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Syrian Intangible Cultural Heritage in Displacement:

Reinstatement or Demolition of Cultural Identity?

By

Maha Hamdan

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THESIS APPROVAL FORM

Student Name: Maha Hamdan I.D. #: 201806791

Thesis Title: Syrian Intangible Cultural Heritage: Reinstatement or Demolition of Cultural Identity?

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School: Arts and Sciences

The undersigned certify that they have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis and approved it in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

M.A. in the major of Migration Studies

Thesis Advisor's Name: Paul Tabar	
Signature: [redacted]	Date: 12 / 08 / 2021 (Day / Month / Year)

Committee Member's Name: Dr. Michelle Kelly	
Signature: [redacted]	Date: 12 / 08 / 2021 (Day / Month / Year)

Committee Member's Name: Dr. Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss	
Signature: [redacted]	Date: 12 / 08 / 2021 (Day / Month / Year)

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Dedication

In memory of my beloved grandmother

I dedicate this thesis to my grandmother who her loss has been tragic and heartbreaking to all of us. I wish she were still here to celebrate with me this and every life accomplishment I make, yet I know her light will continue to shine upon my soul from heaven above. Her presence lingers in my heart forever. I promise her to always be the ambitious, persistent, and spirited person she had always known, and to her I am forever faithful. May her soul rest in peace.

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Syrian Intangible Cultural Heritage in Displacement:

Reinstatement or Demolition of Cultural Identity?

Maha Hamdan

ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of the armed conflict in Syria, a mass number of Syrians have been displaced and forced to leave their home country. Over a million have sought refuge in Lebanon. Along with the mass destruction of Syrian cultural property caused by the ongoing upheaval, Syrian refugees fear losing their connections with their homeland and their sense of belonging. However, studies avow that intangible cultural heritage can be highly essential in reinstating cultural identity and overcoming struggles associated with displacement. By interviewing founders and members of a cultural program which integrates Syrian refugees and Lebanese locals in the old village of Abra in Saida – South Lebanon, findings indicate that integration and preserving intangible cultural heritage tend to create a new meaning of cultural identity, particularly represented by the Syrian refugee experience.

Key Words: Intangible cultural heritage, cultural identity, Lebanon, Syrian refugee experience, Old Abra, integration

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter **Pages**

Contents

Background Information 1

Cultural Heritage Breakdown 1

1.1 Research Questions 3

1.3 Failing Attempts 6

1.4 Research Methodology 10

Literature Review 12

2.1 Defining Intangible Cultural Heritage 12

2.1.1. The "binomial absence-presence" of intangible cultural heritage 14

2.2 Cultural identity and intangible cultural heritage in displacement 15

2.2.1 "Moving identities" in displacement 16

2.2.2 Defining cultural memory 17

2.2.3 Cultural identity in the context of refugeeness 18

2.2.4 The importance of intangible cultural heritage in displacement 19

2.3 Deterioration of the Syrian intangible cultural heritage 20

2.4 Creative self-expression: An artistic healing method in displacement 21

2.5 Conclusion 24

Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 26

3.1 Syrian Refugees Distribution in Lebanese Areas 26

3.2 Lebanese Response to Syrian Refugee Crisis 27

3.2.1 Feelings of Threat towards Syrian Refugees 28

3.2.2 Governmental Policies and "Institutional Ambiguity" 30

3.3 Effect of the Lebanese Response on Syrian Refugees 35

Methodology, Results, and Discussion 38

4.1 Methodology 38

4.1.1 Research strategy and design 38

4.1.2 Study population and sample size 39

4.1.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria 41
4.1.4 Sampling procedure 42
4.1.5. Research tools 42
4.1.6 Data collection procedure 43
4.1.7. Ethical principles and adherence to IRB procedures 44
4.1.8. Ethical considerations 45
4.1.9 Informed Consent 45
4.2 Research Results and Findings 46
4.2.1 Governmental policy burdens on locals and refugees 47
4.2.2 Fear of the "other" 49
4.2.3. Marginalization of Syrian refugees in Old Abra 51
4.2.4 The Integrational Program 52
4.2.5 New Perceptions 59
4.2.6 Recognition of Syrian intangible cultural heritage 61
4.2.7 Reinstatement of Syrian cultural identity 62
4.2.8 Limitations of the integration program 64
Chapter Five 66
Conclusion 66
5.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Findings 66
5.2 Limitations 69
5.3 Mayors' Role in Implementing Progressive Policies 74
5.4 Recommendations 77
5.5 Overall Conclusion 79
Bibliography 82

List of Abbreviations

CCHD: Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development

FDA: French Development Agency

IRB: Institutional Review Board

LAU: Lebanese American University

UN: United Nations

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

Chapter One

Background Information

Cultural Heritage Breakdown

Cultural heritage has always been a concern for all nations. The original meanings of heritage go back to deep-rooted beliefs of inheritance: passing on property for future generations (Davidson 2008, cited in Feary, S. et al. 2005). 'It [Heritage] is also concerned with memory, reflection and the transmission of culture' (Davis 2007, cited in Feary, S. et al. 2005: 87). 'Heritage, therefore, is embedded in a 'past' and 'antiquity,' but since heritage is something preserved for posterity, its frame of reference is the future as much as the past' (Davidson, 2008, cited in Feary, S. et al. 2005: 87). Culture as defined in dictionary, is the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively. It is also the ideas, customs, and social behavior of a particular population or society.

'To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul' (Simone Well 1987: 41, cited in Malkki 1992: 24). Although in cases of settlement in one's homeland this may be true, but situations have effectively changed since the rise of globalization and migration movements. Cultural exchange has increased between different societies across the world. Social and cultural boundaries have been broken, and communication between societies has become much easier. Moreover, as migration has developed, people of different national backgrounds have been increasingly interacting together. Yet, many populations have become displaced. Those who have unwillingly left

their countries or have been forcefully exiled have been physically unattached from their homelands. This has urged many people to take action in order to maintain connections with their countries of origin. Nevertheless, it is argued that such connections have become threatened as a result of displacement.

In recent decades, the world has witnessed many political upheavals and armed conflicts which have caused a huge migration movement of populations to different Arab countries. As Lebanon Population (2020) shows, most of these migrants are victims of war who have lost their homes and are seeking refuge and protection in other countries. One of the largest populations who witnessed mass migration is the Syrian population. Millions of Syrians have fled from war searching for shelter. In fact, Lebanon has been hosting over a million Syrian refugees who have spread all over its districts.

Given the utmost reason that have led to an immense number of Syrians to leave their war-torn homeland, this huge displacement has in turn put Syrian refugees' connections with their homeland at a very high risk. In view of that, this research aims to examine the reasons for the deterioration of Syrian cultural heritage, and the ways that help in preserving this cultural heritage and maintaining connections with the homeland in the context of displacement.

As such, intangible cultural heritage should be analyzed for cognizance of its significance in the displacement discourse. As the study tends to justify in the next chapter, identities move with moving bodies (Powel 2012), and so does intangible cultural heritage since it has a 'binomial absence-presence' relationship with displaced individuals (Colomer and Catalani 2020). Ideally, the thesis seeks to provide an insight on intangible cultural

heritage and its crucial role in reinstating cultural identity in the context of host societies. Its primary focus is on the Syrian refugee experience in Lebanon, specifically in the host society of the old village of Abra, in which Syrian refugees indulge in an integration program which targets Syrian intangible cultural heritage preservation, re-acknowledgment, and reinstatement in the Lebanese community. As such, the significance of intangible cultural heritage is embodied in the cultural practices Syrian refugees are involved in, in this case the integration program under study.

1.1 Research Questions

Journals, newspapers, and other sorts of scholarly arguments have widely discussed the effects of the Syrian crisis on cultural property, yet the effects of displacement on intangible cultural heritage has been scarcely evaluated. In view of that, this dissertation questions the importance of intangible cultural heritage in the displacement context, and the objectives of the cultural practices Syrian refugees are engaging in. Consequently, all of this raises sound questions that the research seeks to answer:

1. What is the purpose behind the cultural practices Syrian refugees are engaging in?
2. What are the messages portrayed in these practices?
3. To what extent do artistic cultural expressions reflect the Syrian's particular experience as refugees?
4. What is the impact of these artistic cultural expressions on Syrian cultural heritage?

According to Cheikhmous (2013), the destruction of cultural property in Syria has indeed reached a threatening level to a heritage that belongs to humanity as much as to Syria itself. However, the research will explore other aspects that have led to deterioration of

Syrian cultural heritage. Displacement will be thoroughly examined as a fundamental aspect threatening cultural heritage. Thus, this study's goal is to fill the gap and add on missing knowledge and value to the integration role of intangible cultural heritage, along with its significance in maintaining connections with the homeland, reassuring sense of belonging, and reinstating cultural identity in displacement.

Primarily, the significance of this dissertation lies in its tendency to highlight the prominence of preserving and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, specifically in the case of Syrian displacement. Hypothetically, this study argues that through integration programs which are essential means for Syrians to express their culture, such cultural expressions have created a new kind of intangible cultural heritage as well as a new conceptual meaning to cultural identity, all represented in the Syrian refugee experience. Successively, research findings will facilitate the comprehension of displacement/ refugee experience and its reflection on creating a new definition of intangible cultural heritage as well as to cultural identity.

1.2 Destruction of Syrian Cultural Property

The issue of destruction, looting, and black market sales of cultural property has risen again as an international concern, waving its red flags and announcing danger coincided with the Syrian war outbreak. Similar to previous cases of art looting, vandalism and cultural property destruction in Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Cambodia, the Syrian society witnesses a historical and identity breakdown embodied in the destruction of its cultural property due to civil unrest and armed conflict. The significance of this issue

comes with the fact that cultural property, when destructed, is irreparable, irreplaceable, and lost for good. Relevantly, its loss is such a huge distress to Syria as well as to the global community on several levels (Solomatin 2017).

Syrian cultural heritage dates back to ages of great ancient empires. 'Syria claims some of the earliest cities in human society, if not the earliest' (Cunliffe 2012: 4). Damascus, Aleppo, Palmyra, Bosra, the Crac des Chevaliers and Saladin's Castle, and the ancient villages of Northern Syria are all sites that date back to approximately two thousand years of history, and are recently included in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. This is aside from many others on the tentative inscription list for future consideration, in addition to other sites on the national heritage list. On top of that, what adds more richness and complexity to Syrian cultural heritage is the fact that it embraces the three Jewish, Christian, and Islamic faiths in the all-inclusive collections of religious artifacts, manuscripts, sacred architecture, and decorations as well as the ritual implements it owns (Gerstenblith 2016).

Sadly, since the beginning of 2011, Syria has experienced 'the most disastrous of the "Arab Spring" conflicts for cultural heritage' (Gerstenblith 2016: 357). Millions of Syrians have been displaced due to the armed conflict and political upheaval. Media outlets have rushed to cover the damage caused to Syrian cultural property. Many historical buildings and monuments have been endangered. Most of those cultural properties have been completely destroyed, exposed to missiles since they are often close to combat zones, or even have become battlefields and targets themselves. The UNESCO heritage site of Palmyra was completely wrecked. More than 30 museums and 6 sites on the World Heritage list have been recently placed on the heritage list in danger by

UNESCO. Other archaeological sites have been used as military bases by combatant parties, which deduces lack of respect and awareness to the importance of cultural property as Syrian cultural heritage. (Kanjou 2014). Moreover, all those endangered museums have very low security measures. Artifacts made of fragile material found in such museums are left unsecured, unprotected, and inadequately archived. Even one of those museums, the Museum of Apamea, is locked with a small key lock that anyone could break with a sledgehammer, meaning artifacts could be easily stolen (Cheikhmous, A. 2013). These stolen artifacts are then preserved, sold, or taxed for profit. Besides that, objects that are too large to move or too known to be sold on the international market do not escape destruction (Gerstenblith 2016).

1.3 Failing Attempts

Several attempts to save Syrian cultural property have failed. Due to continuous attacks and unstoppable bombing, numerous cultural properties which have their locks broken, if not completely destroyed, have become an easy-accessed target for thieves. In fact, countries lack the sources needed to protect their cultural heritage from determined thieves (Brodie 2015). Bombing and theft are not the only reasons for the destruction of Syrian cultural heritage. To make matters worse, several archaeological sites have been used as strategic points for military purposes, and objects looted from sites and museums are sold on the international market in order to raise funds and buy weapons (Gerstenblith 2016).

In fact, in the early stages of the crisis, Syrian efforts have been put in a trial to document the damage to their cultural heritage. A Facebook community page ‘Le patrimoine

archeoligique Syrien en danger' (The Syrian Archaeological Patrimony in Danger), launched by a Syrian archaeologist living in France, Ali Cheikhmous in 2011, have become the major source of evidence for the international community, documenting the damage inflicted on Syrian heritage (Gerstenblith 2016). In addition to these efforts, UNESCO has taken the lead in public response and media pronouncements regarding this matter aiming to raise public awareness about the heritage destruction occurring in Syria. Furthermore, direct training activities have been provided for heritage professionals along with implementing emergency cultural heritage protection projects inside Syria (Quntar and Daniels 2016).

Perhaps these responses have contributed in bringing little satisfaction through providing real information about the degree of damage and destruction to Syrian cultural heritage, and the latter attempt may have been the most tangible among them all. However, a main reason for the failure of all these responses is that their policy emphasis is unrealistic to what is measurable on real grounds. These contributions do not actually translate into real humanitarian actions to neither safeguard the heritage professionals and cultural heritage at risk due to exposed danger (Quntar and Daniels 2016), nor oblige both sides to abide by the conventions and protocols of Syrian cultural property protection (RTE 2018). Although the head of UNESCO Irina Bokova declares the atrocities and the destruction of cultural sites in Palmyra as 'a new crime and immense loss for the Syrian people and for humanity,' destruction of cultural heritage is still considered to be punishable as 'a war crime rather than as a crime against humanity' (Gerstenblith 2016: 389).

