitz, S. (2005) When German Children Come Home. In: Knörr, Jaqueline (ed.). *Childhood and Migration-From Experience to Agency*. London: Transaction Publishers, pp. 30-42.

Mason, J. (1996). *Qualitative Researching* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). London: Redwood Books, Sage.

McCracken, G. (1988). *The Long Interview. Qualitative Research Methods Series (13)*. United States of America: SAGE publications.

McEvoy-Levy, S. (2006). Silenced Voices-Youth and Peer Relationships in Armed Conflict and its Aftermath. In: *World Turned Upside Down: Social Ecological Approaches to Children in War Zones*. Kumarian Press, U.S, pp. 133-154.

Meinert, L. (2003). Sweet and Bitter Places: the Politics of Schoolchildren's Orientation in Rural Uganda. In: Fog Olwig, K. & Gulløv, E (ed.). *Children's Places- Cross Cultural Perspectives*. USA and Canada: Routledge, pp.99-118.

Morris, B. (2004). *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*. China: Cambridge University Press.

Montgomery, H. Burr, R. & Woodhead, M. et al. (2007). *Changing Childhoods-Local and Global*. Malta Open University: Gutenberg Press.

Moughrabi, F.(2001). *A Nation at Risk: The Impact of Violence on Palestinian Children*. Retrieved: [http://www.gcmhp.net/File\\_files/NationAtrisk.html](http://www.gcmhp.net/File_files/NationAtrisk.html). Accessed: 2 November 2010.

NABAA & Save the Children Sweden. (ed. Mikdashi, L. et al.) (2007). *Israeli War Violations in Children's Eyes*. Lebanon: NABAA & Save the Children, Sweden.

Nilsen, R. D. (2005). Searching for Analytical Concepts in the Research Process: Learning from Children. In: *The international Journal of Social Research Methodology* (2) 8, pp.117-135.

Olwig, K.F. & Gulløv, E. (2003). *Children's Places, Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. London and New York: Routledge.

Pandit, N. R. (1996). The Creation of Theory: A Recent Application of the Grounded Theory Method. In: *The Qualitative Report*, (2) 4, Retrieved:  
<http://www.qual.auckland.ac.nz/grndrefs.aspx>, accessed 12 December 2010.

Panter-Brick, C & Smith T. M. et al. (2000). *Abandoned Children*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Pappe, I. (2007). *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. England Oxford: One World Publications Limited. (1<sup>st</sup> ed.).

Percy-Smith. (2002). Contested Worlds. In: *Growing Up in an Urbanizing World*. United Kingdom: UNESCO, pp.57-80.

- Peteet, J. M. (2005). *Landscape of Hope and Despair, Palestinian Refugee Camps*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Punch, S. (2003). Childhoods in Majority World: Miniature Adults or Tribal Children. In: *Sociology* 37 (2), pp. 277-295.
- Prout, A. (2005). *The Future of Childhood*. USA and Canada: Routledge.
- Prout, A & James, A.(1990). *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*. London: Falmer Press.
- Porteus, J.D & Smith, S.E. (2001). *Dominicide. The Global Destruction of Home*. Canada: McGill-Queens University Press.
- Oxford Refugee Studies Centre. (2010). *Ethical Guidelines*. Retrieved: [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/PDFs/ethicalguidlines.pdf](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/PDFs/ethicalguidlines.pdf). Accessed: 2 December, 2010.
- Ramadan, A. (2009). *Writing a Refugee Landscape: Writing Palestinian Nationalisms in Lebanon*. Retrieved: <http://www.acme-journal.org/vol8/Ramadan09.pdf>. Accessed: 13 November 2010.
- Ravid, B. (2007). Lebanon to UN: Israel breached truce deal hundreds of times. In: *Haaretz Com*, 01.07.2010. Retrieved:<http://www.haaretz.com/news/lebanon-to-un-israel-breached-truce-deal-hundreds-of-times-1.232334>. Accessed: 5 December 2010.
- Rawls, J. (1972). *A Theory of Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rosen, D. M. (2005) *Armies of the Young: Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism*. U.S: Rutgers University Press.
- Rouhana, K. (1989). Children of the Intifada. In: *Journal of Palestine Studies*. (72), 4, pp. 110-122.
- Rougier, B. (2007). *Everyday Jihad, the Rise of Militant Islam Among Palestinians in Lebanon*. The United States of America: Harvard University Press.
- Sacco, J. (2009) Introduction. In: Al- Ali. *A Child in Palestine-the Cartoons of Naji al Ali*. London: Verso New Left Books, pp. viii-ix.
- Sa'id, A. & Abu-Lughod, L. (2007). *Nakba-Palestine, 1948, and the claims of memory*. New York: Colombia University Press.
- Said, E. (1999). Palestine: Memory, Invention and Space. In: Abu-Lughod et al *Landscape of Palestine: Equivocal Poetry*. Bir Zeit: Bir Zeit University Publications, pp. 3-20.
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. Oslo: Cappelen Forlag AS.
- Sayigh, R. (1994). *Too Many Enemies. The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon*. London: Zed books.
- Sayigh, Y. (1997). *Armed Struggle and the Search for a State, The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*. Institute for Palestine studies, Oxford: Oxford University Press. (1<sup>st</sup> ed.).



