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A Micro-Perspective on Governance in Informal Tented Settlements
Two Case Studies of Syrian Refugee Communities in Lebanon

By

Katrin Hermanek

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A Micro-Perspective on Governance in Informal Tented Settlements Two Case Studies of Syrian Refugee Communities in Lebanon

Katrin Hermanek

ABSTRACT

A decade after the outbreak of the Syrian war, anyone visiting the Beqaa, or Northern Lebanon can't get around without taking note of the myriad white Informal Tented Settlements (ITSs), providing a "home" to Syrian refugees. While a lot of literature has been dedicated to formal refugee camps run by UNHCR, studies on ITSs are relatively scarce. Existing literature describes them as precarious spaces, run by an informal leader called Shawish, and highly dependent on the informal labor market. This thesis based on two individual cases, considers governance in ITSs in Lebanon from a micro-perspective. It aims to understand the complex ways in which Syrian refugee communities negotiate the spaces in two ITSs: one governed by a male Shawish and the other by a female Shawisha. This thesis observes emerging governance structures, characterized by complex processes, and reveals the extent of long-term sustainability of these settlements. The results suggest ways in which the empowerment of the Shawish has disempowering effects on the settlement's communities. They furthermore show, how the Shawish takes over the role of a gatekeeper who reinforces boundaries between the inside and the outside of the settlement. Moreover, this study analyzes the position of the Shawish through the lens of ethnic identifications and gender, and it tracks the evolution of his role from being a mediator in agriculture between migrant workers and landowners to an informal leader of an entire refugee community.

Keywords: Syrian Refugees, Lebanon, Informal Tented Settlements, Shawish, Refugee Governance, Micro-Level, Humanitarian Aid.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FPM	Free Patriotic Movement
GDGS	General Directorate of General Security Lebanon
GoL	Government of Lebanon
HDC	Higher Defense Council
ILO	International Labor Organization
ITS/s	Informal Tented Settlement/s
LBP	Lebanese Pound
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO/s	Non-Governmental Organization/s
SDG/s	Sustainable Development Goal/s
SMEB	Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WFP	World Food Program
3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan

Chapter One

Introduction: A Micro-Level Perspective on Governance in Informal Tented Settlements in Lebanon

Refugee camps have been the subject of many studies over the years, as societies all over the world are confronted with forced displacement. From Agamben (1998), who describes camps as "sites of exception" reduced to "bare life" to more recent scholarship, that considers camps as complex spaces, very individual in their organization, but comparable due to their containment purpose (McConnachie 2016). Furthermore, recent scholarship has increasingly acknowledged how protracted refugee situations prolong temporary shelter to permanent living conditions (Ilcan and Rygiel 2015). Over the years refugee camps have *de facto* become an additional durable solution as return is not an option for many refugees, local integration is often not accepted by governments and societies, and international resettlement places are scarce (Chimni, 2004). This shift in the conceptualization of the refugee camp is accompanied by trends in the humanitarian response, that begin to consider camps as communities made up of "responsible and resilient subjects" taking control over their lives in times of crisis. New approaches of "resiliency humanitarianism" and "community governance" consider the agency of refugees and include their often long-term and protracted refugee situations (Ilcan and Rygiel 2015).

Eleven years after the outbreak of the war in Syria, it is still considered the world's largest displacement crisis that expelled 13 million Syrian nationals from their homes, 5.6 million of which are hosted internationally (UNHCR 2022a). It has been estimated that roughly 1.5 million[1] Syrian nationals are residing in Lebanon

[1] These numbers are produced by UNHCR and there is no data to compare and verify them. The exact number of Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon is unknown as there is no independent institution producing data, thus all the numbers in this thesis should be understood under this pretense. Due to political tensions and disagreement on the way in which the refugee crisis should be handled numbers are being used for political interests: Stel (2020, 72) shows how officials use numbers lower than 1 million when addressing domestic media, while at the same time they claim that there are 1.5 million Syrian refugees in the country in meetings with the humanitarian community.

(UNHCR 2022b) of which as of January 2022, 839'788[2] are registered with UNHCR (Operational Data Portal 2022). These numbers, added to the already residing Palestinian and Iraqi refugees, make Lebanon the country with the highest number of refugees per capita worldwide (UNHCR 2022b).

The overwhelming self-settlement of Syrian refugees in Lebanon created among other forms of shelter, camps that have been termed Informal Tented Settlements (ITSs). "Informal" because they are illegal, as the Lebanese state prohibits the creation of camps. "Tented" as they are officially considered non-permanent shelter on agricultural lands, made out of timber sheets and wood. And the term "settlement" has inherent characteristics of grassroot practices, as they are organized and run by the refugees themselves (Huq and Miraftab 2020). ITSs thus stand in contrast to official camps, that have been understood as spatial practices mostly run by UNHCR or NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). In this study, I consider ITSs in Lebanon as an individual case of camps, that cannot be understood from theories developed based on official refugee camps. Moreover, compared to the number of publications on refugee camps, organized and run by UNHCR the literature on ITSs is relatively scarce, reflecting a need for further studies.

Originally understood as temporary shelter, ITSs in Lebanon have become permanent through the protracted situation of Syrian refugees in the country, and the percentage of Syrian refugees living in ITSs is even on the rise. Recently, ITSs have been described as spaces that reflect a "sense of ownership and permanence" in their "unplanned nature" (Moawad and Andres 2021, 5), as they are slowly becoming "concealed and self-governed" spaces "beyond the government's control" (Kikano, Fauveaud and Lizarralde 2021, 422). Recent research has focused on how the absence of state management towards the influx of Syrian refugees in Lebanon created a chaotic landscape, where refugees were put in a particularly vulnerable

[2] Number has to be understood under the pretense that UNHCR was forced to suspend registration in January 2015 and that not all refugees that entered before that year registered with UNHCR; since January 2015 only refugees who were already registered had the option to renew their registrations.

position.[3] The current state of knowledge describes the ITS as located in a "grey space of legitimacy" (Sanyal 2017, 118), run by an informal leader called Shawish, and highly dependent on the informal labor market. Instead of looking at the imposed ambiguous governance from the state, the focus of this study is on refugees' agency to organize themselves over the past decade in this highly informal space. It analyzes how the refugee community in two ITSs in Lebanon, one run by a male Shawish and the other run by a female Shawisha, negotiate the space and create complex governance structures. "Governance" is understood as decision-making processes, developed over the years, encompassing participation and inclusion within the settlement and the local community; transparency and accountability of informal leadership; the production of safe spaces; and access to information of residents in ITSs in Lebanon (Monkelbaan 2019). Furthermore, as it directly compares an ITS run by a Shawish with one that is run by a Shawisha, this thesis analyzes how and to what extent governance processes are gendered in different ways.