Ten years have already passed since the beginning of the Syrian conflict; more and more cultural properties have been under fire, if not fully wrecked. This merely leads not only

to more damage, but to catastrophic demolition of a heritage that belongs to humanity as equally as to Syria (Cheikhmous 2013). In other words, the meaning of cultural heritage cannot be underestimated. Monuments whether "dead" or "living" have a potential significance even to the new generations, in which they consider these monuments as venues for their intangible performances. Communities express their attachment to places, monuments, and objects through pilgrimage, religious devotion, story-telling, and tourism. Such act of devotion and true connection can be an essential contributor in constructing group identity. Even if a beloved monument has been demolished, its value is never erased due to communities' strong attachment (Ruggles and Silverman 2009). Thus, it is safe to say that the notion of this attachment has an altering content, in which it is transformed to become one that is defined by intangibility. Perhaps, this can merely be a justified explanation to the far living connections between displaced individuals and their cultural heritage.

On a humanitarian level as well, there is a severe necessity to recognize and honor the human dimension of Syrian cultural heritage. Relevance of the human dimension of Syrian cultural heritage becomes evident through the evolving significance and value this heritage holds in the hearts of local inhabitants since history up till nowadays. Only when this human dimension of cultural heritage is recognized, cultural heritage destruction becomes a crime against humanity, not only a loss of property (Grestenblith 2016).

On another hand, displacement has added more pressure and threat to cultural heritage. It is avowed that forcefully displaced individuals experience "collective losses" besides psychological stresses (Fullilove 2004, cited in Greene, Tehranifar, Hernandez-Cordero, and Fullilove 2011). Three of the main harms caused by displacement are the loss of

social, cultural and economic capital (Greene et al. 2011). In order to understand the impact of displacement on cultural capital, it is essential to define each form of capital. Firstly, social capital includes the norms and sanctions that are shaped within social relations and interactions among people. Given its tradable value, social capital is more essential than social networks or connections (Wood and Giles-Corti 2008 and Coleman 1995, cited in Greene et al. 2011). As for cultural capital, it 'encompasses shared language, traditions, and systems of beliefs and values that are used by members of a group to ascribe meanings to events and experiences, to define roles and their distribution among members of given social groups, and to set norms for social interactions' (Fernandez-Kelly 1994, cited in Greene et al. 2011: 404). Moreover, 'economic capital consists of financial means and economic opportunities, including material resources' (Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner, and Prothrow-Stith 1997 and Kawachi and Kennedy 1997, cited in Greene et al. 2011:404). It is considered as a public good that is set by a population's rules and norms. If lost, targeted outcomes of social group members remain unattained. Moreover, 'social capital exists only in the relationships among individuals within physical and social structures…' ((Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner, and Prothrow-Stith 1997 and Kawachi and Kennedy 1997, cited in Greene et al. 2011:404). Therefore, displacement threatens social ties that weaken social capital and eventually cultural and economic capital, as well (Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner, and Prothrow-Stith 1997 and Kawachi and Kennedy 1997, cited in Greene et al. 2011).

In conclusion, the very foundations of cultural heritage, which are part of a social group's cultural capital, are put at high risk due to displacement. However, displaced individuals aspire to maintain connections with their homeland through interweaving their past and

present, the “there” and “here.” By way of explanation, refugees tend to reimagine and recreate “home” for them in host societies, in which displacement becomes a process where people ‘learn to relate to [their homes] from afar’ (Feldman 2006, cited in Dossa and Golubovic 2019: 174). It is claimed that such process occurs with compromise between displaced individuals and their host societies, in which the displaced contribute in enriching host societies through border knowledge (Dossa 2014, cited in Dossa and Golubovic 2019). Yet, this added value is often downgraded and unacknowledged (Joseph 2013, cited in Dossa and Golubovic 2019), leaving these individuals in a context of preconception and antagonism (Dossa and Gulobovic 2019).

1.4 Research Methodology

The research adopts a qualitative strategy. Given the extent of scholarly arguments on intangible cultural heritage in displacement and the micro perspective approached by this thesis, an investigation of the Syrian refugee experience in Lebanon, specifically in Old Abra justifies the chosen design which is a case study, and guarantees interviews as the best research tool to use. Consequently, data is analyzed according to participants’ perception of the case study in hand. Research participants consist of Syrian refugees and Lebanese locals settling in Old Abra, as well as the founders of the integration program which recruited these Syrian and Lebanese women. The chosen sample includes 6 persons of which 2 are the founders of the integration program, 2 Syrian women, and 2 Lebanese women. All participants have provided essential firsthand information about their experiences which indeed has added value to the research work. Open-ended questions have been addressed to the sample population and responses have been

collected instantaneously. Some interviews have not been recorded due to sensitive shared details. Yet, the interviewing process has been smooth enough to ensure privacy and a comfortable environment for participants to feel at ease to tell their stories.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Defining Intangible Cultural Heritage

Providing a definition of cultural heritage in the previous chapter, it is highly significant to notice the altering content of this term. Not until recent decades that "intangibility" of cultural heritage has started to gain recognition. Although the human actor has been introduced in older documents, the major purpose of preservation of cultural heritage remained a tangible, physical thing. However, in UNESCO's 1989 document "Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore," intangible cultural heritage and its preservation have been targeted for the first time (Ruggles and Silverman 2009).

In an explanation of the value of traditional culture, the 1989 document stated:

'Considering that folklore forms part of the universal heritage of humanity and that it is a powerful means of bringing together different peoples and social groups and of asserting their cultural identity; Noting its social, economic, cultural and political importance, its role in the history of the people, and its place in contemporary culture; Underlining the specific nature and importance of folklore as an integral part of cultural heritage and living culture; Recognizing the extreme fragility of the traditional forms of folklore, particularly those aspects relating to oral tradition and the risk that they might be lost' (UNESCO 1989, as cited in Ruggles and Silverman 2009: 8).

Afterwards, “cultural heritage” started to gain an altering content. In the 2003 Intangible Heritage Convention, the term “intangible cultural heritage” has replaced older terms like “traditional culture,” “oral tradition,” and “folklore” (Ruggles and Silverman 2009). Thus, cultural heritage has been divided into two intertwined types: tangible and intangible heritage. The tangible type which knowingly has always owned recognition from people includes cultural property such as monuments and sites, in addition to the collections of historical objects (UNESCO 2012). However, the intangibility of cultural heritage that only has recently started to be recognized, has also eventually gained high significance as a result of modernization, global mass culture, and displacement (Ruggles and Silverman 2009). Defined by UNESCO, intangible cultural heritage is ‘the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and in some cases, individuals, recognize as part of their cultural heritage. this intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity’ (Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003: Article 2, as cited in UNESCO 2012: 12). ‘Oral traditions and expressions, including language, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship’ are all domains in which intangible cultural heritage is displayed in (UNESCO 2012: 12).

Nevertheless, since the effects on tangible cultural heritage are clearly sensed through the demolition of cultural property, people hurry to preserve what is left of their tangible cultural heritage, disregarding the severity of losing their intangible cultural heritage. What is also highly important for people to consider is the significance of intangible cultural heritage in the context of displacement and the intense necessity for preserving it (Cominelli and Greffe 2012, as cited in Tan, Lim, Tan, and Kok 2020).

2.1.1. The "binomial absence-presence" of intangible cultural heritage

Migrants suffer multiple stresses which can affect their mental health. Major stresses include loss of cultural norms, religious customs, social support systems, adapting or assimilating in a new cultural society, and identity changes (Bhugra and Becker 2005). One of the principal aspects of these multiple stresses migrants live through is the evolving relationship between migrants and intangible cultural heritage during displacement. Literature touches on a 'binomial absence-presence' in which it explains it as 'a temporary and yet evolving emotional three-stage rupture between displaced individuals and their intangible cultural heritage. That is to say, it is a phased transformation that comes with ongoing alternations. Besides personal intricacies with displacement and resettlement, migrants struggle with redefining their own identity between "there": back home, and "then": the host society (Colomer and Catalani 2020). It is argued that in the first phase of migration, displaced individuals witness a lack of heritage, in which they focus on the challenges and struggles they go through during their resettlement, than focusing on the traditions they left behind. Specifically speaking, during this first phase, displaced individuals worry about what obstacles they could face throughout their journey, before even stepping foot in the host country and directly after

they do. Some of those problems may be really dangerous and life threatening, such as illegal migration, human trafficking, and exploitation. Yet, it doesn't take long for heritage to transform into an "absence-presence," where cultural heritage becomes 'the object of longing.' In a new host country where it is difficult to adapt with new cultural norms and engage in society, displaced individuals can suffer from discrimination, inferiority, and marginalization. This is where the feeling of longing for old traditions and cultural habits rekindles. As a result, this feeling creates an urge in displaced individuals to redefine their cultural heritage and reinstate it in the host country. Finally, this leads to the development of cultural heritage as a re-acknowledged presence, where it is reconsidered and redefined, to an extent that in some cases it becomes resilient and adaptable with the new context (Colomer and Catalani 2020).

In fact, this 'binomial absence-presence' of intangible cultural heritage is truly the major argument and main focus of this thesis, in which this research will delve – later in following chapters – into the deepest details of Syrian refugees' relationship with their intangible cultural heritage and how their cultural practices aim to redefine this heritage in the Lebanese society.

2.2 Cultural identity and intangible cultural heritage in displacement

In order to understand "moving identities" and the relationship between cultural memory, cultural identity, and intangible cultural heritage, in addition to the complexity of this relationship in the context of displacement and more specifically in the refugee experience, it is essential, at first, to provide a definition for each concept.

2.2.1 "Moving identities" in displacement

In the context of displacement, it is argued that due to the interaction of the identities of displaced individuals with new and altering surroundings, several complexities arise. 'Persons in the process of being displaced are on the move – their individual and community identities are in the middle of an enormous change' (*Anguish of Displacement*, as cited in Powell 2012: 300). Understanding the notion of "moving identities" helps recognize the complexity of identity construction or reconstruction in the context of displacement (Powell 2012). Although identity construction in the displacement discourse encompasses "starting and ending positions," displaced people in fact inhabit a figurative "third space" or "hybrid identity" since they are unable to 'fully inhabit the ending position' (Powell 2012: 300). In other words, literature claims that since identities move along with moving bodies, they are constantly active within a continuous process of formation, rather than their formation being a fixed outcome. Thus, in order to understand "moving identities," it is essential to recognize the continuous alternation and activity of "the acts of displacement and re-conceptualizing the hybrid identity" (Powell 2012). When an individual is displaced, the new identity of this displaced individual '(whether it be refugee, internally displaced person, or traveler through many nations), does not completely overtake the old identity' (Powell 2012: 301); instead, a hybrid identity is shaped combining both old and new identities. Accordingly, 'displacement is defined as 'a meandering path,' rather than a 'linear movement' of paths which are 'predetermined by place, person, or nation' (Powell 2012: 301). Being aware that displacement is a transitional process rather than merely an ending journey, one can notice the violence imposed on a shifting identity throughout this

process. Indeed, displacement shatters a displaced person's identity, forcing a recreation of identity that is not chosen (Powell 2012).

2.2.2 Defining cultural memory

'Memory is the construction or reconstruction of what actually happened in the past. Memory is distorted by needs, desires, interests, and fantasies. Subjective and malleable rather than objective and concrete, memory is emotional, conceptual, contextual, constantly undergoing revision, selection, interpretation, distortion, and reconstruction' (Bertman 2000, as cited in Agnew 2005: 198).

Research argues that memories act as a bridge which connects our individual past and collective past (our origins, heritage, and history). The past is always carried with us; it is what defines our present, what we have become, and what we call "home." Hence, studies declare that 'what we call the past is merely a function and production of a continuous present and its discourses' (Hirsch and Smith 2002, as cited in Agnew 2005: 3). It is also avowed that cultural memory, specifically, is the collective memory of the shared past of a group of people of the same nation, ethnicity, or origin. Cultural memory is collectively constructed rather than personally experienced (Paez, Basabe, and Gonzalez 1997, as cited in Agnew 2005).

In other words, cultural memory is far from the everyday; it has a fixed temporal horizon which doesn't change with passing time. Moreover, cultural memory is maintained through 'cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance),' which are called "figures of memory." (Assman and Czaplicka 2014: 129). Thus, studies affirm that through memory, one can understand the

meaning of culture which carries collective desires and self-identifications (Agnew 2005).

2.2.3 Cultural identity in the context of refugeeness

On another hand, researchers find cultural identity to be a complex concept, indeed. 'This is because cultural identity is connected both to sameness and difference. It is possible to think of cultural identity in terms of sameness, when we relate it to shared cultural elements, grounded in shared history. But when cultural identity is connected to difference, then it is a process, a matter of becoming as well as of being' (Hall 2000, as cited in Catalani 2019: 4). Accordingly, in the context of difference, cultural identity is a "to be built" objective that undergoes a lot of struggle to fight for and protect (Bauman 2004, as cited in Catalani 2019).

On a similar basis and in terms of displacement or specifically in refugeeness, cultural identity becomes a denied privilege in the country of residence. Refugees indeed struggle to claim their own cultural identity as well as living through a crisis of belonging. However, literature argues that it is only through the crisis of belonging that cultural identity is redefined and recognized, both on a personal and collective level (Catalani 2019).

In view of that, research explains the process of redefining cultural identity through recollecting memories. These memories of shared experiences, cultural practices, and values reinforce identity reinstatement even in the context of displacement (Catalani 2019). Other studies agree as well that such memories reassure what they call "a sense of personal worth," and consequently encourage a positive redefinition of the cultural

identity of refugees and a validation of their cultural heritage in the displacement context. As a result, what literature insists on calling "the absence-presence of intangible heritage" becomes the actual power that reactivates personal worth, re-establishes cultural identity, and inspires social transformations in the final phase of the evolving emotional rupture between displaced individuals and their intangible cultural heritage (Colomer and Catalani 2020).