- Schulz, H. L. & Hammer, J. (2003). *The Palestinian Diaspora-Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland (1<sup>st</sup> ed.)*. London: Routledge.
- Silverman, D. (2006) *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Stamatopoulo-Robbins, S. C. (2005). *Palestine Online: An Emerging Virtual Homeland?*. Retrieved: [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/PDFs/RSCworkingpaper28.pdf](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/PDFs/RSCworkingpaper28.pdf). Accessed: 17 November 2010.
- Sukarieh, M. (1999). Through Children's Eyes: Children's Rights in Shatila Camp. Huquq al-Nas (Rights of the People), In: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 29(1), pp. 50-57.
- Suleiman, J. (2010). *Trapped Refugees. The case of Palestinians in Lebanon*. Retrieved: [www.humansecuritygateway.com/ ... /RSC\\_NoRefuge\\_PalestiniansinLebanon.pdf](http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/.../RSC_NoRefuge_PalestiniansinLebanon.pdf). Accessed: 10 November 2010.
- Teeffelen, T, Bitar and al Habbash. (2005). Resilience in the Palestinian Occupied Territories. In: Ungar, M. el et al. (2005). *Handbook for Working with Children and Youth-Pathways to resilience Across cultures and contexts*. London: Sage Publications
- Tingstad, V. (2007). New Technologies, New methods? Representing Children in Online and SMS Ethnography. In: *Nordicom yearbook 2007: Children, Media and Consumption. On the Front Edge*, Yearbook 2007, Nordicom: Göteborg Universitet, pp.127-143.
- Ugland Fr. Ugland et al. (2003). *Difficult Past, Uncertain Future-living Conditions Among Palestinian Refugees in Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon*. FAFO report. Oslo: Centraltrykkeriet AS.
- UNRWA. (2010). Ein El Hillweh Refugee Camp Profile. Retrieved: <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=137>. Accessed: 1 December 2010.
- UNRWA. (2007). *Medium Term Plan-A Better Future for Palestine Refugees 2005-2009*. Retrieved: <http://unrwa.org/userfiles/2010011812234.pdf>. Accessed: 20 November 2010.
- UN. (2006). *Lebanese reply to list of issues to the committee on the Rights of the child*. Retrieved: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G06/415/14/PDF/G0641514.pdf?OpenElement>. Accessed: 5 May 2009.
- Ungar, M. el et al. (2005). *Handbook for Working with Children and Youth-Pathways to resilience Across cultures and contexts*. London: Sage Publications.
- Usher, G. (1991). Children of Palestine. In: *Race and Class-A journal for Black and Third World Liberation*. (23) 4. London: Kings Cross Road Publishing.
- Watters, C. (2008). *Refugee Children, Towards the Next Horizon*. USA and Canada: Routledge.
- Wessel, M. & Strang, S. (2006). Religion as Resource and Risk, the Double Edged Sword for Children in Situations of Armed Conflict. In: *World Turned Upside Down: Social Ecological Approaches to Children in War Zones*. United States of America: Kumarian Press, pp.199-221.