While an increasing number of studies (Ansems de Vries 2016; Bochmann 2019; Yon and Kim 2019) consider micro-level governance structures in camps worldwide, ITSs in Lebanon have so far not been studied. I contend here that these spaces are individual in their micro-governance structures and can provide unprecedented insights into the pressing issues of our time. In order to find solutions for sustainable and long-term refugee governance, as identified by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) it is essential to understand how refugees in protracted situations negotiate their space.

This research expands the knowledge on the consequences of the Lebanese approach to the Syrian refugee crisis. Furthermore, it contributes to the literature on refugees' agency and distances itself from the current victimizing narrative especially on

[3] Janmyr (2016) discusses how receiving a legal status in Lebanon is made very difficult by the state and puts the refugees in a vulnerable situation. Stel (2020) elaborates on governance of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and shows how the absence of state management shifts responsibilities to more local actors and makes the refugees vulnerable to arbitrary behavior of state actors. Turner (2015) shows how the reaction of the state enables exploitation of Syrian labor and BouChabke and Haddad (2021) explain how the reaction of the Lebanese state to the influx of refugees even corrupted the humanitarian sector.

refugee women (Krause 2014, Johnson 2011).[4] Instead of considering refugee women as passive subjects (Olivius 2016), their active role in the community is described, by focusing on the empowered role of a female Shawisha. Moreover, the research reveals micro-level structures whose understanding are considered essential for successful responses by involved stakeholders, confronted with settlements that provide long-term shelter for refugees in protracted situations.

This thesis is structured as follows: First, I demonstrate how the Lebanese context and the existing legal frameworks in combination with the historical circular labor migration from Syria to Lebanon, set the stage for the creation of ITSs. Then, I discuss the extant literature on informal governance structures in ITSs, and I outline the methodology for this research. This is followed by an analysis of the observed processes in the two settlements under study, which will lead to a discussion of the implications of these processes, using different theories of space. Lastly, based on the findings I propose recommendations for actors that work in the field, and I conclude with final remarks.

[4] Johnson (2011) criticizes how the images of children and women are used to collect donations to support refugees. This assumes the woman as a victim who has to be supported, while many male refugees are understood as a threat. Krause (2014) calls for a move away from the victimizing discourse of refugee women and states the importance of understanding the agency of refugee women.

Chapter Two

Context: Setting the Stage for the Creation of ITSs in Lebanon

A number of factors contributed to the creation and the continued existence of ITSs in Lebanon. In this chapter I contend that the Lebanese response to the Syrian refugee crisis, as well as the economic relationship between the two countries were essential factors that set the stage for the establishment of ITSs.

In the following the Lebanese response to the Syrian refugee crisis and the legal frameworks that regulate refugeehood in Lebanon, as well as some facts and figures to contextualize the situation of Syrian refugees are reviewed. Then, I discuss the circular labor migration between the two countries. Finally, I elaborate on how these two factors set the stage for the creation of ITSs in Lebanon, and on the current situation inside the settlements in light of recent developments in the country.

2.1 The Lebanese Response to Syrian Refugees

From the outset of the war in Syria and the first arrival of refugees, the overall response of the Government of Lebanon (GoL) was characterized by a "set of no's": no refugees, no camps, no representation (Nassar and Stel 2019, 47). To this day, the GoL has refused to recognize Syrian nationals in the country as refugees, and it continues to refer to them as the "displaced" population. Then to refer to the Syrian nationals in the country as refugees would mean to acknowledge that they have a certain set of rights (Janmyr 2016). Furthermore, the GoL has officially rejected the creation of formal refugee camps based on the historical precedent the country has had with Palestinian refugees. And last, the country has resisted any official representation of Syrian refugees (Nassar and Stel 2019). This approach created among other forms of shelter, a multitude of ITSs scattered over the whole country, providing a place to stay for a vulnerable refugee community, lacking legal status and without any official representation (Stel 2020).

The overall policy of the GoL has been termed by Lama Mourad (2017) as one of "standoffishness" where the state doesn't inhabit a clear position and leaves space for the arbitrary treatment of the refugees. Nora Stel (2020) elaborated on this approach of "institutional ambiguity" where a knowingly non-transparent treatment of the refugees has put them in a precarious legal situation. This has clearly imposed different forms of informality, producing politically desirable vulnerability of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (Stel 2020). The GoL still manages refugees through only temporary responses and to this day doesn't include any integration strategies in its response (Fakhoury 2017).

2.1.1 Legal Frameworks Regulating Refugeehood in Lebanon

Lebanon is neither a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention nor of its 1967 protocol and initially there was no official response of the GoL to the influx of Syrian refugees (Janmyr 2017). Still, Lebanon has generally adhered to the non-refoulement clause (Fakhoury 2017). Over the years multiple attempts from different institutions were made to regulate the presence of Syrian refugees in the country. This created a complex and highly fragmented landscape of legal frameworks that regulate refugeehood in Lebanon.

Until late 2014 a 50-year-old law[5] regulated the stay of Syrian refugees in the country, due to a lack of agreement for any alternative legal frameworks (Stel 2020).[6] This "Law on Entry and Stay of Foreigners" mentions the granting of a pass to refugees to enable them to reach the desired third country (Article 19). It furthermore gives the opportunity to apply for political asylum in Article 26 (ILO 1962). Specifically applicable to Syrian nationals crossing the border to Lebanon, the 1993 Syrian Lebanese agreement for "Economic and Social Cooperation and Coordination" applied. It includes freedom of movement for Syrian nationals and Lebanese across the border to facilitate economic cooperation in both countries. Under this agreement Syrian nationals that entered Lebanon were granted a six-month residence permit, upon presentation of an identity document, which was

[5] Law on Entry and Stay of Foreigners 1962.
[6] Lebanese political parties are divided over the Syrian question; March 8 (pro-Syrian): Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), Amal, Hezbollah; March 14 (anti-Syrian) Future Movement (FM), Lebanese Forces (LF), Kataeb; this made agreement on any refugee response difficult (Fakhoury 2017).

renewable for the same period (Syrian Lebanese Higher Council 1993). Large groups of people were allowed to cross the border and Lebanon was praised for its open-door policy by the international community (Kikano, Fayazi and Lizarralde 2018). By the end of September 2014, 1'163'709 Syrian nationals had crossed the border since the outbreak of the war and were registered with UNHCR in Lebanon (Operational Data Portal 2014). However, the initial response of the GoL to the influx of Syrian refugees has been described in the academic field as a "policy of no policy" (El Mufti 2014) where the state remained largely absent and responsibility for refugees was shifted to UNHCR and NGOs.

The Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) is the Lebanese chapter of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) led by UNHCR and UNDP, developed to manage the Syrian refugee crisis in its neighboring countries. The LCRP is a joint initiative between the GoL, more specifically the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and a number of international and national partners.[7] It ensures humanitarian support for Syrian refugees, as well as the vulnerable Lebanese population through service provision using national systems and reinforces Lebanon's economic, social, and environmental stability. While in the year 2021 still 54% of LCRP operations were funded, in 2021 this number dropped drastically to 43% (UNHCR and GoL 2022). This is clearly visible on the ground, as financial support for refugees is dwindling and the situation of Syrian refugees is becoming more precarious. The role of UNHCR in the country is generally regulated by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreed upon by the General Directorate of General Security Lebanon (GDGS) and UNHCR in 2003 which, despite multiple attempts was not updated since (Janmyr 2018). It clearly states that "Lebanon is not a country of asylum" and an asylum seeker is considered someone who seeks asylum in a third country (Frontiers Center 2013). Even though, the 2003 MoU allowed UNHCR to register refugees in Lebanon, local authorities have refused to give any meaning to these registrations, especially since the MoU was never actually signed by the GoL (Janmyr 2016).

[7] The first edition of the LCRP targeted the years 2015-2016, it was renewed for the 2017-2021 period and currently the 2022-2023 LCRP is in process.

As Syrian refugees continued to cross into Lebanon and the number of UNHCR registrations reached a million, the government reacted in late 2014. The GDGS published a "Policy Paper on Syrian refugee displacement" that states three main goals concerning Syrian refugees in the country. First, to reduce their number; second to ensure security by increasing regulations; and third to reduce the burden on the Lebanese infrastructure (GDGS 2014). In practice, this policy paper meant limited access of refugees to the labor market and the renewal of the refugee status became almost impossible. Syrian refugees in Lebanon were now only allowed to work in three sectors, which are agriculture, construction and environment (Janmyr 2016). Recent studies (Cassani 2021; Sanyal 2017; Sajadian 2020; Turner 2015) in the academic field give detailed descriptions of the ways in which the policy paper was part of how the state created conditions that facilitate the exploitation of Syrian labor.[8]

In the beginning of the following year and as part of the policy paper, new visa categories[9] were introduced under which Syrian refugees were processed (GDGS 2015). The new visa categories do not include an option for refugees fleeing conflict, violence or persecution. The most viable way to receive legal residency is through the sponsorship system, where a Lebanese citizen takes responsibility for the refugee and agrees to be his or her sponsor. This option clearly increased the risk of exploitation for Syrian refugees since they are completely depending on the goodwill of their Lebanese sponsor. The new visa categories further discriminated between Syrian nationals seeking refuge depending on their financial situation. To renew an existing residency costs 200 USD every six months, in addition to requested documents,[10] which are almost impossible to get (Janmyr 2016). Only in the beginning of 2017 did the GDGS lift renewal and overstay fees for refugees who entered Lebanon before January 2015, and who were previously registered with UNHCR, unless they had already renewed their residency under one of the visa categories (GDGS 2017).

[8] An example of this is the sponsorship system, many Lebanese sponsors exploit the labor of Syrian refugees in exchange for legal residency.
[9] The new visa categories put in place in January 2015 are tourism, business, landlords, tenants, students, transit to third country, displaced, medical treatment, embassy appointment and sponsorship.
[10] Documents include housing commitment; certified attestation from a mukhtar that the landlord owns the property; valid ID or passport; proof of entry to Lebanon (Janmyr 2016).

The new regulations of 2015 resulted in many irregular border crossings of incoming refugees to Lebanon and many of the present Syrian refugees were pushed into illegality.[11] Shortly after, the UNHCR was forced by the GoL to suspend the registration of Syrian refugees in the country. Thus, there is a clear differentiation between refugees who entered Lebanon before January 2015 and those who entered it after that date. Anyone who entered and registered with UNHCR before 2015 can now renew their stay on the basis of that registration, or under one of the visa categories, while refugees who entered after January 2015 do not have the option to register with UNHCR. These events had an enormous impact on the refugee community and as Janmyr (2016) states, it left Syrian refugees in the country with essentially two viable options, either to accept mistreatment or leave. As of 2021, only 16% of all Syrian refugees in Lebanon above 15 years of age hold legal residency permits (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP 2021). Furthermore are 70% of Syrian children who were born in Lebanon not registered anywhere, which renders them stateless (Kiwan 2021).

The illegal presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon makes them vulnerable to arrests and more recently to repatriation to Syria. Even though Lebanon is indirectly bound by the non-refoulement principle, the key political actors agree that Syrian refugees should return from Lebanon to their home country (Fakhoury 2021). This position is clearly reflected in the decision of the Higher Defense Council (HDC) in May 2019, that requires the arrest and deportation of any Syrian who entered the country illegally after April 2019 (Amnesty International 2019). The GoL created channels to facilitate the voluntary return of Syrian refugees, and political parties that are closely connected to the Syrian regime provided additional routes for Syrian refugees to return (Fakhoury 2021).[12] Over the past years, thousands have returned, even though many human rights groups have determined it unsafe for Syrian refugees to go back to their home country (EuroMed 2021). A recent report by Human Rights Watch

[11] On 8 February 2018 the State Council in Lebanon annulled the new entry visas, declaring these conditions illegal because they were just issued by the GDGS (Saghieh 2018) but to this day neither the government nor the GDGS have implemented this ruling.
[12] Mainly Hezbollah and FPM.

(HRW) shows Human Rights abuses and detention by the Syrian government and affiliated militias faced by the returnees (HRW 2021).[13]

This highly fragmented legal framework, the absence of inclusive policies and the relatively passive role of the central government in the refugee response, shifted many responsibilities to municipalities. The decentralizing strategy has left municipalities unmonitored in their refugee response and free to violate basic rights of refugee mobility by imposing unpredictable raids and curfews (Geha 2019). Overall, the approaches of municipalities in handling the refugee population on their territory differ greatly and vary "from exclusion to hospitality" (Kikano, Fauveaud and Lizarralde 2021, 430). The treatment of the refugees depends to a large extent on the religious majority and political affiliations of the responsible municipality (Fakhoury 2017). As the overwhelming majority of the refugees are Sunni Muslims, municipalities with Sunni majorities were clearly more welcoming, while other municipalities felt threatened in upholding their religious demography (Kikano, Fauveaud and Lizarralde 2021).[14] It is thus necessary to examine the particular situation of the refugees, according to the social, economic and political context of the governorate, district and municipality that they are living in.