2.2.4 The importance of intangible cultural heritage in displacement

As a result to what has been previously argued, this intangible cultural heritage trigger which provokes social transformations and future aspirations can only occur through reaffirmation of cultural identity and heritage, which are eventually reconsidered and recognized as 'resources fostering social and cultural cohesion and well-being' (Comer and Catalani 2020: 16). However, it is avowed that such re-acknowledgment can only be achieved through realizing the importance of intangible cultural heritage in the displacement discourse in order to overcome the struggles of forced migration and resettlement. Intangible cultural heritage is an essential matter for displaced individuals since it acts as an ambition for a better future. Moreover, through remembering and reintroducing their cultural traditions, displaced individuals develop an urge to adjust if not conquer harsh situations. Thus, intangible cultural heritage of displaced individuals becomes "resilient," in which it is able to recover quickly and frequently from harsh situations accompanied with displacement (Comer and Catalani 2020). Therefore, it is safe to say that this thesis strongly avows the fact that intangible cultural heritage is capable to be not merely an alternative, but also a central reality to displaced individuals that have temporarily lost their tangible cultural heritage.

2.3 Deterioration of the Syrian intangible cultural heritage

After giving a clear definition of intangible cultural heritage and arguing with its significance in maintaining and reinstating cultural identity in the context of displacement, it is necessary to delve into a deep discussion of the deterioration of the Syrian intangible cultural heritage due to the ongoing armed conflict in Syria. Unfortunately, not much has been discussed about the effect of such crisis on intangible cultural heritage. Not only that, but as literature has shown before – in the section discussing failing attempts to preserve cultural property - all the efforts made to protect cultural heritage has been focused on objects rather than the collective memory of the community (Conteras 2012). Elements of intangible cultural heritage, including but not limited to, local knowledge and know-how, artistic expression, crafts and traditions, religious practices and rituals, language and oral expressions… separately or combined together, form a collective identity and memory, strengthen social solidity, and reassure continuity for people (Chaterlard 2017).

In fact, Syria's intangible cultural heritage has lost, to a great extent, its richness due to war and displacement. Consequently, the very foundations of the Syrian society have been deeply weakened. Cultural practices, artistic expressions, and creative skills have been threatened due to displacement and social fragmentation (UNESCO 2003). Many workshops, tools, and materials have been destroyed and burnt, some crafts have been ceased, and another traditional ceramics factory has closed. Even religious practices have stopped since a lot of places of worship have been targeted. Thus, as a result of the armed conflict, many knowledge holders have disappeared, ceasing transmission and leading in turn to the "extinction" of some oral traditions and know-hows (UNESCO 2003).

Nevertheless, similar to moving identities, intangible cultural heritage also moves with moving bodies. As literature previously avowed, displaced migrants use their intangible cultural heritage as a reaction to social, economic, and psychological shocks. In exile, this "soft" form of heritage is significant to refugees' collective memory, cultural identity, and resilience (Chaterlard 2017). However, in the case of displacement and refuge, preserving intangible cultural heritage can turn to be a complicated mission. The culture of displaced individuals may clash with that of the actual inhabitants who wish to maintain their own behaviors and traditions. Traditions of a certain community may also intertwine with the habits and norms of the host country, merely hindering the expression and preservation of this community's intangible cultural heritage (Seddon 2016). Not only that but also, some host societies may avert refugees' conductivity of expressing their intangible cultural heritage. In such cases, some expressions and practices may probably fade away, while others transform to carry new definitions and conceptual meanings (Chaterlard 2017).

2.4 Creative self-expression: An artistic healing method in displacement

In the context of displacement, refugees experience sudden change and simultaneous loss of everything, including identity, sense of belonging, connections, and possessions all at once. It is indeed an extreme complex conversion that refugees experience causing them to lose – often simultaneously – everything that supports them during displacement (Adnams Jones 2018). Such massive loss can really be traumatizing. 'Simply put, trauma includes difficult changes in our circumstances (either sudden or chronic) that we cannot immediately integrate. Processing painful change, which is often accompanied by loss,

can sometimes be challenging… Change and the subsequent loss can often result in disorientation, dislocation, dispossession, and disconnection…' (Adnams Jones 2018: 8). All of these are side effects which can be clearly justified as those experienced by refugees. Displaced, disconnected from their homelands, and forced to assimilate in new and different host societies, refugees certainly lose their sense of self-recognition and relating to others. Therefore, refugees feel rejected from both their country of origin due to oppression, and the host country because of potential discrimination. (Burnett 2013, as cited in Jalbert, Jiang, Liao 2018). What intensifies matters more is the fact that refugees are also forced to adapt with a new and different lifestyle and pressured to conform to foreign society norms, eventually weakening their original cultural connections (Jalbert, Jiang, Liao 2018) – a claim this thesis tends to argue for and prove through its findings.

However, literature asserts that individuals have the potential of surviving this intense level of trauma through visual self-expression, to an extent that they can even flourish (Adnams Jones 2018). Thus, it is argued that creativity can have potential ability of transforming people's lives – especially those healing from trauma – which in the context of displacement includes the lives of refugees. Joining the concepts of trauma and creativity together increases individuals' ability in facing life challenges and adapting with changes. Strictly speaking, creative self-expression helps displaced individuals connect with their new community, develop resilience, and deepen their sense of identity and meaning of life. Creativity can also transform people's lives through "three time-linked aspects of the self: 'healing "past" wounds, or blockages, learning to access their "present" endurance and power, and evolving into new "future" meanings and identities' (Adnams Jones 2018: 10). Displayed people develop what literature calls "healthy

identities" through overcoming being "stuck" in less adaptive forms of life changes. Resilience comes with internal evolving, and creative self-expression can be a primary method in updating and rebooting oneself to adapt with the altering external (Adnams Jones 2018).

Art in general is a "transformation" process in itself, in which in this context "transformation" translates to change, social integration, public health, and empowerment (Adnams Jones 2018). More specifically, and in order to clarify "creativity," it is crucial to identify the forms of creative self-expression. Creative acts include many practices such as writing, dance, music, image-making, and performance. Even though these forms nominally differ, they still share principal similarities. 'For example, they are all "symbolic languages" representing reality through metaphorical forms – using text, voice, gesture, rhythm or image' (Adnams Jones 2018: 11).

'When fears are deeply rooted and spaces segregated, it seems that only arts could cross the visible and invisible barriers' (Marcuello-Lopez 2017: 39). From the remnants of the Syrian crisis, a creative movement of artistic expression has risen. Born out of war, Syrian art calls for public awareness and international response. It is a space for Syrians to raise their voices, represent their revolution, resilience, and resistance, and most importantly overcome fear. It is also a call for hope and world re-humanization (Marcuello-Lopez 2017). Even though Syria is known to its proximity with Lebanese culture, being categorized as "refugees," the artistic expressions of these displaced Syrians do not facilitate their integration in the Lebanese host society (McVeigh 2016, as cited in Marcuello-Lopez 2017). Besides being overwhelmed with struggles of

displacement, Syrian art is threatened to disappear if not acknowledged and given adequate support to be reinstated in this host society (Marcuello- Lopez 2017).

2.5 Conclusion

Summing it all up, in light of all the destruction caused by the armed conflict, Syria has truly suffered almost total damage to its cultural heritage. The demolition of cultural property is in itself a huge loss of Syria's valuable history. Monuments and museums not exposed to missiles and bombs did not escape looting acts of determined thieves, in which looted objects and handcrafts are sold on the international market aiming to raise funds and buy arms. Moreover, the damage has not only affected cultural property, but the negative impact of the ongoing conflict has widely spread to reach intangible cultural heritage as well. Social fragmentation and displacement of millions of Syrians, caused by war, in turn have highly deteriorated Syria's intangible cultural heritage and deeply weakened the very foundations of its society. All this threat to cultural practices, artistic expressions, and creative skills and disappearance of many knowledge holders have stopped transmission of this cultural knowledge to younger generations, leading several oral traditions and know-hows to vanish. Furthermore, clashing with the cultural norms of the host society makes preserving intangible cultural heritage a difficult and complicated task. Not giving any space for refugees to express their cultural heritage in a foreign cultural society can probably lead to the disappearance of some practices and transformation of the meanings and definitions of others. Thus, not only intangible cultural heritage is threatened, but also the cultural identity of a whole population.

However, it is said that intangible cultural heritage is resilient to an extent it has the ability to adapt with new contexts. In other words, through resilience that comes with internal evolving and creative self-expression, displaced individuals can reboot themselves to adapt with life changes. This can merely be achieved through recognizing the significance of intangible cultural heritage in overcoming the harsh conditions refugees experience during their forced migration and resettlement. Only then cultural identity and heritage can be reaffirmed and re-acknowledged as fundamental triggers of social and cultural cohesion and well-being.

In fact, displaced Syrians in Lebanon have established a creative movement of artistic expression. Although this art is justified to be an outcome of war and trauma, and some Syrian refugees consider their art as a form of resilience and healing, others refuse to identify as victims of war, considering themselves as ambassadors of their own culture that produces pure artistic creation of pure Syrian art. Syrian refugees claim that their purpose through their artistic endeavor is not creating social transformation, rather than encouraging a sense of belonging (Marcuello-Lopez 2017).

Chapter Three

Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

Perhaps art can be a form of resilience and a means to overcome struggles of displacement. However, before delving into examining the healing potential of such acts, one cannot overlook the context of which such artistic expressions are performed. Accordingly, this chapter examines the Lebanese context as the host society in which Syrian refugees are trying to integrate in, as much as safeguard their cultural heritage, retain their identity, and create a sense of belonging.

3.1 Syrian Refugees Distribution in Lebanese Areas

In the beginning of 2011, a mass migration of Syrians occurred because of the political upheavals and armed conflicts that have started in Syria. Syrians have been forcefully displaced, fleeing from war and searching for security. Millions of them have sought refuge in Lebanon, considering it as a favorable destination 'given the political and socio-economic history of the two nations, geographical proximity, and close interpersonal relations between the two peoples, including inter-marriages' (Rabil 2016: 11). Most of the Syrian refugees of the initial waves – that entered Lebanon in April 2011 – have settled in North Lebanon, mainly in Tripoli, Wadi Khaled, and Akkar. Sunni Syrian refugees have been welcomed in the neighborhoods and homes of the predominant Sunni population and Syrian residents in the Northern area, while others settled in abandoned schools and buildings. The majority of those Syrian refugees have been officially registered, which eased their access to needed services. As the Syrian crisis has

dramatically aggravated, so has the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. This time, the Bekaa Valley has become the new destination for the displaced Syrians, for it is merely close to the Syrian cities and towns in which the armed conflict has spread. Most of those who have sought refuge in Bekaa have not settled with Lebanese families, rather they have been offered to live in shelters provided by local inhabitants. Some others moved into overcrowded rented houses and apartments, while the rest have settled in tents on abandoned or rented land plots. As their numbers have continued to increase, Syrian refugees have started to widely spread in all areas of Lebanon, including Beirut. Up until this year, according to official governmental data, Lebanon hosts the largest per capita concentration of refugees in the world, with 1.5 million Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR, besides those who have entered illegally without registration. Living in over a thousand and a half localities throughout Lebanon, over half of the displaced Syrians – in which the majority of them are women and children – live in severely poor Lebanese areas and insecure shelters, lacking access to services (Rabil 2016).

3.2 Lebanese Response to Syrian Refugee Crisis

As previously mentioned in this chapter, Lebanon is the country with the highest number of refugees per capita. With such a large number, Lebanon has reached saturation level (IGG 2013, cited in Meier 2014). This makes it an essential setting to comprehend the changing aspects of the Syrian refugee crisis. This crisis has intense impacts on Lebanon. It has vastly influenced the Lebanese institutions and citizens' daily lives as well as their representations of the "other," deepening the tension between the refugees and locals.

3.2.1 Feelings of Threat towards Syrian Refugees

Studies show that emotions of fear from the other stem from the perception that this other is threatening essential aspects such as economic resources or values. This results in what researchers call "outgroup hostility" (Cottrell and Neuburg 2005, cited in Vallejo-Martin, Canto, Garcia, and Novas 2020). According to the Intergroup Threat Theory (ITT), basic sources of threats are divided into two crucial categories: realistic and symbolic threats. Giving a definition of both threats, ITT states that 'realistic threat implies the perception of competition between in-group and outgroup for scarce resources, such as employment, social services, education and healthcare. At the same time, symbolic threat refers to the perception of differences in values and beliefs that members of outgroups are thought to have. In this sense, symbolic threat is focused on worldview and moral values, along with fear of losing in-group customs, language, and traditions as a consequence of interaction with members of the outgroup' (Rodriguez 2005, cited in Vallejo-Martin, Canto, Garcia, and Novas 2020: 2). As a matter of fact, this perceived threat influences intergroup attitudes, in which such hostility varies according to its social context. Consequently, the level of threat and hostility are measured according to the nature of the relation between groups in question (Stephan W. G., Ybarra O., Martinez C. M., Schwarzwald, Tur-Kapsa 2017, cited in Vallejo-Martin, Canto, Garcia, and Novas 2020). Stating it differently, a majority group's attitude and reactions against different outgroups vary according to the intergroup context in which this majority is put in (Meuleman B., Abts K. and Meeusen C. (2017, cited in Vallejo-Martin, Canto, Garcia, and Novas 2020).