## Appendices

### **Data material: List of interviewed NGOs**

1. UNRWA (Beirut)
2. NABAA (Saidon\ Ein el Helwe)
3. Ghassan Kanafani (Ein el Helwe)
4. Bait Atfal al Summud (Ein el Helwe)
5. Islamic Kindergarten: Morshid (Ein el Helwe)
6. Najdee (Ein el Helwe)
7. Social centre school-special school (Ein el Helwe)

### **Data from field site participation:**

- Informal conversations with parents
- Meetings with parents through home visits

### **Secondary sources gathered during fieldwork:**

1. Reports from NABAA NGO
2. Recent report on Ein el Helwe from the Danish Refugee council NGO (2009)
3. Articles about children from the “Centre for Palestine studies” in Beirut (Research institution and library).

## **Interview Guide**

The interview method used when interviewing child informants was semi-structured. Thus these questions were not asked in any chronological order or necessarily in the exact form given below but rather became part of a conversation. The child informant's interests were also a factor which may have steered the conversation. Many questions emerged from the first basic question (in bold italics) which concerns everyday life. This question introduced many interview themes which I had not expected.

- **Everyday life**

*What do you do every day from morning until evening?*

Which of these activities do you like the most?

- **Camp**

Can you explain a camp for me as an outsider? How is it like to live here?

Is there a difference between the camp and the surrounding city?

What do children here like to do?

- **Family and relations**

Who are your friends and family?

What do you do together with your friends?

- **Palestine**

Where do you come from?

- **School**

What do you do in school each day?

- **Future**

What do you want to do when you become older?

Do you have any role models?

How do you imagine your future?

## Focus group: Session activities

### **Session 1**

Subject: **Camp**

Group activity: Drawing a map of the camp

Summary: Discussion of this map

### **Session 2**

Subject: **Social network**

Group activity: Drawing of a spider in order to illustrate social networks

Summary: Talking about the social networks

### **Session 3**

Subject: **School**

Group activity: Drawing the school

Summary: Talking about the school

### **Session 4**

Subject: **Palestine**

Group activity: Reading a letter of consent together

Group activity: Draw how you “imagine Palestine.”

Group activity: Draw something which “makes you happy.”

Summary: Talking about the drawings together.

### **Session 5**

Subject: **The future**

Group activity: Drawing images of yourself in the future

Summary: Talking about these drawing together

**Session 6:**

A trip to the nearby amusement park. Boys and girls went separately.

**Note:** Many of the outlined focus group activities have been inspired by exercises described in Hart & Tyrer (2006) *Research with children living in situations of Armed Conflict: concepts, Ethics & Methods*.

## **Informational Sheets**

### **To the parents and family:**

I am a Palestinian-Norwegian Master's student who is currently undertaking research with children aged from 9 to 14 years old. My master's degree is an International Master's Degree at the Norwegian Centre for Child Research (NOSEB).

I wish to do research with each child for about 2- 4 hours each week for approximately eight weeks. The objective is to understand and talk to children about their life and future perspectives in Ein el Helwe. More specifically, I wish to understand children's views on the institutions which support their future wishes.

Traditionally, children's own perspectives have not been heard in organised research, a reason why I believe his study is important. It is also important that children's own opinions are heard so that organisations working with them consider their perspectives. This is in line with the International United Nations Child Right's Convention which has also been ratified by Lebanon.

The finished Master's degree will be provided to the following organisations in addition to my university:

- Save the Children
- Norwegian Centre for Child Research
- The Norwegian Palestine Committee.

The Palestinian Children in Lebanon's perspectives could also help adults in understanding children in similar situations. Unfortunately, this research will probably not have any direct influence on the lives of children in Palestine or the surrounding areas, but I will do my best to disseminate the research findings in Norway. My research methods are child-friendly and I hope they will make the participation in this study more interesting for the children. The identities of all participants will be concealed and no information which might harm the security of the child and its family will be published.

The participation in the project is, of course, voluntary and any participant will retain the right of withdrawing at any time. Everyone who participates in the project will be provided with a copy of my study. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

أنا طالبة ماجستير فلسطينية-نرويجية، و أود أن انفذ أبحاث مع الاطفال بعمر 9 إلى 14 سنة في عين الحلوه. برنامج الماجستير هو برنامج دولي لصالح المركز النرويجي لأبحاث الطفولة.