2.1.2 The Zahleh District in the Beqaa Governorate

The research sites of this study are located in the Beqaa Governorate (محافظة), in the Zahleh district (قضاء)[15] between its capital city Zahleh and the Syrian border.[16] The region is mixed in political and religious affiliations as it hosts Christians, Sunnis, Shiite and Druze communities, while Zahleh is a Christian majority town. Political orientations in the Beqaa generally reflect the countrywide pro- and anti- Syrian division that underlies the Lebanese refugee response (COAR 2021).

[13] Report is based on 30 interviews with Syrian nationals who returned from Jordan and 24 Interviews with Syrian refugees who returned from Lebanon to Syria between 2017 and 2021.
[14] For more on the interplay between the refugee response and Lebanon's political model of sectarian power sharing, as well as the way in which the refugee crisis is instrumentalized for political gains see Fakhoury 2017.
[15] Also referred to as Central Beqaa District.
[16] Detailed location of the studied settlements won't be revealed due to anonymity reasons and to protect the participants of this study.

The Beqaa hosts the largest absolute and relative numbers of refugees and is currently home to 39.1% of all registered refugees by UNHCR in Lebanon (Operational Data Portal 2022). Furthermore, almost half (45%) of the refugees hosted by the Beqaa Governorate live in non-permanent shelter and only 13% of the refugees over the age of 15 had legal residency in Lebanon in 2021. Both of these numbers reflect a higher vulnerability than the country average, which is 16% with legal residency and 22% living in non-permanent shelter (UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP 2021). The region is known for its leading role in the agricultural sector in Lebanon, other economic activities include tourism and industry. While Syrian agricultural workers already played an important role before the Syrian war, it has been estimated that now 80 - 90% of Syrian refugees living in the region are seasonally working in agriculture (UNDP 2018).

Zahleh is one of the districts that enforced multiple evictions[17] over the years (UNDP 2018) and introduced curfews[18] on Syrian refugees to limit their mobility due to proclaimed security reasons (UNHCR 2020). All municipalities in the Zahleh district are required by the governor to constantly update their databases on the refugees staying on their territory, and a circular in 2018 prohibited refugees from constructing more ITSs or moving between the settlements (UNDP 2018). A recent analysis shows how tensions between host communities and refugees are countrywide the highest in central Beqaa and are even on the rise. These tensions are rooted partly in the historical precedent of the Lebanese civil war, as Zahleh was heavily bombarded by the Syrian Armed Forces, which is still in the collective memory of especially Christian communities in the area (COAR 2021). Hostilities become visible in multiple fires that took place in refugee settlements (Zabater 2018) and stories of aggressive and disrespectful ways in which the municipal police enforce evictions, cheered on by local communities (HRW 2018).

[17] In the beginning of 2017 thousands of Syrian nationals were evicted from the municipality of Zahleh and around the Riyak airbase (Zabater 2018).
[18] Curfews typically last from 7/8pm - 6am; if refugees want to leave the settlement during these times, they need to inform the municipal police and get a permit prior to leaving the settlement (UNHCR 2020).

2.1.3 Shelter Policies and Evictions

The Lebanese constitution states the right to housing for all people living on Lebanese ground, but generally there is a lack of affordable and adequate housing in the country (UNHCR and GoL 2022). Overall, there is no national housing strategy in Lebanon and consequently no inclusive shelter policies that regulate the stay of Syrian nationals. This and the fact that the Lebanese state didn't allow the construction of formal refugee camps, as discussed above, led to the observed self-settlement of Syrian refugees (Stel 2020). As for the central government, the MoSA is assigned to manage almost all issues concerning refugees and one of its main responsibilities is to prohibit refugee shelters from becoming sustainable and long-term housing solutions. A decision by the HDC in April 2019 pressured refugees to take down refugee structures that were made from any material other than plastic and wood (HRW 2019). The same goal limits NGOs from making durable improvements to Syrian shelters. Thus, the shelter strategies of UNHCR and the MSoA as well as the LCRP mainly include yearly weatherproofing of shelters against snow and heavy rainfall (UNHCR and GoL 2022). Apart from this, several NGOs implement shelter strategies, which are predominantly local and scattered over the whole country.

As of December 2021, 57% of Syrian nationals in Lebanon live in "dangerous, substandard or overcrowded shelters" 5.4% of which are currently under an eviction notice (UNHCR 2021, 1). At the end of 2021, 68% of Syrian refugees lived in residential buildings; 10% in non-residential shelter; and 22% in informal settlements (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP 2021). In comparison to previous years the percentage of Syrian refugees living in ITSs is on the rise. As average rent increased 18% from 2020 to 2021 many refugees are forced to move to cheaper and mostly non-permanent shelters (UNHCR and GoL 2022). According to a recent poll by UNHCR and MEDAIR (2021) there are currently 5,993 informal settlements in Lebanon, hosting 310,066 individuals. Their sizes vary from consisting of just one household to the biggest mentioned informal settlement, which accommodates 218 households. The same way in which the GoL refuses to refer to Syrian nationals in the country as refugees, the ITSs are officially referred to as "gatherings" (Janmyr 2016).

Over the years there have been multiple evictions, either ordered by the Lebanese security agencies;[19] by the local municipalities; or from the landlords themselves. While under the Lebanese law, labor or visa violations are not sufficient reasons to be evicted (UNDP 2018) and legally a court must order the eviction (HRW 2018) most known evictions take place in a grey area of legality.