Similarly, the Stereotype Content Model proclaims that judging others comes as a result of structural relationships within groups; these relationships are determined according to

groups' statuses and their competence for resources. Perception of the other changes according to two aspects: warmth and competence (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu 1999 and 2002, cited in Vallejo-Martin, Canto, Garcia, and Novas 2020); in turn Leach, Ellemers, and Barreto (2007) have later deduced that warmth also includes two dimensions: sociability and morality. As defined by these researchers, 'sociability is associated with the desire to interact with others (for example, being friendly or nice). At the same time, morality refers to the degree to which the behavior of the person or group evaluated is considered proper (for example, a trustworthy or sincere person)' (Leach, Ellemers, and Barreto 2007, as cited in Vallejo-Martin, Canto, Garcia, and Novas 2020). In fact, various studies have certified the real effect of these two differential aspects on outgroup hostility. Yet, the dimension of morality seems to have the highest influence on perception of others. In other words, only when a high level of outgroup morality is perceived by host societies, the outgroup becomes no longer a threat, and is given acknowledgement to maintain its culture (Ordonez-Carrasco, Blan, Navas, and Rojas-Tejada 2020, cited in Vallejo-Martin, Canto, Garcia, and Novas 2020).

Practically addressing these theoretical approaches, a recent study shows that even though around 75% of Lebanese have respect and compassion for Syrian refugees, but the majority still assumes that these refugees are taking jobs away from them. Therefore, this reinforces the Intergroup Threat Theory's definition of realistic threats, in which the study concludes that Lebanese perceive refugees as a threat to their economy, financial status, and employment. On the level of symbolic threat, the study also declares that Lebanese feel unsafe in the presence of Syrian refugees (Alsharabati and Nammour 2015). Reactions of fear and resentment against Syrians stem from previous perceptions

which date back to the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) and Syrian occupation of Lebanon (1990-2005). 'A vivid memory of humiliation, killings, and arbitrary power over Lebanese citizens remains' (Meier 2014: 3). Lebanese citizens still relate Syrians to the Assad regime, considering them as former members of its methods reflected in its "policy of fear." It is claimed that this fear further lingers in the mind-set of the Lebanese as long as the crisis continues. Unfortunately, this bias preconception has already formed the responses of the Lebanese state towards the Syrian refugees residing in the country, as well as Lebanese citizens' discernment against them.

3.2.2 Governmental Policies and "Institutional Ambiguity"

Nassar and Stel (2019) claim that the Lebanese response towards the Syrian crisis is described with informality, or as they prefer to call it "institutional ambiguity." This term is defined to be 'an unpredictable, hybrid form of governance that emerges at the continuously shifting interface between formal and informal forms of regulation' (Nassar and Stel 2019: 44). The Lebanese government has rejected establishing formal refugee camps, and implied regulations regarding registration, residence, and work. This has driven the country into more informality, and even illegality. Institutional ambiguity is of course a result of the chaos and the heavy burden caused by any refugee crisis. Nevertheless, the paralyzed and confused situation is merely intensified by the lack of the Lebanese government's resources and measurements, which are in turn a consequence of "the country's dysfunctional sectarian system."

Since the beginning of the massive displacement of Syrians, Lebanon has responded with a 'no-policy-policy' (Ghaddar 2017, Hamdan and Bou Khater 2015: 35, El Mufti 2014, Nassar 2014, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019: 47) to the influx of Syrian refugees to the

country. This given term represents the Lebanese government's reaction to the refugee crisis, which has been translated as 'little to no response' (Yassin, Osseiran, Rassi, and Boustani 2015: 14, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019: 47) and a 'lack of unified government policy' (Al Masri 2015: 12, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019: 47). Instead of setting a political framework that abides with international law, Lebanon's open border policy seems to be more of what researchers define as 'a laissez-faire common-sense approach' (Boustani, Carpi, Gebara, and Mourad 2016: 14, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019: 47). No official declarations have been made regarding the influx of Syrian refugees to Lebanon, even in Baabda's 2012 Declaration which only called for '"human solidarity" in the context of the Syrian war' (Dionigi 2016: 10, cited in Nassar and Stel: 47).

Giving a clearer explanation of the "no-policy-policy" adopted by the Lebanese government, this policy has strictly claimed a "no refugees and no camps" approach (Frangieh and Barjas 2016, Mourad 2016, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019). Given that Lebanon has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, this does not give permission for the state to disobey 'the obligations that host states have vis-à-vis refugees under international customary law (Hamdan and Bou Khater 2015, Janmyr 2016, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019: 47). Controversially, the Lebanese government has decided to treat Syrian refugees as 'guests,' 'displaced persons' (Janmyr 2016: 59, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019: 47), or even more skeptically as 'de facto refugees' (Janmyr 2016: 62) – terms that all disagree with international law. Not only that, but the Lebanese government have gone as far as to stop refugee registration by UNHCR in 2015, since although international law defines these people as refugees, yet they are not considered as such by

the Lebanese government (Amnesty International 2015, Levy and Shamiyeh 2016, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019).

As for the no camps policy, it is a decision resulting from the Lebanese government trauma regarding the Palestinian refugee experience. Fearing that formal camps will lead to the permanent settling of Syrian refugees (Abi Khalil and Bacchin 2015), and assuming that these camps will probably act as 'terrorist safe havens' (Dionigi 2016: 22, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019: 47), the Lebanese government has refused any establishment of refugee camps. In fact, it is believed that 'denouncing camps became a way to uphold the increasingly delusional idea that the refugee crisis would be short-term' (Ghaddar 2017, as cited in Nassar and Stel 2019). Thus, this no-camp policy is not in the least an attempt for refugee inclusion (Fakhoury 2017). In fact, the Lebanese government has failed to apply UNHCR's Policy on alternatives to camps (UNHCR 2014, cited in Grandi, Mansour, and Holloway 2018), due to pre-existing housing shortage. As a result, refugees have ended up living in informal settlements and overcrowded conditions, such as wood-framed dwellings covered by plastic and collective shelters in warehouses and unfinished buildings (Arab et al. 2015, Government of Lebanon and UN 2018, cited in Grandi, Mansour, and Holloway 2018).

As the armed conflict in Syria has aggravated, it has become obvious that Syrians returning home is likely impossible. As such, the displacement of Syrians has become a burden on the Lebanese government as well as citizens. As a matter of fact, this has increased the tensions between refugees and less affluent host communities (Abi Khalil and Bacchin 2015, cited in Fakhoury 2017). Realizing that the massive influx of Syrian refugees surpasses the country's capacity (European Commission 2013, cited in

Fakhoury 2017), the Lebanese government has announced an "urgent international call" policy (Meier 2013a, as cited in Meier 2016). However, this has only led to formalizing the informality that has been indicated in the "no-policy-policy." The Lebanese government has executed a one-page "Policy Paper on Syrian Refugee Displacement" (issued in October 2014; applied in 2015), limiting the number of Syrian refugees settling in Lebanese areas, securing safety of local citizens and refugees, and reducing the burden put on the Lebanese and their economy (Prime Minister Council 2015, as cited in Cherri, Gonzalez, and Delgado 2016). By applying this policy, the Lebanese government claims 'ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for Syrian 'de facto' refugees and the poorest Lebanese, strengthening the associated capacity of national and local public service delivery systems, and supporting Lebanon's economic, social, institutional, and environmental stability' (Janmyr 2016: 62, Yassin et al. 2015: 18). Nevertheless, this has only reinforced "institutional ambiguity" through extremely strict, illogical, and vague regulations. In other words, these regulations allow Syrians to enter only if their stay suits a particular entry category, despite the fact that this questioned categorization has been significantly intended to ban Syrian refugees. In fact, only one category declares the entry of displaced individuals, yet it clearly excludes Syrians fleeing from their war-torn country. Moreover, in order to meet the needs specified by these categories, Syrians should obtain elaborate and specified documentation, which can actually be very expensive, difficult, and time-consuming, hence excluding those who cannot afford it (Janmyr 2016, cited in Nassar and Stell 2019). Furthermore, even those who have managed to enter before implying these regulations, or those who enter illegally suffer from the overwhelming process of residency renewal or regulation (Nassar and Stel

2019). On top of these regulations, stricter restrictions on freedom of movement, access to work, and legal status have been implemented (Amnesty International 2015, Janmyr 2016, Mansour 2017, Harb et al. 2018, Lintelo et al. 2018, cited in Grandi, Mansour, and Holloway 2018). The complex and burdensome bureaucratic procedure, unaffordable paperwork and fees, and inconsistency of implemented policies, make it very difficult for refugees to obtain valid residency (Amnesty International 2015, UNHCR et al. 2017, Ford and Lintelo 2018, Government of Lebanon and UN 2018, cited in Grandi, Mansour, and Holloway 2018). Not to forget that finding Lebanese sponsors (kafeels) for unregistered refugees can be very problematic and challenging as well (Janmyr 2016, Al Masri 2015, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019).

Thus, the Lebanese response towards Syrian refugees has exacerbated the situation, instead of treating it clearly (Dionigi 2016, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019), eventually coercing refugees to use illegal ways (Lebanon Support 2016, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019). Indeed, this policy has merely led to intended and unintended consequences that have had great impacts particularly on refugees, but also on Lebanese, especially after the over pouring of refugees to Lebanon and the absence of an effective response on grounds (Abi Khalil and Bacchin 2015). Additionally, institutional ambiguity has been further embedded in the erratic and illogical implementation of regulations (Amnesty International 2015, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019). In consequence, Fakhoury (2017: 687) concludes that 2014 policy has implemented a form of 'discretionary governance measures and increased refugee vulnerability' through its 'restrictive, tedious and changing procedures,' eventually leading to 'migrant illegality [and] creating new forms of precariousness.

3.3 Effect of the Lebanese Response on Syrian Refugees

Due to institutional ambiguity, Syrian refugees in Lebanon have become awfully vulnerable. Lebanese government's refusal to define displaced Syrians as "refugees" has deprived the latter from legal residency provided by this status (Knudsun 2017, Thorleifson 2014, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019). Formalizing informality that is a result of the no-policy-policy has intensified vulnerability, establishing a "protection gap" that in turn encourages exploitation.

As such, refugees are exposed to extreme forms of marginalization and abuse. For instance, difficulty to obtain documentation and get approval has made Syrian refugees extremely dependent on landlords, sponsors, attorneys, and local state authorities. Thus, such strict regulations illogically implemented by the Lebanese government have reinforced residency and labor exploitation, and eventually impinged a variety of human rights (Amnesty International 2015, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019).

Moreover, Syrian refugees' illegality has made it almost impossible for them to move freely, since they are always at high risk of getting arrested at checkpoints. Not only that, but the fact that the overwhelming number of settling refugees has made it an 'existential threat' to Lebanon (Dionigi 2016, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019), has in turn created a securitization process that further reinforced refugees' vulnerability (Ghaddar 2017, Mourad 2016, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019). Such securitization has worsened refugees' mobility, due to curfews imposed by municipalities. In short, Syrian refugee influx has been treated as a security threat rather than a humanitarian problem.

Furthermore, restrictions regarding the border policy have prohibited Syrians from travelling back and forth to Syria, seeking cheaper prices, free medical care, civil documentation, passports renewal, and attending essential family events. Hence, most of the Syrian refugees live below poverty line, since aid alone cannot fulfill their needs. Even those who find paid work are unable to suffice their household expenses, and suffer from remaining costs not fully covered for health service (Abi Khalil and Bacchin 2015).

On another hand, Syrian refugees with illegal status are not spared from the abuse of their employers. Employers not only threaten to withhold paying refugees or fire them, but also to report them to authorities. What makes matters worse is the fact that employers take advantage of refugees' illegality and lack of approved documentation, keeping them away from seeking assistance from local authorities. Besides, employers are initially guilty of violation through disaffirming and not providing work permits for employed refugees (Abi Khalil and Bacchin 2015). In consequence, Syrian refugees in Lebanon live in a dilemma of constant fear and uncertainty, unable to neither maintain connections with their homeland, nor overcome this harsh situation, or obtain the least possible of rights through an acknowledged refugee status (Nassar and Stel 2019).

Adding fuel to fire, the initial absence of an effective policy and the later institutional ambiguity has only led to a fragmentation in the emerging saving attempts. Although humanitarian organizations have worked together in an attempt to fix what has been neglected by the government, their mandate in Lebanon has 'remained poorly defined' and their implemented work inefficient (Boustani et al. 2016: 14, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019: 49). Indeed, the no-camp-policy has been aggressively challenging to the humanitarian response. Illegality and the scattered nature of informal settlement of

refugees have made it an extremely difficult task for humanitarian organizations to improve living conditions. Practically, the no-camp-policy couldn't hinder the establishment of thousands of informal camps or scattered tents. However, illegality of refugees, besides the absence of official camps and an effective policy, has put the protection of self-settled refugees and those in informal settlements at high risk, for they 'do not have recourse to law in case they are evicted' (Knudsen 2017, cited in Nassar and Stel 2019: 50).

In conclusion, perceptions and prejudgments of Syrian refugees initially embedded in the Lebanese mind-set have led to a great failure in governmental responses and treatment of Syrian refugees' influx to the country. In fact, this failure has posed excessive hardships on both Syrian refugees and Lebanese locals as well, only to eventually develop more hatred, intolerance, and hostility between both the in-group and outgroup.

Chapter Four

Methodology, Results, and Discussion

4.1 Methodology

4.1.1 Research strategy and design

Intangible cultural heritage has recently started gaining its recognition. Reviews have shown that its importance is associated with recent migration movements and displacement of populations. In order to explicitly argue the essential role of intangible cultural heritage in displacement and provide genuine answers for the research questions, this thesis adopts a qualitative research strategy. Given that the research aims to study cultural practices, intangible cultural heritage preservation, and integration of Syrian refugees and Lebanese locals in the context of the old village of Abra, it is justified that a case study is best to look into this critical model. Through this design, the research will be able to focus on the complex nature of the Syrian case in question, and give an intensive analysis of it.