ما أصبو اليه هو أن أودي الأبحاث لمدة ساعتين إلى أربع ساعات فالأسبوع لمدة 8 اسابيع. الهدف هو التحدث مع الأطفال لفهم منظورهم للحياة. و بدقة أكثر أود أن أفهم كيف ينظر الأطفال إلى مستقبلهم، و أي مؤسسات يعيلون عليها.

عادة ما يهمل منظور الأطفال و هناك نقص في الأبحاث عنهم و عن فهمهم، و لذلك فاني أرى أن هذا المشروع مهم جداً، لأن المنظمات التي تريد أن تساعد الأطفال يتوجب عليها أن تعرف كيفية تفكيرهم و نظرتهم للحياة قبل أن تبدء في مشاريعها. يتوافق ذلك مع الاتفاقيات الدولية الخاصة بالطفل و التي صادق عليها لبنان.

تهدى هذه الرسالة بعد انتهائها إلى :

- مؤسسة الطفل النرويجية.

-اللجنة الفلسطينية النرويجية.

Save the Children-

لن تساعد هذه الرسالة على فهم الأطفال الفلسطينيين اللاجئين في لبنان فحسب، بل ايضاً على فهم الأطفال في أجزاء أخرى من العالم. للأسف لن يكون للبحث تأثير مباشر على حياة الأطفال، و لكنني سوف أفعل ما بوسعي لنشر نتائج البحث هنا في النرويج. طرق البحث التي استخدمها مناسبة للأطفال و سوف تكون المشاركة ممتع و مفيدة للطفل، و بالإضافة إلى ذلك فإن المشاركة اختيارية للأطفال ، و يمكنهم الانسحاب متى شأؤ.

هوية الأطفال و أهلهم و أي معلومة عنهم يمكنها التأثير عليهم سلبياً لن تنشر. كل المشتركين في البحث سوف يحصلون على نسختهم من الرسالة.

في حالة وجود أي سوال أرجو عدم التردد بالاتصال بي.

**To the children participating in this research study in English:**

1. I would like thank you for participating in my research so far. It has been very interesting for me to get to know you and understand more about how children here in Ein el Helwe think about their lives. I hope that you will continue with meeting with me. I would also like to remind you that you have the right to withdraw from the project at anytime you would like.

2. The purpose of our meetings and interviews is to hear each child's own views on what is important to them. This information is important so that adults that work with and would like to help children can understand what children themselves think. When I have finished collecting both what you are telling me and your drawings I will make it into a book that I will give to my university and to a organisation that work with children all over the world, also Palestinian children. If you participate in this project you will also be given this book. I will make sure to change your names if I write something you have told me, to secure your privacy.

3. If you have any suggestions regarding what we could do together in the groups I would like to hear them and to try work with you. I also hope that do you not hesitate to tell me if you have any questions about the research or want to talk about a theme that I have not mentioned. I can be contacted on these phone numbers (concealed for reasons of privacy).



## To the children participating in this research study in Arabic:

الى الاطفال الذين يشاركون في هذا البحث,

1. أولاً أود أن أشكركم على مشاركتكم في هذا البحث. لقد كان شيقاً بالنسبة لي أن أتعرف عليكم وأن أتعلم عن ماذا وكيف يفكر الأطفال بالنسبة لحياتهم هنا في عين الحلوة. أتمنى أن تتابعوا مشاركتكم وأن تأتوا لملاقتي ولكني أريد أن أذكركم أنكم تستطيعون أن تنسحبوا من المشاركة في أي وقت تريدون.

2. الهدف من اللقاءات التي نقوم بها هو أن نستمع لأراء للأطفال وأن نتعرف على المواضيع التي تعني و تهتم الأطفال أنفسهم. هذا النوع من المعلومات مهم بالنسبة للكبار الذين يعملون مع الأطفال و يودون مساعدتهم. عندما أنتهي من جمع أرائكم ورسوماتكم سأصنع كتاباً. هذا الكتاب سأرسله إلى جامعتي وإلى منظمة تعمل على مساعدة الأطفال في كل أنحاء العالم وكذلك الأطفال الفلسطينيين. لو شاركتكم في هذا المشروع ستحصلون على نسخة من الكتاب أنتم أيضاً. إذا كنت سأكتب شيئاً مما قلته لي فسأغير أسمائكم للحفاظ على خصوصيتكم.