2.2 Circular Labor Migration from Syria to Lebanon

Lebanon's history is closely interlinked with Syria and borders between the two countries have always been relatively permeable. The presence of Syrian nationals in the country is not a new phenomenon, but rather a big part of Lebanon's history. Already in the 1940s many Syrian nationals came as guest workers to Lebanon (Habib et al 2016). In what Chalcraft (2007) calls mass migration mostly male, menial, and primarily unskilled laborers came seasonally to Lebanon to profit from higher salaries. This circular migration persisted over years and was essential for the Lebanese and Syrian economy. Syrian migrant workers mainly worked in construction, agriculture, and service provision. Until the 1970s/1980s also many female domestic workers crossed the borders from Syria to Lebanon (Chalcraft 2009).[20]

After the end of the Lebanese civil war, accompanied by the 1989 Ta'if agreement[21] the Syrian troops remained in the country and until 2005 *de facto* occupied Lebanon. During this time, the economic entanglement of the two countries was made official in the 1992 "Bilateral Agreement for Economic and Social Cooperation and Coordination" between the Lebanese and the Syrian Arab Republic.[22] The agreement sets out to "derive utmost benefit from economic and human potential available in the two countries and to mobilize it to their benefit" (Syrian Lebanese Higher Council 1993, 1). This should lead to better living standards in both countries and

[19] In April 2017 the Lebanese Army ordered evictions of approximately 10'000 refugees from ITSs over the whole country (Nassar and Stel 2019).
[20] The feminization of the guest workers came to a halt, because Syrian women were replaced for cheaper labor from other countries (Chalcraft 2009).
[21] The Ta'if agreement marked the end of the civil war, Syria was acknowledged the "guardian" of the post war period (Fakhoury 2017).
[22] Initial open-door policy of Lebanon for Syrian refugees as mentioned above was also based on this agreement.

make them capable of competing on international markets. It included freedom of movement for persons of both countries, by abolishing any restrictions at the border and thus set further incentives for circular labor migration (Syrian Lebanese Higher Council 1993). This became visible in the post-war reconstruction period in Lebanon, where Syrian migrant workers made up the bulk of the construction labor force and during this time their number peaked at 600'000 (Chalcraft 2005).[23]

Political unrest in Lebanon after the assassination of Rafiq Hariri divided the political landscape into the March 8 (pro-Syrian) and March 14 (anti-Syrian) alliances and resulted in the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon.[24] As the Syrian Lebanese relations worsened, many Syrian workers returned to their country of origin due to the very hostile environment (Fakhoury 2017). While before the civil war, Syrian labor was never seen as an issue, the political tensions between the countries and the economic crisis after the civil war in Lebanon fueled xenophobic feelings towards Syrian nationals. Still, the Lebanese public quickly admitted that Syrian laborers were needed, as construction sites halted due to their departure, and soon many returned (Chalcraft 2005).

The Lebanese guestworker regime has been described as exploitative, then laborers lacked political and social rights in Lebanon. Most of them didn't have any written contracts, could be fired at any moment, and didn't have any insurance while working long hours in hard physical work. As the goal was to save as much money as possible to support the family back in Syria, workers lived as cheap as possible in Lebanon (Chalcraft 2005). Agricultural workers stayed seasonally in tented settlements, next to the land where they were working (Chalcraft 2009). Here also significant numbers of female workers were found, mainly in sowing, weeding, and harvesting (Chalcraft 2005). Shortly before the outbreak of the Syrian war, Syrian migrant agricultural workers made up 90% of the labor force in the North and 54% in the Beqaa Valley. They either worked directly with the landowner or with the Shawish who limited the risk of not receiving the salary as he immediately paid the

[23] There is no accurate and detailed statistics on the numbers of Syrian workers in Lebanon; this number is just an estimation (Chalcraft 2005).
[24] Division remains to this day, and critically shaped the loyalties in the Syrian conflict as well as the Lebanese refugee response (Fakhoury 2017).

worker, even if the landowner was delayed with the payment.[25] This option was especially chosen by those working on a daily basis, without long-term contracts. Workers who received monthly contracts more often worked directly with the landowner (IRC 2013).

With the outbreak of the war in Syria, seasonal migrant workers stopped returning to their home country, and many brought their families to Lebanon. As more and more refugees were looking for work, the importance of the Shawish in the region grew. This is reflected in the fact that while landowners paid higher salaries than before, agricultural workers received lower pays and profit margins of the Shawishes drastically increased (IRC 2013).[26]

2.3 Construction of ITSs in Lebanon

The Lebanese strategy towards Syrian refugees that rejects formal refugee camps but doesn't provide real alternatives and is characterized by its fractured legal framework, set the stage for the production of a particular form of ITSs in Lebanon (Nassar and Stel 2019). In this sense, ITSs have been understood as a reflection of the overall governance of Syrian refugees in Lebanon in which ITSs thrived (Nassar and Stel 2019). Moreover, many of the ITSs are considered an expansion of settlements, adjacent to agricultural lands where Syrian migrant workers used to stay, while working seasonally in the fields (Cassani 2021; Habib et al 2016; Sanyal 2017). With the outbreak of the war in Syria many of these seasonal workers became refugees and were reclassified by UNHCR as displaced population. Consequently, they couldn't cross the borders to profit from health care and other services in Syria anymore (Habib et al 2016). Still, due to the history of circular labor migration from Syria to Lebanon, Syrian nationals are to this day associated with menial labor. As Turner (2015) argues, these groups have to be understood simultaneously as refugees, and as part of the informal labor force in Lebanon. This becomes critical especially considering the fact that Syrian nationals in Lebanon officially need to

[25] Here the role of the Shawish has to be understood solely as a contractor between the landowner and the seasonal worker.
[26] Average pay of agricultural workers in the Beqaa in 2013: Men 2000 LBP (Lebanese Pound)/hour; Women 1500 LBP/hour, commission rate of the Shawish equivalent of one hour of work per day (IRC 2013).

choose between the right to work and the right to receive humanitarian aid (Kikano, Fauveaud and Lizarralde 2021).

What was meant to be temporary accommodation for Syrian migrant workers became permanent settlements for refugees as the war continued and the refugee situation in Lebanon became protracted. Located on agricultural land that is rented out by the owner, Syrian refugees in the ITSs today are private tenants of Lebanese landowners (Sanyal 2017). Yet, the GoL continues to deny the *de facto* long-term shelter that these settlements provide and treats Syrian nationals as temporary visitors. Today, more than a decade after the outbreak of the Syrian war, anyone visiting the Beqaa, or Northern Lebanon can't get around without taking note of the uncountable white tented settlements spread across the entire landscape.

2.3.1 The Situation of Syrian Refugees in Light of Recent Developments

Over the past years, Lebanon has been shaken by a deep institutional and political crisis which eventually resulted in financial collapse. This meant devaluation of the Lebanese lira and rising prices, while salaries in the country remained the same. On top of that, the port explosion in August 2020 and the global COVID-19 pandemic put further strains on the Lebanese economy. The host community, as well as the Syrian refugees in the country are struggling to survive, while the economic situation is further deteriorating.