It is crucial to show that in spite of all the limitations of choosing Old Abra as a particular setting to study, its significance lies in the specificity of its demographic nature. Primary inhabitants of the old village are Christians. However, due to the crawling of citizens from Saida and internally displaced populations of border villages after the Israeli aggression, its geographical landscape has expanded to become as it is currently known as Old Abra (village) and New Abra (town). As a matter of fact, the settlement of these new residents has created a fear from the "other," which eventually has limited

integration between primary Christian inhabitants of Old Abra and the new citizens of New Abra. The pressure has increased after the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Lebanon as a whole, and in Old Abra in specific where numerous incidents of discrimination, sexual harassment, violence, and even murder have occurred against these refugees (Social Movement 2014). Accordingly, this research chooses to study Old Abra as a relevant setting to examine the Syrian refugee experience and their extreme struggle to safeguard their cultural heritage and identity in such a bias setting.

In consequence, the qualitative research strategy and the case study design are precisely chosen to serve the micro perspective used to look into the topic at hand. Both ensure to cover contextual conditions relevant to the studied phenomenon, giving insight of unclear boundaries between the phenomenon and the context (Yin 2003, cited in Baxter and Jack 2008). Baxter and Jack (2008: 546) argue that 'one of the common pitfalls associated with case study is that there is a tendency for researchers to attempt to answer a question that is too broad or a topic that has too many objectives for one study.' Accordingly, the research ensures setting boundaries for its objectives and pursued answers. Moreover, it binds the case through specifying its time and setting, as well as its definition and context sought to comprehend. Then, collected data is analyzed and discussions are made to reflect participants' perceptions relevant to provide genuine answers to research questions.

4.1.2 Study population and sample size

Determining the study population is critical in order to serve research questions and hypotheses. In other words, it is essential to always choose a sample population that can genuinely provide the research with insightful findings. Looking into the case study of

Syrian refugees' intangible cultural heritage and integration with Lebanese locals in Old Abra, it is only relevant to choose participants that have first-hand experiences within the chosen setting and context under study. Taking this into consideration, the research involves 6 participants that are divided as founders or members of the integrational program.

Firstly, the research has precisely chosen to recruit the Head of the Social Movement Center in Saida and the previous Mayor of Abra, as key participants in the research knowing that they are the main founders of the integrational program involving refugees and locals of Old Abra. Syrian refugees and locals are then recruited according to their involvement in the program, which has attempted to establish a women's cooperative enrolling women of both parties in a traditional food activity that represents intangible cultural heritage and integration between the members. 2 Syrian and 2 Lebanese women have been chosen among those who contributed in the program. The number of recruited women is determined according to the percentage of involved refugees compared to locals in this program. Knowingly, only 2 Syrian women have enrolled in this program while the rest are Lebanese women.

Participants' perceptions are treated with confidentiality, taking into consideration ethical decrees. Compared views are sorted to identify the purposes and concerns of each, the refugees and locals, to which they have raised. Refugees and locals' considerations have helped in the investigation of the context and setting this research has chosen to analyze, thus in turn, providing a vision of the extent to which such integration affects the representation of intangible cultural heritage, and in turn reinstatement of cultural identity, as well as its reflection of the Syrian refugee experience.

4.1.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Following a certain inclusion and exclusion criteria, the research tends to reduce the chances of error accurately choosing its study population and sample size. Consequently, all collected data is guaranteed to confine with the research questions this dissertation raises. Limitations on participants' engagement are also measured and adhered to. Hence, considering the nationality of these participants as an essential factor enables the research to identify the number of Syrian refugees involved in this integrational program compared to that of Lebanese locals. Thus, this in turn permits measuring the percentage of integration between the refugees and locals in the contextual setting under study.

On another level, integrity is also assured by carefully choosing the participants that can provide insightful answers of the topic at hand. In other words, through abiding by these criteria, data collected delivers relevant and concise answers that serve the research questions and study objectives. Perceptively, this thesis has specifically recruited refugees and locals from the integrational program in Old Abra, who have quite lived through this substantial experience.

Therefore, semi-structured interview questions are addressed to the targeted sample, excluding non-proficient participants that would have influenced the research process and interfered with the integrity of data collection. Consequently, the research process have been smoothly carried in a reliable and confident environment reflecting a genuine shared image of refugee stories, as well as locals' true concerns on integration and re-acknowledgment of Syrian cultural heritage.

4.1.4 Sampling procedure

Since the research particularly focuses on the integrational program involving Syrian refugees and Lebanese locals in Old Abra, then it is justified that participants are sampled through a critical case sampling approach. This sampling approach has best attended to the purpose of this research. In view of that, this method has grouped the refugees and locals in terms of the particular issue they both have experienced through their enrollment in the integrational program and work together in the traditional food activity. Critical case sampling has assisted in understanding each group's perceptions and concerns. Taking into consideration their shared integrational experience yet differential positions, have indeed facilitated the determination of each groups' conditions that in turn have helped in understanding the concepts of intangible cultural heritage preservation and reinstatement of cultural identity in the context of displacement. Realizing these variations has been crucial since they have influenced the nature of addressed questions. Such acknowledgment has ensured addressing interview questions in a structure that fully represents the truth about the actual situation.

4.1.5. Research tools

For the achievement of this research, certain study tools have been used for data collection. Semi-structured interviews have been used to address questions which serve the research questions and objectives. Interview questions have been designed according to different categories for participants. Two different lists of questions have been specially designed for the Head of the Social Movement Center in Saida and the Former Mayor of Abra according to their role in establishing the integrational program. Other questions have been structured according to the remaining two categories of participants:

Syrian refugee women and Lebanese women. Interviews for the founders of the integrational program are based on questions that define their role, purpose, and perceptions regarding the integrational program and the Syrian refugee experience in Lebanon.

As for the Syrian refugee women, questions have been designed for a thorough discussion on the pressures of being a refugee in Lebanon, their particular refugee experience in the contextual setting of Old Abra, as well as their involvement in the integrational program. Finally, regarding interviews with Lebanese women in the program, addressed questions have covered discussions about their participation in working with Syrian refugees in the program, their perceptions on Syrian refugees resettling in Lebanon and Old Abra in specific. On another level, all interviews with the participants have touched on integration and its role in preserving cultural heritage and reinstating cultural identity in the context of displacement.

Regarding research ethics, confidentiality of participants is guaranteed all through the interviewing process, through ensuring de-identification of any personal information. By ensuring anonymity, participants' are more confident to share their stories and respond to questions with more assertiveness and trust.

4.1.6 Data collection procedure

After sorting out appointments for meeting with each participant, data has been collected from participants through semi-structured interviews. Through the interviewing process, the researcher has guided the respondents and given clear explanation of detailed questions which may have not been clearly understood by the participants. Consequently,

discussions have been properly directed, which in turn has ensured delivering accurate answers.

Integrity of data collection has been also guaranteed through prohibiting any chance of intrusion. In view of that, each interview has been conducted separately with every participant, safeguarding privacy and confidence of respondents. Knowing that any intimidation or intrusion may lead to hesitation, manipulation, and eventually lack of accuracy in the answering process, the researcher has been fully attentive of forbidding any interaction between all the participants, especially between the founders and the members, as well as between the refugees and the locals.

4.1.7. Ethical principles and adherence to IRB procedures

The role of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in the Lebanese American University (LAU) is to review and give approval of conducting research projects involving human subjects. In view of that, all approved research projects must adhere to the ethical principles executed in the Belmont Report as well as regulations and guidelines of ethical research conduct.

Thus, this thesis has abided by the underlying principles implemented by the review board. All concerns of conducting interviews, privacy and confidentiality insurance, and data collection integrity have been taken into consideration. Accordingly, all required procedures of ethical research conduct have been well covered and acknowledged. In view of that, the study has gained participants' trust and acknowledgment of its legitimacy and credibility, through genuinely describing the nature of the study at hand and going through all the terms and conditions of conducting this research.

4.1.8. Ethical considerations

For a research to be rendered successful, there are several core principles of research ethics which should be considered: informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and risk. These ethical considerations are very critical when involving human subjects in the research. Being aware and responsible for participants' needs is key to ethical treatment. A selected category of participants in this research, which are Syrian refugees have a high tendency of vulnerability, making it necessary for the researcher to quickly intervene in protecting and improving their conditions.

Accordingly, this research has acknowledged these ethical pillars that govern human subjects' involvement in research and has recognized their accuracy and sensitivity which exist in data collection and representation of collected data. Data collected from recruited participants has served research questions and objectives. It also has given a genuine representation of the case study at hand. With due attentiveness and recognition, this study has ensured protecting 'the life, health, dignity, integrity, right to self-determination, privacy, and confidentiality of personal information of research subjects' (World Medical Association 2013, cited in Yip, Han, and Sng 2016). Through abiding by all these ethical considerations and not subjecting respondents to any kind of mistreatment, this research has gained credit and trust from participants consistent with ethical decrees.

4.1.9 Informed Consent

Obtaining consent from participants is essential for data collection. Consenting to the research means that participants approve of engaging in the data collection process and accept the use of their responses in the research study. Thus, through abiding by all

ethical considerations regarding human subjects' involvement in research studies, this dissertation has considered obtaining consent from its recruited participants. According to ethical process of consenting, the researcher has ensured to provide all participants with a detailed explanation of the topic under study, in addition to the legal formalities that are crucial for research confirmation. Required documents have been stamped by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Lebanese American University (LAU) and all terms of conditions have been met as part of the research authentication process.

In any research involving human subjects, the social background, health condition, and educational level of respondents should be taken into consideration. Being aware of such considerations improves the quality of collected data, guaranteeing that it meets with the needs of the research questions and objectives. Signed consent forms obtained from respondents grant permission for the researcher to use them as vital sources of data. Consequently, interviews have been conducted after assisting participants and giving them all the support needed to ensure a comfortable environment for them to share information.

4.2 Research Results and Findings

This section provides a critical analysis of collected data and findings of the research, extracting essential knowledge about intangible cultural heritage in displacement from differential views of the founders, and Syrian and Lebanese members of the integration program. The section investigates core expanses of the Syrian refugee experience in the context of displacement, such as the perceptions on integration and its extent to which it

allows preservation of intangible cultural heritage and reinstatement of cultural identity in the context of displacement.

4.2.1 Governmental policy burdens on locals and refugees

In light of all the "institutional ambiguity" the Lebanese government has practiced in dealing with the massive Syrian influx to Lebanon, the hostile relationship between Lebanese and Syrians has only intensified. The Lebanese state's haphazard decisions and random policies have merely reinforced economic and social injustice between locals and refugees, leading Lebanese to blame all this occurring chaos on refugees. In fact, effects of displacement and this huge influx have been painful for Lebanese locals, as much as for refugees themselves.

Indeed, both Lebanese and Syrians have become victims of the state's failure in decision-making. Such chaos has deprived Lebanese and Syrians from their rights to live a decent life in light of the emerging economic crisis. Former Mayor of Abra emphasizes on the huge failure in providing security and peace to refugees as well as locals, due to the no-camp policy adopted by the Lebanese government. As a matter of fact, Lebanese have struggled with sharing electricity and water supply with refugees resettling in their areas since some areas already suffer from permanent electricity cuts and water shortage. Besides that, random distribution of resettling refugees has caused overpopulation in most areas all around Lebanon.

In the context of Abra (Old and New), this small town has hosted around 60 Syrian families, most of which resettled in its old village where rental is cheaper than that of New Abra. This has created overpopulation in this small village where services hardly

meet the needs of its locals. Eventually, citizens and settlers of the village have suffered severe difficulty in accessing some services such as electricity and water supply, if not complete inaccessibility to some other services. As a result, this has developed intolerance and resentment between Lebanese and Syrian refugees in Old Abra.

As for the increase in unemployment rate, this is another huge problem the Lebanese have severely suffered from congruently because of restrictive governmental laws. Lebanese labor law which does not guarantee Syrian workers' rights through social security and identified minimum wage, has negatively affected on Lebanese workers as well. As a result of these unfair regulations not providing equal labor rights and allowing competition between employees according to proficiency rather than availability, Lebanese employers prefer to hire Syrian workers with lower wages, longer work hours, and no social security benefits, instead of choosing Lebanese workers which certainly costs them more. This has not only led to an increase in unemployment rate, but also has deepened competition between Lebanese and Syrians on several professions. Some professions such as construction, carpentry, upholstery, agriculture, machinery… have truly become extinct to Lebanese since Syrians have taken over these businesses (ILO 2014). This retrogressing situation has merely frustrated Lebanese leading them to throw all the blame on Syrian refugees.

Lebanese participants of the integration program show their frustration from the irrational policies implemented by the Lebanese government and its unfair treatment to it citizens as well as refugees resettling in its country. Participants J and M stress on the fact that such governmental neglect in seriously dealing with the Syrian influx has put enormous pressures on Lebanese citizens, making it too difficult for them to tolerate or accept the

Syrian presence especially in this huge number. Being aware enough to admit that it's the state who should be blamed for forcing its citizens to endure all its faults and imposed burdens, Lebanese participants show their empathy with Syrian refugees who also suffer from similar pressures due to displacement. Both respondents J and M sympathetically state that they understand the need for every refugee to find a decent job in order to satisfy the minimum needs of his household. 'It is not refugees' fault that the Lebanese labor law is unjust to us all. On top of that, we cannot deny the fact that after the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the village, access to several services has become really difficult. However, it is the government's responsibility in the first place to secure necessary needs and distribute all services equally. To put it simply, it is vital to be aware of whom to fight and blame for all this corruption.'

4.2.2 Fear of the "other"

In order to investigate more the effects of the Syrian refugees influx to the significant setting of Old Abra, Lebanese participants were asked to describe their initial perception on Syrian refugees after they first settled in Old Abra. All respondents' answers point out on a "collective memory" of the killings and violent acts of Syrian army during their occupation of Lebanon. Even though they admit that they believe most of the Syrians who fled from war are against the Syrian regime, locals still fear from an increase of violence, robbery, and murder due to their massive influx to Lebanese urban areas and resettlement between Lebanese citizens. Former Mayor of Abra stresses on this matter through retelling the story of a Syrian labor worker who tried to kill his Lebanese employer. He explains that this incident has reinforced this fear, hence increasing the tension between locals and refugees living in Old Abra.