3. إذا كان لديكم أي اقتراحات على ماذا يمكن أن نفعل في المجموعات فأود أن أسمعها و سأعمل على تلبيتها. وكذلك أتمنى أن لا تترددوا إذا كان لديكم أي سؤال حول البحث أو إذا أردتم أن نتحدثوا عن موضوع معين لم نتناوله.

يمكنكم الاتصال بي على الأرقام التالية:

(concealed for reasons of privacy)البيت:

**Permission letter required to take the child on field trip**

Dear Family of ... .

My research project here in Ein el Helwe is coming to its end. The children and I have decided that we will go on a short trip to ... .on ... .

I hereby ask for your permission to take your child on this trip. I will cover the cost of the activity and transportation.

On the day of the trip the children should meet where I live. Please remember bring with your signed information sheet. If you would like to come with us on the trip or have any questions you would like to ask please call me. When away on our trip I can be reached on mobile:  
(concealed for reasons of privacy)

Your signature:

**Permission sheet to take the child on the trip in Arabic:**

عزيزي ولي امر الطفل

ان بحثي الذي اجرته في عين الخطه سوف ينتهي .  
انا والاولاد قررنا الذهاب في رحله صغيره الى  
اود الحصول على موافقتكم لآخذ الاولاد الى هذه الرحله وانا متكلفه بمصاريف  
النشاطات واجور تاطرقات .

يوم الرحله على الاولاد المجي الى المكان الذي اسكن فيه في الساعه  
ولا يحق للولد ان يذهب الى هذه الرحله اذا لم يحضر توقيعكم على هذه الورقه .  
اذا عندكم اي استفسار حول هذه الرحله او لم يعجبكم الوقت الرجاء الاتصال . وايضا  
يمكنكم الاتصال خلال الرحله باولادكم وذلك على الرقم التالي :

تلفون :

مقسم :

توقيعكم :

## حقوق المشارك

يعود اليك أن تتكلم معي أم لا . أنت قرّر .

لا يجب عليك أن تقول نعم.

لأذا شعرت بعدم الراحة فلا تكمل أو تستمر.

نحن نتوقف عن الكلام متى تريد أو اذا أحببت أن تأخذ فترة راحة.

اذا كنت لا تريد أن تجاوب على سؤال " لا اريد أن أجاب " .

أنا سوف أحفظ كل ما سجّلت عنك في مكان أمين .

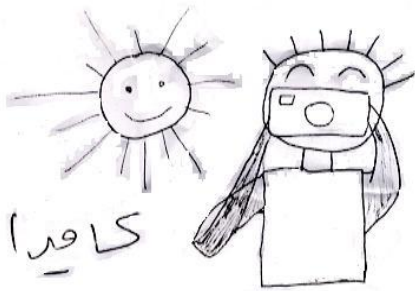
عندما أتكلم في البحث أو أكتب تقارير سوف أغيّر الأسماء الحقيقية للأطفال لأحفظ خصوصية الأطفال.

This is a short list of “your right’s” (in Arabic). It is a paper which was read to the child informants before we began the interview. It is for instance written here that the child has the right to withdraw from the interview at any time.

## Photo project:

This leaflet and the drawing explain to the child informants the following:

- Basic practical issues when using the camera.
- The children should photo something that they like.
- When and how they should return the camera so that I can develop the pictures for them.



١- هرة الكاميرا غير قابلة للإستعمال إلا مرة واحدة .  
لا تفتح الكاميرا لكي لا تترق الفيلم .  
إذا لم تعرف كيف تستعمل الكاميرا عليك ان تسأل أحد كبير .  
فإذ اعلم ان أصور ؟

١- عليك ان تصور الأشياء الملهمة في حياتك والتي تحبها .  
٢- عند الانتهاء من التصوير عليك ان تعيد لي الكاميرا لتظهر الفيلم .  
٣- ستقيي الكاميرا هناك مرة اسبوع وعلين ان تسلمني الكاميرا  
في ١-١٢ - ٢٠٠٩ .  
بعد تطوير الأفلام سيعقد اجتماع في ٣-١٢ - ٢٠٠٩ للصبيان الساعة  
الكافسة - لتأخذوا صوركم  
والبنات في ٤-١٢ - ٢٠٠٩ الساعة الواحدة ظهراً ليأخذن صورهن  
مع هنزل الشكر  
ليلي