Generally, the economic situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has reached levels far below the poverty line. Since 2020 the financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic pushed almost the entire refugee population (88%) to below the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB). As the Lebanese lira has lost most of its value, the cost of the revised food SMEB in August 2021 is more than seven times the cost of the basket back in October 2019. Syrian refugees who live in ITSs are considered of the most vulnerable groups in Lebanon, where 96% live below the SMEB (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP 2021).[27] Access to the informal labor market

[27] Also reflected in the Interviews (See *Recent changes in Lebanon that impact the communities in ITSs (15)*, Row 17); From now on refers to Excel Sheet "Coded Themes_A Micro-Perspective of Governance in ITSs", for access see Appendix, Coding.

has become further restricted and many Syrian nationals lost their jobs or stopped working due to the financial crisis in the country. In addition, Covid-19 resulted in stricter encampment mechanisms imposed by state actors. These included additional illegal and restrictive curfews that only applied to Syrian nationals and at one point the government announced, that only one person was officially allowed to leave the ITSs and buy food for the whole settlement community (Moawad and Andres 2021).

The reliance on humanitarian aid of inhabitants in the settlements has increased. But international organizations struggle to fund their humanitarian aid for Lebanon. For example, only 10% of UNHCRs requested funds for its Lebanon operation 2022 are funded by the international community (UNHCR 2022b). This goes hand in hand with the fact, that many respondents of this study claim that cash assistance from UNHCR has been reduced: now maximum six persons per family are eligible for the monthly cash assistance of 300'000[28] per person, which is either received in form of LBP (Lebanese Pounds) or vouchers that can be exchanged for food at specific supermarkets.[29] As the income doesn't cover the expanses anymore, absolute numbers of average debt of Syrian households to landlords, supermarket owners and relatives more than doubled between 2020 and 2021.

In the year 2021, 25% of Syrian children in all of Lebanon dropped out of school. Consequently, only half of Syrian refugee children between the age of 6 and 14, and only 27% of children aged between 15 and 17 went to school in the 2020-2021 schoolyear. Overall, almost a third of Syrian refugee children between the age of 6 and 15 never went to school at all.[30] While in 2019, 2.5% of Syrian children between the age of 6 and 14 were involved in child labor, two years later this number has risen to 5.5% (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP 2021).

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[28] Currently the black-market exchange rate fluctuates between 20'000 and 30'000 for 1$.
[29] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Humanitarian Aid (10)*, Row 12); couldn't be confirmed with different sources; These two options are perceived as unfair by most respondents as supermarkets where UNHCR food vouchers can be exchanged have higher prices than other stores.
[30] Like everywhere around the globe, schools were closed for months due to COVID-19 offering only remote education or none at all. Later, the political and financial crisis put enormous pressure on the school system and public schools remained closed. Teachers have been striking because their salaries were not adapted to the value of the currency. Furthermore, the lack of access to internet and the inability to afford devices and education material resulted in many children dropping out of school. Schools resumed at the end of January 2022 (UNHCR 2022b).

The crisis in Lebanon has reinforced racism towards Syrian refugees. Over the past years, Syrian nationals in the public space have become scapegoats for the multiple crises in the country. Many refugees fear local security personnel because of their racist and very unpredictable behavior towards them. A report by Amnesty International (2021) revealed that hundreds of Syrian nationals were detained without apparent reasons by Lebanese security forces and became victims to torture and unfair trials since 2014 (Amnesty International 2021).

Chapter Three

Literature Review: Governance in ITSs in Lebanon

Even though they have existed for over a decade, detailed research on the social structures, hierarchies, and governance within ITSs is relatively scarce. Many describe ITSs as spaces of overcrowding (Kiwan 2021), that are characterized by a lack of privacy with a high risk of violence (El Helou 2014) while others point out the precarious health situations within these settlements (Habib et al 2016). A recent publication by Nora Stel (2020) focuses on how the state structures influence the governance in ITSs. Since there are officially no camps in Lebanon, then there is no need for official camp management. Thus, ITSs are spaces that reflect how refugees, lacking official residency status, organize themselves on a micro-level and create governance structures in the absence of services provided by official levels. A variety of authorities and informal leaders have emerged over the past years, creating a complex system of responsibilities. Consequently, is the governance in ITSs largely based on personal initiatives and characterized by its informality (Stel 2020). One of the most discussed forms of informal leadership in the literature is the figure of the Shawish.

3.1 The Emergence of Informal Leaders

In the context of the ITSs the role of the Shawish is understood as a broker between the landowner and the refugees. He is a mediator who collects and pays the land rents that the ITS is built on and provides work opportunities for the inhabitants of the settlement (Habib et al 2016). In most cases the Shawish is a male who has a high social status within the community, although in rare cases there is to be found women in the role of the Shawisha (Stel 2020). The position of the Shawish already existed in the 1980s as a contractor between the landowner and the seasonal workers. The workers were employed by the Shawish who was paid by the Lebanese farmers, took a commission for himself, and paid the workers (Cassani 2021). This role however was extended when seasonal workers became refugees and permanently moved to ITSs. The Shawish took over additional responsibilities and is often

described as the supervisor or informal leader of the ITS (BouChabke and Haddad 2021).

The description of his tasks varies depending on the literature. El Helou (2014) notes, that the Shawish decides who is allowed to settle in the ITS; who is supposed to leave; who goes to school; and even if a girl in the settlement is ready to get married (El Helou 2014). Sajadian (2020) points out the dependance of the inhabitants of the ITSs on the Shawish. In some cases, he is the only opportunity for the refugees to guarantee their livelihood. If in need he lends out money, but until the debts are settled the refugees need to stay in the ITSs and work for him (Sajadian 2020). Others describe his figure as one that is being exploited, while exploiting at the same time (Ghaddar 2017). The Shawish profits from the workers living in the ITSs, while at the same time he is under the authority of the municipality and, in some cases even "the eyes and ears of the State Security" (Stel 2020, 93).

The way in which the Shawish is put in this position has been described in different ways. El Helou (2014) notes that the Shawish is designated by the landowner while Stel (2020) shows that there is also Shawishes who are being elected by the inhabitants of the ITSs. Many municipalities insist on the existence of a Shawish in the ITS and thus his figure can be understood as being imposed on the refugee communities (Stel 2020). In some cases, the Shawish may even be put in place by NGOs (Clarke 2018).