On another hand, one of the Lebanese women (participant M) along with the former Mayor of Abra shed light on the cultural differences between Lebanese and Syrians. Both state that most of the Syrian refugees residing in Old Abra originally come from a Bedouin social background. Thus, Lebanese citizens of the village could not tolerate their different habits and dressing style. Participant M proclaims that she realized that Syrian Bedouin women, for example, annoyed from how Lebanese women leave their houses with their hair uncovered, wearing tight clothes that reveal their skin, and interact freely with men. Likewise, Participant S, who is a Syrian respondent, retells her story of feeling inferior and unable to cope with the new host society of Old Abra. This is because she originally comes from the rural area of Aleppo and wears the "abaya," unlike the locals in the village who are mostly open-minded and modern Christians.

Accordingly, findings reflect a new concept of fear reflected by the Lebanese-Syrian context. Respondents' answers justify previous studies which have avowed that such perception of Syrians has lingered in the mind-set of Lebanese and has eventually created a pre-judgmental response from Lebanese towards Syrian refugees resettling in the country. This is besides the cultural differences between both parties, confirming the Intergroup Threat Theory (ITT) which believes that 'symbolic threat stems from differential values and beliefs between members of in-group and outgroup' (Rodriguez 2005, cited in Vallejo-Martin, Canto, Garcia, and Novas 2020: 2) and the Stereotype Content Model that proclaims that judgement of others is shaped according to the structural relationships between groups (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu 1999 and 2002, cited in Vallejo-Martin, Canto, Garcia, and Novas 2020). More specifically, it verifies earlier studies arguing that the dimension of morality mostly defines the level of outgroup

hostility (Stephan W. G., Ybarra O., Martinez C. M., Schwarzwald, Tur-Kapsa 2017, cited in Vallejo-Martin, Canto, Garcia, and Novas 2020).

4.2.3. Marginalization of Syrian refugees in Old Abra

As mentioned before, and after the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Old Abra, the violent incident about the Syrian labor worker who tried to kill his Lebanese employer reinforced tension between both parties. Former Mayor of Abra admits that this murder attempt increased fear and created hostility among the citizens. No new murder attempts or physical abuse were recorded after then, yet different forms of discrimination appeared. The Head of the Social Movement Center reports incidents of verbal abuse against refugees residing in Old Abra. Participant Y, who is one of the Syrian women interviewed in this research, states that her Lebanese neighbors used to get annoyed from her children trying to play with their children. She used to hear them say to their children, 'Don't play with those Syrians; they are dirty and troublesome. They don't resemble us.' In view of such verbal abuse, former Mayor of Abra reports that the municipality was forced to seek the police's help in calming the situation and prohibiting any form of interaction between the locals and refugees. The Head of Social Movement Center in Saida adds that they had to put cameras all over the streets of Old Abra in order to monitor any kind of harassment of Syrian children in the village.

In fact, this tension between Lebanese locals and Syrian refugees remained even after the establishment of a housing complex (instead of an official refugee camp) for the Syrian refugees settling in the village. Former Mayor of Abra explains that the massive influx of Syrian refugees to the village imposed pressure on locals, since Old Abra is a demographically small village that hosts Lebanese (mostly Christian) families. Thus, this

huge number of Syrian refugees coming to the village was threatening to the calm environment these families used to live in. Thereby, even after establishing the refugee housing complex, locals of the village still did not feel completely safe since it was built in the heart of this small village, rather being located on the outskirts of Old Abra. Not until movement of Syrian refugees was controlled, through tracking their entry and exit from their housing complex did the Lebanese feel a bit more secure.

4.2.4 The Integrational Program

4.2.4.1 Definition and Purpose

Given the enormous influx of Syrian refugees to Lebanon and the great pressures imposed on Lebanon as a whole, it has been an urgent need to provide help for small municipalities that have been suffering the struggles and burdens caused by the huge number of resettling refugees. In view of that, the integration program comes as a rescuing opportunity to the small municipality of Abra. The integration program was established through collaboration between the Social Movement Center in Saida and the Municipality of Abra. This program is part of a bigger project: "Supporting Municipalities during the Syrian Crisis" in partnership with The Catholic Committee against hunger and for development (CCHD) funded by the French Development Agency (FDA) The general purpose of this program is to help improve the living conditions of displaced populations and host communities in Lebanon. Thus, through engaging relevant stakeholders in the Municipality of Abra, this program seeks to improve the social and economic conditions of locals and refugees in Old Abra and alleviate the tensions between them. Accordingly, the integration program aims to erase this lingering fear in the Lebanese mind-set, and break the differential barriers between the Lebanese locals

and Syrian refugees. Therefore, the ultimate thrust of this humanitarian project is to achieve social and community development through implementing the concept of integration between locals and refugees on real grounds.

4.2.4.2 An Inspiring Initiative

This initiative was launched in 2014, when a development committee was formed consisting of 12 members: the Mayor of Abra back then, representatives of the youth committee, representatives of the Lebanese and Syrian women group, municipal members, and representatives of development associations and clubs. Lebanese and Syrian women enrolled in this integration program were given specialized workshops on enhancing self-confidence, communication, teamwork, cultural exchange, mediation, conflict resolution, and economic beneficence. These women were encouraged for local production and exchanging skills through cooperating together in cooking and preparing traditional dishes from both Lebanese and Syrian cuisines, in an attempt to establish an official women's cooperative which opens doors for them to sell their products in the Lebanese and international market.

Lebanese and Syrian women were a bit afraid at first of enrolling and clashing with other participants, due to the common rigid relationship between refugees and the locals of Old Abra. However, they were then encouraged to break this fear and hostility through raising awareness of the importance of integration between locals and refugees and their cooperation in improving their living conditions within the village. Consequently, the program was able to enroll a decent number of Lebanese women, yet did not succeed in hosting more than two Syrian women, mainly due to high illiteracy rate among Syrian women in Old Abra and their illegal status (not registered in UNHCR).

When asked about her purpose of participation, Participant J describes her experience with enthusiasm: 'I have a passion for cooking and learning new dishes from different cultures. I have always added some new touches to the dishes I produce in my catering kitchen, through combining ingredients and flavors from different cuisines. It is not my first participation in training courses; however, what encouraged me the most to participate in this program is my eagerness to get familiar with Syrian traditional food and learn new dishes that are not found in our Lebanese cuisine.' As for the other Lebanese respondent, Participant M is a Lebanese born to a Syrian mother. Due to her half-Syrian origins and love to Syrian traditions, she was motivated to enroll in this program. She nostalgically expresses her feelings, 'I still remember my grandma storing food in jars for winter supply, and the Syrian unique architecture of old houses (the fountain in the middle, huge arcs, and colored windows). I thought that this program will give me great opportunity to learn Syrian traditional food and revive my memories of Syrian traditions and old customs.'

Syrian participants Y and S were also inspired to join in the program. This program opened doors for both respondents to find themselves a decent job through teaching them new cooking skills. Besides personal benefits, and what mattered most to them, is the fact that they found a great opportunity to revive their intangible cultural heritage through producing traditional Syrian dishes, as well as a suitable chance to reduce hostility between them and the locals through cooperating with Lebanese women and learning traditional cooking skills from each cuisine.

4.2.4.3 Choosing criteria

The Head of the Social Movement Center in Saida explains that individuals enrolled in the program were chosen according to certain criteria. In other words, women were chosen according to their age, gender, legal status, residency, and literacy. Knowing that Syrian women's number exceeds that of men (90 women to 65 men), this program had significantly chosen to enroll women in order to help improve the social and economic conditions of Lebanese and Syrian households in Old Abra, through providing job opportunities for women to help their families. Membership terms required women not under 18, who are literate and citizens (for Lebanese) or settlers (for Syrians) in Old Abra. As for Syrian women, legal status was mandatory.

4.2.4.4 Why cooking traditional food?

When asked this question, Head of the Social Movement Center in Saida declared that this choice is significant since cooking traditional food is an easy skill most women acquire. Food production is an essential activity in facilitating quick access to the market; it also comes with dual beneficence both on economic and cultural levels. In other words, since the program's objectives mainly focus on integration and economic support, this activity is most proficient to achieve both aims. It provides economic support for Lebanese and Syrian participants by allowing them to sell their food products in exhibitions, along with cultural exchange resulting from women cooperating together and learning from each other traditional dishes from both cuisines, and significantly introducing Syrian traditional food to the Lebanese host society.

4.2.4.5 Producing traditional dishes

Throughout working together in this program, Lebanese and Syrian women agree that they have gained a unique cooking experience. Describing their experience they all confirm that delving into the recipes and ingredients of traditional dishes from both cuisines has made them recognize the differences as much as the similarities of their traditional cultures aside from learning to cook traditional dishes from both cuisines. Respondents explain that even though both Syrians and Lebanese make Kibbeh, Kousa bi Laban (zucchini in yoghurt), and Ouzi (spiced rice with lamb meat), it is the added spices and cooking method which determine whether the food is Lebanese or Syrian. For example, the women have learned that the Syrian Kibbeh, famously done in Aleppo, is made of flour and bulgur on the outside, and then filled with ground meat, unlike the Lebanese kibbeh which is made of bulgur and meat. As for the Kousa bi Laban, zucchini is fried and filled with ground meat when done the Syrian way instead of stuffing it with rice and meat like the Lebanese Kousa Mahshi. According to Ouzi as well, Lebanese simply cook it with spiced rice adding lamb meat on top with some nuts for presentation. Nevertheless, Syrians cook Ouzi with spiced rice, green peas, ground meat, and nuts wrapped in filo pastry sheets that are cooked with Hamwi ghee in the oven.

On a similar level, participants J and M happily state that they enjoyed learning to prepare Syrian winter supply products. Some of those products are eggplant jam, makdous (young eggplant stuffed with walnuts and crushed chili red pepper dipped in olive oil) pickled lettuce. Another famous Aleppo dish that Participant J added to her menu in her catering kitchen is the Muhammara. Muhammara dip is made of roasted red pepper, walnut, and Aleppo pepper which gives it a spicy flavorful kick. Since Aleppo

pepper may not be available or common in the Lebanese market, it can be substituted with paprika. Pomegranate molasses can be added as well. This recipe is mainly served with pita bread as part of the mezze, or made as a mankoushe for breakfast.

On the other hand, when asked about what the Syrian participants have learned from the Lebanese cuisine, respondents Y and S affirm that they were excited to learn how to prepare pumpkin kibbeh, Lebanese frakeh (raw kibbeh), and fish tajin. They indeed express their appreciation of such high quality food of the Lebanese cuisine and their enjoyment in preparing as well as trying out these dishes.

After learning different recipes and ways of traditional food preparation, Lebanese and Syrian women of the program were given an opportunity to produce their food in exhibitions made in several cities in Lebanon. Several dishes and winter supply products were introduced to the Lebanese society under the name of Syrian production. Indeed, pickled lettuce, eggplant jam, and muhammara were highly acknowledged by Lebanese, to an extent that Participant J delightfully expresses her satisfaction when orders of Lebanese customers on eggplant jam had highly increased after she started producing this winter supply product in her kitchen. Not only this, but learning how to prepare young eggplants had encouraged her to add a new unique dish of her own touch to her kitchen menu: dry eggplants filled with nuts (similar to the dry dates recipe) – which became highly demanded by her Lebanese customers.

4.2.4.6 Traditional cooking as a healing method

After the massive loss of personal and cultural property as well as all sorts of connection with their homeland, Syrian participants express their initial fear of resettling in the

hostile environment of Old Abra among mostly Christian locals who they feel very inferior to. Head of the Social Movement Center explains that this fear is a result of their traumatic experience of being forcefully displaced due to war and their sudden change of circumstances which they cannot immediately cope with. Processing such painful change has been really challenging for refugees to an extent it resulted in a feeling of dislocation and loss of their sense of belonging. Through retelling previously mentioned struggles of forced adaptation in Old Abra, participants Y and S argue that this has led them to lose connections with their culture.

However, this traditional cooking experience has come as a surviving opportunity for these Syrian women. Self-expression translated in cooking Syrian traditional dishes and selling them in exhibitions has developed resilience in Syrian refugees, re-establishing their self-worth. Nevertheless, creative self-expression cannot alone provide sufficient support for Syrian intangible cultural heritage to re-obtain its acknowledgment in the host society of Lebanon. As such, integration between Lebanese and Syrian participants, which is the ultimate aim of this program, has in its turn reinforced this much needed recognition of Syrian intangible cultural heritage. This has occurred through encouraging Lebanese and Syrian women to cook together and produce traditional dishes that express both cultures. Moreover, giving the required space for Syrian refugees to produce their own traditional dishes in exhibitions has increased their resilience and productive engagement in the Lebanese host society.

Therefore, this integration experience has indeed provided a much needed chance for Syrian refugees to raise their voice. In other words, traditional cooking has come as a revolt against all the overwhelming struggles of displacement. Correspondingly,

participants Y and S affirm that they felt responsible for being ambassadors of their culture, presenting Syrian cuisine to the host society of Lebanon. In return, this creative self-expression along with the integration experience has opened a space for Syrian refugees to share their stories, skills, and needs with Lebanese members of the same program.

4.2.5 New Perceptions

Given the previous description of the critical nature of Old Abra, and the thorough explanation of the integration program's objectives and activities, this subsection extracts results of the integration program, through investigating the changing perceptions of Syrian refugees and Lebanese locals on integration, the importance of intangible cultural heritage, and reinstatement of cultural identity in the context of displacement. It also discusses limitations of this program and the reason for its cessation.