عقيد  
٣٠٠٩ هنزل ساعة قات

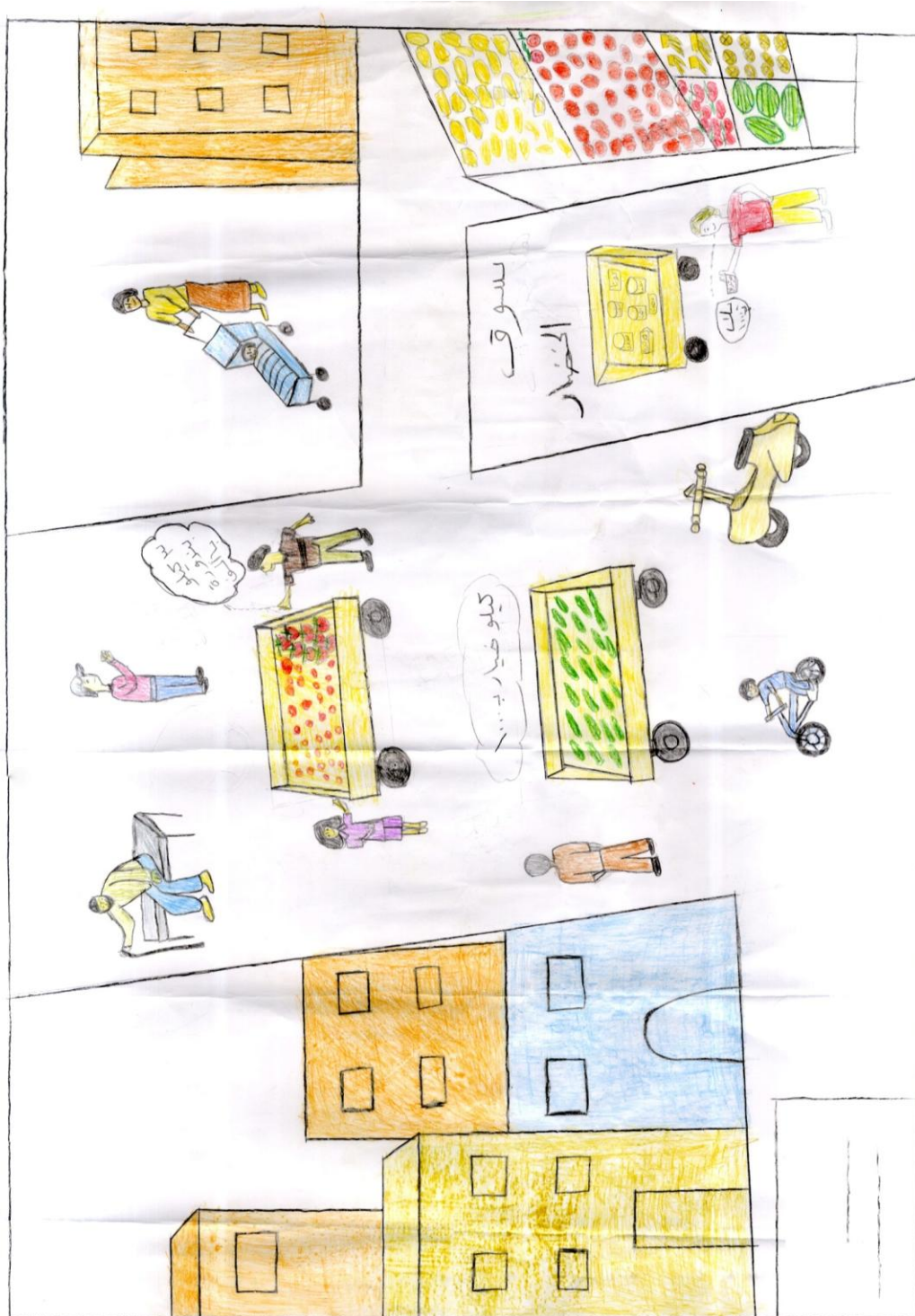


Figure 20 Drawing of Ein el Helwe's vegetable market by Child informant, aged 14.



**Figure 21: Drawing. In the thought bubble:“I want to become a doctor” On the house it is written “Hospital” and on the car:“Ambulance”. by female child informant, aged 11.**