As the Shawish became the informal leader of the ITS and took on additional responsibilities he became the main point of access for humanitarian organizations to the inhabitants of the settlement. Through that even aid organizations submitted to the informal power of the Shawish (BouChabke and Haddad 202; Clarke 2018). This status empowers the Shawish as he influences the decision of how humanitarian aid is distributed and who gets to profit from it (Clarke 2018). The reliance of the humanitarian community on the informal leader of the settlement, makes more participatory approaches with the refugee community difficult, as they are based on agricultural hierarchies that already existed before the war in Syria (Chatty 2016). BouChabke and Haddad (2021) have pointed out how these structures facilitate corruption in humanitarian systems, as informal leaders of settlements have learned

to take advantage of aid distributions (BouChabke and Haddad 2021). Turner (2015) shows how official encampment facilitates aid distribution. This point has also been made in the beginning of the refugee crisis in Lebanon, as the chaotic expansion of informal settlements in the country challenged the humanitarian aid sector and ITSs received only little aid (Loveless 2013).

3.2 Centrality of the Labor Market

As the above observation demonstrates, the role of the Shawish is debated and has to be understood according to the particular context (Cassani 2021; Stel 2020). Generally, it is clear that the existence of the Shawish and the informal settlements are closely connected to the labor market. As Turner (2015) elaborates, the no-camp policy has to be understood as a method of the GoL to facilitate the exploitation of the Syrian labor force. Thus, while official refugee camps represent spaces of segregation and spatial containment, highly dependent on humanitarian aid, ITSs in Lebanon are structured around the labor market. This intersection between forced migration, the labor market and the governance in ITSs has been pointed out by Cassani (2021). He focuses on the role of "refugees-as-laborers" in the Beqaa and how this influences the governance within the ITSs. Labor is central to the resolution of conflicts within the ITS and it determines the social relationships among the Syrian nationals as well as between the host community and the refugees (Cassani 2021).

In contrast to the seasonal migrants working in agriculture before the eruption of the war, which were predominantly male, today more than half of these workers are female (Habib et al 2016). As shown by Nassar and Stel (2019) in a variety of cases the Shawish allows the harassment and exploitation of the Syrian women (Nassar and Stel 2019). Sanyal (2017) stated that the high percentage of women working in the fields is due to the belief that they have a lower risk of being arrested outside of the settlements than men. Furthermore, they work for lower wages which makes them more likely to be hired (Sanyal 2017). Migrant women working in agriculture have repeatedly been described as inhabiting an especially vulnerable position (Habib and Fathallah 2012). Particularly female agricultural workers in ITSs led by a Shawish lack any form of protection (Baroud and Zeidan 2021). Their position in the

fields, where the women are predominantly responsible for harvesting vegetables is highly feminized. They are referred to as “banāt” (بنات) which means girls and as Sajadian (2020) shows, in the rare cases where men take over the same jobs, they are still collectively being referred to as “banāt” (Sajadian 2020). Syrian migrant farmworkers are considered to be among the most marginalized populations (Habib et al 2016). Referring to the agricultural work as female labor is one way through which gender roles are produced within the ITSs (El Helou 2014). In her analysis of the “gendered reality of Syrian refugee life in settlements in Lebanon” Quist (2016) shows how gender roles are renegotiated in the settlement, as men are challenged to fulfill their male provider role and women are starting to work outside the house.

3.3 Comparing Different Forms of Shelter

Other studies examine the ITSs in Lebanon more individually and in a comparative way to show the differences and similarities between various kinds of refugee accommodation. Kikano et al (2015) compare an informal settlement in Jdita with a more official settlement in Bar Elias, run by NGOs. They point out that the social relations in the informal refugee settlement in Jdita are better than in the more organized one, because they live together in enlarged families. Furthermore, the study shows that informal settlements are closer to inhabited spaces and less isolated (Kikano, Fayazi and Lizarralde 2015). In a more recent article, the same authors compare two longitudinal studies of an urban refugee camp in Bourj Hammoud and a rural ITS in Dalhamieh. They show that the inhabitants of the ITS is a homogenous group, all from the same area in Syria and generally less vulnerable than the refugees in urban areas. Furthermore, they elaborate on how the absence of state involvement facilitates the exploitation of the refugees (Kikano, Fauveaud and Lizarralde 2021). Sanyal (2017) looks at two informal settlements in Lebanon analyzing their physical and social spaces. The study points out that there are huge variations between the two settlements, since one of them has more access to humanitarian aid and the other one has to be understood as an even more informal settlement. This shows that there are great variations between the settlements and the importance to move away from the existing generalizing narrative (Sanyal 2017). Generally, ITSs are physically isolated, distant from each other and characterized by a fragmented governance depending on the particular municipality. One consequence of this is that there is

neither coordination between the different ITSs nor between their informal leaders (Clarke 2018).

Chapter Four

Methodology

This chapter is concerned with the research methods that were used for this thesis, the limitations and challenges that I encountered during the study, as well as my own positionality as a researcher. The aim is to explain the underlying methods based on which, the results of this research have to be understood.

4.1 Research Methods

The literature review has shown that detailed research on ITSs is relatively scarce and limited to general findings that often place the organization of ITSs as a result of external structures and don't give detailed attention to the way in which the refugees themselves produce and experience governance in ITSs. Furthermore, compared to the scarce literature on ITSs there is to be found a myriad of articles on refugee camps organized and managed by UNHCR. I argue here that there is a need for more extensive and detailed research on Governance structures within ITSs, focusing on micro-level processes that take place inside of the settlements.

Existing literature disagrees on the role of the Shawish, and it has become clear that ITSs are very individual in their social structures, hierarchies, and governance. The aim of this study is to analyze how the refugee communities in two ITSs in the Beqaa in Lebanon over the course of multiple years created informal governance structures that today dominate the way in which the space is negotiated. Furthermore, it focuses on the reciprocal relationships between the refugee community in ITSs and external stakeholders, naming NGOs, Lebanese landowners, and state institutions and how they impact the governance inside of the settlement. As noted by the literature review above there are ITSs led by a female Shawisha. To my knowledge there has not been any literature examining how a woman takes over the informal leadership of an ITS, in what has to be called a very patriarchal society. Understanding this provides an opportunity to move further away from the victimizing narrative of refugee women (Johnson 2011; Krause 2014) and analyze their position in the refugee community of an ITS from a new perspective. Instead of looking at the imposed ambiguous

governance from the state, the focus of this study is on refugees' agency to organize themselves over the past decade in this highly informal space.

4.1.1 Research Design

I chose a qualitative research strategy for this study as the goal was to analyze concrete practices in the field, that have not been studied in detail before. This strategy allowed me to give space for new findings, that couldn't be predicted at the beginning of the research. An interpretivist approach provided the possibility for the participants to articulate their interpretation of the world, that is constantly shifting around them. To understand micro-level structures the individual stories and experiences were put to the forefront and conclusions were drawn in an inductive way (Bryman 2016, 16-38).