4.2.5.1 Acknowledging diversity and recognizing similarities

Participants admit that this integrational program have indeed provoked their interest and awakened their attention to the importance of integration in accepting the "other". Working together hand in hand in producing and selling their traditional food, sharing their experiences and exchanging their skills, Lebanese and Syrian women have been able to recognize their differences as well as their similarities.

Most importantly, intensive workshops and meetings have offered a space for Syrian women to retell their stories of war and displacement, as well as share their skills with the Lebanese women of the program. Lebanese women have listened to their stories empathizing with the struggles and harsh conditions they have experienced and continue

to live through. Moreover, other locals and refugees of Old Abra have been invited to an official event where a thorough explanation of the program's objectives has been presented. The village's playground has also been an official meeting place for locals and refugees of Old Abra.

This cooperation has encouraged both communities to acknowledge their diverse customs, social norms, and lifestyles, as well as their shared needs and interests. Overcoming cultural and social differences, Lebanese and Syrian women have realized that both have economic needs they seek to satisfy. Hence, through their enrollment in this integration program, both have been able to find a job opportunity that offers them money and self-sufficiency.

4.2.5.2 Emergence of a friendly environment

After acknowledging diversity among locals and refugees, as well as realizing the similarities, decent friendships have emerged between Lebanese and Syrian women who harmoniously worked together in producing traditional dishes of Lebanese and Syrian cuisines. Respondents stress on the significance of this integration in developing connections between them. They indeed have become close to an extent that they started hanging out together, inviting each other to occasions, and frequently visiting each other. Their friendship has continued even after the program has stopped for certain reasons that a following subsection will further discuss.

Such evolving connections between both communities have provoked other locals in Old Abra to change their pre-judgmental perception of Syrian refugees. Through attending the event, set up by the Social Movement Center in Saida in collaboration with the

Muncipality of Abra, locals have been able to recognize shared needs with refugees and sympathize with their refugee stories. In fact, this has established tolerance and approval to Syrian presence in Old Abra. As a result, pressures of the Syrian influx on the municipality and the pre-existing tensions between locals and refugees in this village have certainly been reduced.

4.2.6 Recognition of Syrian intangible cultural heritage

Syrian women confess that this traditional cooking experience has revived their cultural heritage and reinforced their connections with their homeland. Participant S sorrowfully explains that she has lost her house because of the massive raids on several villages in the countryside of Aleppo. She also mourns her long lost brother who died in the bombing in 2012. Since then, she has left her homeland seeking refuge in Lebanon. Settling in several areas in Lebanon before coming to Old Abra, participant S has clashed with the social norms of a very distinct host society which doesn't resemble her Bedouin customs at all. Not until she has enrolled in the integration program, has she found an embracing environment among the other Syrian and Lebanese members of the program who have been respectful and acknowledging of their differences. Lebanese respondents as well as the other Syrian woman (Participant Y) agree that they have developed amity bonds among them all.

In fact, this embracing environment is not only limited to this kindled friendship among members of the program, but exceeds to reach approval and recognition of Syrian cultural heritage. Realizing their shared needs have only strengthened their unity in facing together all the pressures the economic crisis in Lebanon has put on them.

Correspondingly, Lebanese participants have overcome their fear against Syrian refugees, granting Syrian intangible cultural heritage the acknowledgment and recognition it seeks.

On the other hand, Syrian intangible cultural heritage has also been able to obtain its approval from the Lebanese host society as a whole. The peaceful environment among members of the integrational program has spread to other locals and refugees living in Old Abra. A tolerating atmosphere has generated among all settlers of the village, thus eradicating earlier marginalization and hostility against Syrian refugees. Moreover, through selling traditional dishes and food products in exhibitions under the name of Syrian production, Syrian refugees have been able to introduce their intangible cultural heritage represented in their Syrian traditional cuisine to the Lebanese host society. As a result, Lebanese host communities have become familiar with Syrian traditional food, to an extent that some dishes have indeed obtained great approval which encouraged Lebanese customers to increase their orders on some products such as eggplant jam and muhammara. In other words, this integration has contributed in the re-acknowledgment of Syrian intangible cultural heritage in the context of the Lebanese host society.

4.2.7 Reinstatement of Syrian cultural identity

Through implementing their intangible cultural heritage, Syrian women of this integration program have been able to revive memories and connections with their homeland, hence in turn reinstate their cultural identity in the host society of Lebanon. As participants Y and S assert, "Working with Lebanese and gaining their respect and acknowledgment to our cultural heritage made us feel productive and worthy of ourselves. Honestly, this encouraged us to embrace our cultural heritage that we thought we had long lost due to war and destruction of cultural property back in our homeland.'

Moreover, Syrian women's participation in the program has turned from an aim to share their refugee stories of struggle and grief, into a shared experience that allowed cultural exchange, productivity, and reinstatement of identity and self-belonging. Likewise, Lebanese participants agree on the fact that this cultural exchange offered through integration has indeed fostered social and cultural cohesion between them and Syrian women in the program.

On another hand, Head of the Social Movement Center in Saida stresses on the significance of introducing traditional dishes and food products exclusively made with Syrian hands, in order to give space to Syrian women to express their own cultural heritage. Explicitly speaking, this program did not neglect the importance of Syrian intangible cultural heritage in the reinstatement of Syrian cultural identity. Although aiming for integration in the first place, selling some of the Syrian traditional dishes separately in exhibitions have maintained exclusivity of Syrian production, thus not hindering preservation of Syrian cultural heritage. This has certainly reinforced reinstatement of Syrian cultural identity through offering needed space for Syrians to implement their intangible cultural heritage in the Lebanese host society.

As such, only through realizing the importance of intangible cultural heritage in overcoming struggles and conquering harsh situations did Syrian refugees have the chance to obtain the recognition of their intangible cultural heritage needed in the host society of Lebanon. In other words, this encouraging opportunity for integration - which opened doors for them to introduce their intangible cultural heritage to host society - has been an essential means for them to become resilient in order to recover from harsh conditions which they continue to struggle with throughout their refugee experience, thus

reinstating their cultural identity which comes as a result of regaining their personal worth and sense of belonging in the host society.

4.2.8 Limitations of the integration program

It is safe to say that the functional objectives of the integration program have had tangible positive results. However, it could not reach its paramount goal in establishing a women's cooperative as promised. Thus, the positive outcome of this cooking experience hasn't exceeded Lebanese borders. In other words, Lebanese and Syrian women have failed to spread their work through exporting their traditional food products to other countries. The reason why the women's cooperative has not been launched is due to the previously mentioned restrictive labor law implemented by the Lebanese government on Syrian refugees and the difficulty to obtain work permits. Head of the Social Movement Center in Saida sadly states that their trial in forming an internal system which guarantees the right to work for Syrian refugees has failed because of such governmental restrictions. In fact, it has been too difficult to obtain legal approval to continue working in this system, even though this system does not include unregistered refugees. Moreover, after the former Mayor has left the municipality, the new appointed Mayor and municipal council have refused to cooperate in continuing this project and attract funding, hence the Social Movement Center has neither been able to continue with this program, nor achieve the rest of its desired aims.

Another limitation is the restricted number of chosen participants. Due to the inability of enrolling unregistered Syrian refugees, the program could not reach out to a bigger number of displaced Syrians. Yet, it still has been able to achieve good results in the

small village range as well as spread its positive outcome to the general host society through the exhibitions made in several Lebanese areas.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The cultural heritage of Syria, a country that witnessed some of the oldest civilizations and greatest empires, has been put at very high risk due to armed conflict which has started at the beginning of 2011. What made matters worse is forced displacement causing millions of Syrians to flee from their homeland seeking refuge and shelter in neighboring countries such as Lebanon. Since then, Syrian cultural heritage has witnessed continuous deterioration, to an extent it has become threatened by complete demolition.

This has moved international response into action after recognizing the importance of preserving intangible cultural heritage in displacement. One of the effective responses has been the integration program implemented in Old Abra, in which regardless of some of its limitations, this program has facilitated the verification of several theoretical and conceptual findings deduced in this thesis.

5.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Findings

Throughout their journey of resettlement, Syrian refugees have moved through several transitional phases defined by their altering relationship with their intangible cultural heritage. At the beginning of their displacement, Syrian refugees have suffered many hardships accompanied with their dislocation. Hence during this initial phase, they have witnessed a lack of heritage. That is to say, instead of thinking of what they have left

from their culture back home, they have become preoccupied with overcoming obstacles of displacement, specifically illegal migration in the case of entry to Lebanon.

In addition to that, previous discussion of data analysis has shown that Syrian refugees have experienced marginalization, violence, and abuse since they have first stepped foot in Old Abra. Thus, in this phase of the evolving relationship between Syrian refugees and their intangible cultural heritage, Syrian refugees' longing for old traditions and cultural habits have reawakened in a small Lebanese village of Christian majority where it has become difficult to adapt with its new social and cultural norms.

Consequently, this has urged Syrian refugees to redefine and reinstate their cultural heritage in the host society of Old Abra. Through the integration program, Syrian women involved in the cooking experience have been able to develop a re-acknowledged presence of their cultural heritage through introducing Syrian traditional food to the Lebanese society, and eventually gaining recognition to their cultural heritage. As a result, this integration experience has encouraged the creation of a resilient Syrian intangible cultural heritage in the context of the Lebanese host society. In fact, this evolving relationship between Syrian refugees and their intangible cultural heritage embodied in their refugee experience in Lebanon has justified the binomial absence-presence theory in its evolving emotional three-stage rupture between displaced individuals and their intangible cultural heritage in the context of displacement.

Although at some point discussions have highlighted the realistic and symbolic threats defined by the Intergroup Threat Theory through giving live examples of competition between locals and refugees for scarce resources (electricity, water, employment, and

other public services…), the integration program have confirmed that through providing a job opportunity for Syrian and Lebanese women to work together in selling their traditional food products, such competition between the in-group and outgroup has actually diminished. Moreover, this lingering fear of losing Lebanese customs and traditions because of this interaction with refugees has also reduced after locals and refugees have realized their shared needs and accepted their differences.

Furthermore, since perception of the other changes according to warmth and competence – as stated in the Stereotype Content Model, then this integration program have facilitated access to resources and encouraged warmth between Syrian refugees and Lebanese locals. As a matter of fact, this warmth has developed through women working together on producing traditional dishes and sharing their skills, needs, and experiences. This has eventually created an embracing environment to an extent that they have become friends indeed. As a result, Lebanese locals have changed their view in which they perceive the behavior of Syrian refugees. Emerging sincerity and trustworthiness between members of the integration program have increased the level of Syrian refugees' morality as perceived by the Lebanese host society. Thus, they have no longer been considered as a threat and are given the acknowledgement they need for their intangible cultural heritage.

In conclusion, research results show that the integration program, through reinforcing interaction between refugees and locals, has encouraged an inhabitance of a hybrid cultural identity. In other words, such integration has facilitated the interaction of refugees' identities with the different social and cultural norms of the Lebanese host society, hence leading to reconstruction of their cultural identity. Thus, being introduced to Lebanese traditional cuisine and working along with Lebanese women in producing

traditional food, Syrian women of the integration program have constructed a hybrid cultural identity, resilient to new and altering surroundings embodied in the Lebanese host society. As a matter of fact, such theoretical finding verifies the notion of moving identities previously discussed in literature review. In view of that, it is safe to say that Syrian displacement in Lebanon has imposed a shift in their cultural identity, forcing a recreation of a new Syrian cultural identity represented in their refugee experience in the context of the Lebanese host society.

5.2 Limitations

Although international response has rushed into action in order to preserve intangible cultural heritage, its attempts have remained questionable in their efficacy on real grounds. This is obvious in this dissertation's case study where analyzed data have shown some limitations in the integration program. Nevertheless, other vital limitations can be deduced regarding international response. In the critical case of Syrian displacement in Lebanon and the international response regarding this matter, it is justified to confirm the limited effectiveness of implemented programs on Syrian refugees in Lebanon as well as the host society.

In the light of the Lebanese government's rejection of the international refugee law regime, UNHCR remains unable to provide international protection needed for refugees in the host society. Ironically, the Lebanese state has always depended on UNHCR's assistance for finding solutions regarding refugees. Through taking a neutral decision on the subject of Syrian armed conflict, the Lebanese state has thrown all responsibility on international organizations, such as UNHCR, to deal with refugees resettling in the country. Oppositely, the state's implementation of restrictive regulations on Syrian

refugees and its no-camp policy seeking to decrease Syrian influx to Lebanon has only limited UNHCR's application of its international protection mandate. Moreover, the 2003 agreement between UNHCR and Lebanon's General Security Office, regarding registering asylum seekers and determining refugee status, has restricted UNHCR's authority in forcing host countries to accept refugees. Congruently, Lebanon insists on being classified as a non-asylum country. Thus, UNHCR has remained powerless towards the Lebanese state and lacking required capabilities to apply an effective plan (Janmyr 2018).

Only after three years of the Syrian conflict and continuous inflow of Syrian refugees to Lebanon, have the Lebanese government taken prime action. However, this miscarried plan to control Syrian influx and encourage refugees' return to their homeland has catastrophically exposed Syrian refugees to high insecurity and extreme marginalization. In other words, the Lebanese government's response has come as a knockout, when the situation has only required some constructive adjustments (Janmyr 2016, cited in Janmyr 2018). This destructive response comes as a result to the Lebanese government's stubborn denial of identifying displaced Syrians as "refugees." Its persistent decision in considering them as visitors who will soon return to their homeland has prevented their formal declaration and recognition as refugees, which is essential to their protection and status (Janmyr 2018). In view of that, any international attempt to protect those Syrian refugees cannot succeed without Lebanese government's cooperation in realizing an effective framework for refugee protection.

This assertion is also true when it comes to international organizations' role in funding programs that provide help to Syrian refugees as well as host communities on different

levels. In view of all the poor living conditions, which have often become life-threatening to Syrian refugees due to displacement, a humanitarian and developmental initiative known as the 3RP (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan) has come to light in response to the Syrian crisis. This plan and two-sided humanitarian programs in collaboration with the Lebanese government, UN, and other national and international NGOs have donated millions of dollars to poor Lebanese locals and returnees as well as Syrian and Palestinian refugees from Syria and Lebanon in attempt to reduce some of the burdens resulting from dramatic economic and social conditions in Lebanon. The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), which is part of the bigger 3RP, is a focused plan initiated by the Lebanese government and the UN in 2015 that has come as a response to the Syrian influx to Lebanon. This initiative's utmost purpose is to restore stability to a country that has long suffered very weak foundations, through providing protection and humanitarian assistance to highly vulnerable Syrian refugees and improving the quality of public services (United Nations 2014, cited in Cherri, Gonzalez, and Delgado 2016).

Former Mayor of Abra avows that such programs along with thousands of other national and international responses to the Syrian influx in Lebanon have all failed to achieve effective results on real grounds. Research agrees on this point and emphasizes on the fact that countless needs of Syrian refugees and Lebanese locals cannot be met by underfunded and unsustainable programs implemented in Lebanon (Cherri, Gonzalez, and Delgado 2016). Add to this, former Mayor of Abra states, 'Nothing can be done without funding, yet this financial support is a drop in the sea in a weak country that has long been drowning in its debts due to deep-rooted administrative and governmental corruption.' In other words, tangible results of implemented programs remain narrow

since they mainly focus on specified areas in Lebanon with high number of Syrian refugees, where serious needs of other areas in the host community remain unmet.

Therefore, no matter how much money is raised to support humanitarian and development programs aiming to reduce some of the aggravating hardships Syrian refugees and Lebanese locals are suffering from, this cannot replace the state's role in finding solutions. However, the state is bankrupt and unable to take any decisive action to confront the large waves of Syrian influx to its land. Thus, even minimum rights of citizens and Syrian refugees resettling in Lebanon remain unprotected.

What make matters worse are the political circumstances that do not allow Syrian refugees to return to their homeland, especially those against the Assad regime. Former Mayor confesses that if there has been any room for negotiation, it would have been possible for Syrians to return to their country, where some areas are no longer at risk. One of the resolutions could have been habilitating these cities for the safe return of Syrian refugees to their homeland. Nevertheless, this remains impossible in the light of the ruling regime which prevents anti-regime refugees to return safely to Syrian land. Although this dissertation does not aim to discuss this political matter in depth, it has been necessary to briefly address it in order to conclude problems arising as a consequence of this issue. Yet, if discussed on a humanitarian level, former Mayor of Abra confirms that Syrian refugees return is not an unjust or inhumane act since it could have been beneficial for both Lebanese locals and Syrian refugees as well. Suggesting return as a resolution can in fact reduce the burdens put on both citizens and refugees residing in Lebanon. On top of that, it all goes back to the state's failure in decision-

making, sectarian divisions, political interests, and external intervention which all avert finding a quick and active solution to the Syrian influx crisis in Lebanon.

Besides throwing all the responsibility on international community to find solutions for the Syrian influx crisis in Lebanon, and leave the needs of locals and refugees in the hands of national and international organizations, another problem that aggravates poor living conditions is lack of censorship over implemented projects. Former Mayor of Abra admits that some entities' objectives are suspicious and questionable. In other words, they seek to achieve personal desires instead of focusing on local development of areas affected by high concentration of Syrian refugees. These desires are mainly political, in which they try to attain by selecting targeted groups in certain Lebanese areas who support their political and sectarian orientations. Hence, targeted locals and refugees enrolled in these programs are taken advantage of in order to achieve the entities' desired goals without any actual help being provided to them. Even when projects obtain international funding, money raised to help locals and refugees are so often stolen by unprofessional or illegitimate NGOs which usually have commercial purposes; thus, money is wasted without any real action or effective work being observed in targeted areas.

Former Mayor of Abra describes such action as inhumane, illegal, manipulating, and unjust to Lebanese locals and Syrian refugees who become vulnerable victims of these entities and organizations.

As such, the Lebanese local community remains weak, lacking required resources and capabilities in facing intense difficulties arising from the massive Syrian influx to

Lebanon. Most importantly, and what really matters in this study is the preservation of Syrian intangible cultural heritage in displacement, which in turn is subjected to demolition due to continuous failure of such manipulating projects in achieving community development and meeting shared needs of refugee and local populations in Lebanon. That is to say that those exploitive programs which use vulnerable refugees as means of beneficence for personal interests only harm Syrian intangible cultural heritage. Head of the Social Movement Center in Saida explains that the true concept of Syrian intangible cultural heritage is hindered through using refugees' cultural artistic expressions as means to reflect their vulnerability, oppression, and weakness, rather than showing resilience, revolution, and power. Hence, such reflected characteristics destroy Syrian cultural identity which refugees strive to reinstate in the context of displacement.

5.3 Mayors' Role in Implementing Progressive Policies

Regarding Syrian refugees' presence in Lebanon, research has shown that individual mayors have a crucial role in creating and implementing national and international policies. Mayors' policy practice from refugee-status determination to the right to work can indeed vary from the common national policy framework (Milner 2009; Schmidt 2014; Orchard 2014, cited in Betts, Memisoglu, and Ali 2021). Accordingly, Syrian refugees' fate has become in the hands of mayors and municipal authorities through their adoption either of more "progressive" or "more restrictive" policies than those of national entities. 'While this may be influenced by their individual's personality and values, a key factor in shaping the relative influence of individual mayors appears to be their transnational networks (Betts, Memisoglu, and Ali 2021: 7). In this case, former Mayor of Abra along with Head of the Social Movement Center in Saida has used transnational

networks to get funding from FDA in order to implement their integrational program. On top of that, even though the majority of Old Abra's local population is that of Christian religion, former Mayor of Abra has overcome this obstacle in order to achieve a noble purpose which is supporting Syrian refugees through acknowledging their intangible cultural heritage and recognizing its essential role in reinstating their cultural identity in the Lebanese host society.

Not until recently has the significance of municipalities been recognized. International agencies have used to directly deal with Syrian refugees earlier, neglecting or actually sidestepping the Lebanese government. However, they have lately started cooperating with municipal authorities in implementing projects. After that, the Lebanese government has dumped the responsibility for Syrian refugees in the lap of municipalities. Seeking to 'control the security of the displacement,' the 2014 October policy ordered municipalities to monitor Syrian refugees' registration, using municipal police as means of tracking refugee movement and maintaining security. Tracking municipal authorities' legal implementation of policies, Ministry of Interior and Muncipalities (MOIM) have supported municipalities to take the lead in controlling security (Mourad 2017, cited Betts, Memisoglu, and Ali 2021).

Nevertheless, tending to justify the significant role of individual mayors, former Mayor of Abra have used his personal connections to approach national and international organizations – in this case the Social Movement Center and FDA – in order to support Syrian refugees and Lebanese locals in Old Abra. Although it has been necessary to hire municipal police to reduce violence and harassment against Syrian refugees in Old Abra at a certain period of time, yet former Mayor of Abra has refused to continue applying

restrictive policies on Syrian refugees, and rather has preferred to find an integration solution to reduce hostility between locals and refugees residing in this old village. Thus, it is safe to say that the former Mayor of Abra being in power has returned benefit to locals and refugees residing in Old Abra, through building municipal-level data relating Syrian refugees and attracting national and international communities' attention to this small village. Such transnational recognition has opened path for the Muncipality of Abra to obtain more resources and win over transnational support of "progressive" refugee policies.

Likewise, through overcoming restrictive central government policies, former Mayor of Abra in collaboration with Head of Social Movement Center in Saida has established an internal system giving right to work for Syrian women enrolled in the integration program, offering a promising opportunity for these women to find a decent job and help satisfy their household needs. Although this internal system has had certain limitations due to the restrictive regulations implemented by the Lebanese government, yet it has at least opened doors for registered Syrian refugees to wider job opportunities away from narrow work domains that have created huge competition between Lebanese and Syrian labor workers.

As a matter of fact, individual mayors can overcome restrictive policies of the central government by putting their social capital and leadership in good use. In that sense, former Mayor of Abra has been able to gain the locals and refugees' trust through putting all his efforts in hosting an integration program that has indeed helped both communities defeat pre-existing hostility and fear of the other that has been particularly lingering in

the Lebanese mind-set for a very long time – more precisely since the Syrian oppression in Lebanon.

5.4 Recommendations

Since the continuous dilemma of the Syrian influx crisis to Lebanon has become an arguable topic for researchers and scholars, this dissertation has gone into an intensive search for applicable suggestions. For that specific reason, the research has obtained reliable answers from the former Mayor of Abra since he has been in the core of accountability and holding responsibility of finding relevant solutions for this ongoing phenomenon.

Former mayor of Abra believes that in order to reduce pressures of the massive Syrian influx, it is firstly crucial to start dealing with high concentration levels of refugees in different areas in Lebanon. Accordingly, a logical and valid suggestion can be redistribution of Syrian refugees among Lebanese areas. Syrian refugees can be divided according to capacity in which each area can absorb a certain number of refugees. This can be rendered successfully through measuring access to public services as well as housing capabilities. Another tested aspect can be the need for Syrian labor workers in some areas, such as the Bekaa valley where many Lebanese employers search for proficient workhands for their factories. Such jobs require certain skills that most Syrians acquire due to their familiarity with the nature of such jobs. Hence, this does not only reduce burdens on the Lebanese government, Lebanese citizens, and Syrian refugees all together, but also offers a decent living for many vulnerable Syrian refugees who suffer harsh living conditions as well as facilitates equal access to services among locals and refugees in all areas of Lebanon. Such recommendation can be easily applied through

filling vacancies that have lost necessary labor, thus implementing a demographic reorganization technique of refugee populations in local areas.

On the other hand, for national and international projects to render successful outcomes, municipal authorities along with governmental institutions should continue hosting such programs through attracting useful resources and supporting progressive policy implementation. This will only return benefit to local and refugee communities through continuous funding of such projects. However, it is essential to monitor legal application and track the path of raised money, in order to prohibit any stealing attempt or manipulation of vulnerable refugees who can be highly subjected to exploitation. Therefore, this requires appointing a supervisory body that censors workflow of entities. In view of that, former Mayor of Abra stresses on municipalities' responsibility in measuring the nature of needed programs; meaning that help should be provided according to Syrian refugees' need for educational, psychological, cultural, social, or healthcare programs.

Redirecting discussion to the dissertation's main focus, it is mostly crucial to realize the effects of such applicable suggestions on Syrian refugees and their reinstatement of their cultural identity. All previous arguments and suggestions are relatable to preservation of Syrian intangible cultural heritage in the extent of realizing the importance of progressive policy implementation in sustaining refugees' resilience in the context of displacement. Strictly speaking, municipalities' role in using transnational networks, which in return maintain resources needed for attracting more national and international projects similar to the integrational program hosted by the Municipality of Abra, can be an actual suggestion in itself to preserving intangible cultural heritage and reinstating cultural

identity. In other words, if the importance of integration between locals and refugees is realized as essential means to reduce hostility and fear by municipal authorities and individual mayors, this can be a factual recommendation to overcome restrictive governmental policies that obliterate Syrian refugees' resilience and revolution against displacement. This can be applied by focusing on hosting more similar programs and sustaining their continuity through maintaining constant funding of these programs.

5.5 Overall Conclusion

To sum it all up, this thesis has presented an overview of literary arguments concerning preservation of intangible cultural heritage and its relation to reinstatement of cultural identity in the context of displacement. Through choosing Syrian refugees in Lebanon as a case study, and significantly studying the critical setting of Old Abra, this dissertation has been able to provide a new insight of preservation of intangible cultural heritage in displacement represented by the significant Syrian refugee experience, and its relevant effect on reinstatement of Syrian cultural identity.

Results and findings of analyzed data have justified the importance of integration in preserving intangible cultural heritage and reinstating cultural identity in the displacement discourse. Delving into the nature of the setting being studied, this research has shown the significant role of integration in reinforcing recognition and acknowledgement of intangible cultural heritage by the host society, thus creating a resilient type of intangible cultural heritage that encourages social and cultural cohesion between local and refugee communities, and in turn achieves refugees' reinstatement of their cultural identity. As such, this thesis has proven that only through recognizing the importance of intangible cultural heritage in displacement can refugees adjust with if not

conquer the struggles and aggravating hardships of displacement, and thus, build a reinstated cultural identity represented by a resilient cultural heritage.

On another hand, it is vital to acknowledge some of the limitations of this dissertation which can be clearly recognized through its chosen strategy and case study. Precisely speaking, adopting a qualitative research strategy and choosing Old Abra as a setting for studying intangible cultural heritage of Syrian refugees in Lebanon can be restrictive to some extent, in which results and findings cannot be generalized. However, this chosen methodology has enabled deducing important theoretical and conceptual findings in which previously discussed theories and conceptual meanings are well-justified in collected data analysis. To add on this, this thesis has also added on missing literature through providing recommendations which can in fact open doors for further studies to argue their efficacy in overcoming restrictive policy implementation and measure to what extent these suggestions can be effective in resolving Syrian influx crisis to Lebanon, as well as reinforcing a resilient intangible cultural heritage and in turn reinstating cultural identity.

As a matter of fact, this study concludes that although Syrian influx crisis in Lebanon can truly be problematic, recognition of the importance of actual implementation of progressive policies can indeed help decrease pressures and burdens imposed on refugees and locals. Since many political and administrative struggles prohibit serious treatment of the Syrian influx crisis by the Lebanese government, the most appropriate and applicable solution remains in the hands of municipal authorities and mayors to bear responsibility in order to reduce the burdens. On top of it all, awareness is also needed among national and international communities to continue supporting locals and refugees in Lebanon

through effective development programs that equally serve Syrian refugees and the Lebanese host society.

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