As already mentioned above two different settlements were the research sites of this case study, which provided the opportunity for comparative results. I chose the case study approach because ITSs are very diverse in their organization and there is a need for studying them as individual and unique spaces. The first settlement was chosen, because I had already built good relationships with the inhabitants, due to my work for an NGO that is active in this ITS. The fact that the inhabitants and the Shawish of the first settlement already knew me, allowed for more extensive and detailed research, as there was already a level of trust between us. The second settlement was chosen due to its female Shawisha, who is very well known in the whole area. The second research site is a particular case, as still most informal leaders in the region are men.

The two cases that were studied are very different in their organization, while they are both located in the same governorate and district in Lebanon. This provided a good opportunity to draw conclusions from comparing the results from the two settlements. Still, it is important to notice, that the chosen research design has implications for the integrity of the conclusions. As the study is concerned with two individual cases, results are not generalizable to other ITSs (Bryman 2016, 39-71).

4.1.2 Data Collection

In November 2021 and February 2022[31] extensive fieldwork was conducted in form of twenty in-depth, semi-structured interviews in the two ITSs in the Beqaa (Bryman 2016, 500-524).[32] This gave the participants control over the information discussed and the possibility to speak about the issues that they are concerned with personally. The conversations were not limited to the prompts and not all of the questions were covered, instead the prompts were meant to trigger the discussion of certain subjects (Bryman 2016, 465-499). Interviews were conducted with both Shawishes, while the other respondents were chosen based on their willingness to talk to me as I randomly asked inhabitants if they were available for an interview.[33] All respondents had to be between the age of 18 and 80 and the same number of interviews were conducted with women and men. All interviews were conducted in Arabic, recorded, and then transcribed in English for the later use of the data.

Furthermore, I spent a lot of time in the two settlements between August 2021 and March 2022, which allowed me to participate in and observe the daily life of the inhabitants. Findings of this study are primarily based on the interviews, but individual observations in the two ITSs helped me to understand the unique governance structures.

4.1.3 Analysis and Findings

The final steps of the research were a qualitative data analysis and writing up the findings. Based on a grounded theory approach, recurring and relevant data was coded, using seventeen general themes[34] (Bryman 2016, 572-584). Later, the coded

[31] After I had received approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB).
[32] Interview guide is attached in Appendix.
[33] Initially it was the Shawish who decided, with whom I should talk, only after a while I was allowed to move freely around in the two settlements.
[34] Origin and creation of the settlement, Means to become Shawish (1); Power structures: Control and responsibilities of the Shawish (2); Work in Agriculture (3); Conflicts (4); Conflict resolution (5); Control Mechanisms, Managing Exploitation (6); Surveillance, Information channels from the settlement towards outside (7); Relationship to landowner (8); Financial security (9); Humanitarian Aid (10); Responsibility for humanitarian aid (11); Geographical origin of inhabitants, Tribal structures (12); Relationship between inhabitants of the settlement (13); Security (14); Recent changes in Lebanon that impact the communities in ITSs (15) Gender roles (16) Disruptive effects of forced displacement on gender roles (17). Excel sheet is available upon request, See Appendix.

data was analyzed with a sustainability framework based on Economic, Social and Environmental factors.

The first part of the chapter analyzing the interviews is an observation of what I witnessed during the research, trying to keep away from normative approaches and giving the word to the respondents. Only in the second part of the chapter, implications of informal governance structures are analyzed.

4.2 Challenges and Limitations

There are several limitations to this study as well as challenges that I had to overcome during the research period. Interviews only took place with inhabitants of the settlement and no interviews were conducted with other stakeholders of ITSs in Lebanon. This puts the opinions and experiences of the refugees to the forefront and allows for an understanding of informal governance structures on a micro-level and from a bottom-up perspective. At the same time, it doesn't allow for further insights to understand the perspectives of other actors who take part in the complex processes that create and form the spaces of ITSs. These are municipalities, landowners, NGO-workers, and representatives of UNHCR who are in direct relationship with ITSs, mainly coordinating and collaborating with the Shawish.[35]

Furthermore, all interviews took place in Arabic without a professional translator present. I have been in Lebanon for more than two years, and my language level is relatively good, but still the Arabic language kept me on my toes, especially since some of the inhabitants spoke Syrian dialects that are influenced by their Bedouin inheritance. The recordings of the interviews helped me to overcome this challenge as friends supported me with some of the transcriptions in English. Still, in some instances the interviews were limited to the prepared questions, due to distinct dialects.

As all interviews took place inside of the shelter, it wasn't always possible to get through the whole interview without any interruptions. In some cases, children were

[35] Initial attempts to contact the landowner of the first settlement were stopped by the Shawish as he refused to give me the contact information.

around who entered and left the rooms, in other cases the wife or husband or other family members were in the same room. This might have limited the safe space and some things maybe remained unsaid.

4.3 Positionality

Scholarship has shown (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) that the researcher's neutrality is impossible and thus this section is concerned with my positionality in the fieldwork. I am a European student of Migration studies and my interest to study the Syrian refugee community is informed by my own positionality as I experienced the way European countries reacted to the so-called refugee crisis. The way I perceive different refugee stories is clearly impacted by these experiences. I am concerned with the so-called refugee crisis and my studies have encouraged me to question mainstream narratives. Thus, I tried to go beyond these narratives, moving away from the victimization of Syrian refugees to understand the complexity of the Syrian refugee's experience in Lebanon, focusing on their agency. My positionality clearly affected the interaction with all the subjects of the research. My higher socio-economic status as well as my possibility to leave the settlement and Lebanon at any time put me in a specific position in relation to the inhabitants of the settlement.

Since August 2021 I work as the project coordinator in the school, located in the first studied settlement. Furthermore, based on a crowdfunding that I started in summer of 2021, I implemented a project in the first settlement, where we produced "mūna" (مونة), fermented vegetables in jars with the women. Through that, I initially occupied the role of an NGO worker and later started conducting interviews in the first settlement. I had spent a lot of time in the settlement, whole afternoons sitting with the women, preparing the vegetables for the fermentation process, was invited for tea and coffee in individual tents, stayed for dinner on several occasions and even spent a night in the settlement, when the late time didn't allow me to go back to Zahleh. So, when I started conducting the interviews in November 2021, I had already built a close relationship with the inhabitants of the settlement.

I do not claim that this study is inclusive of all the processes that create informal governance structures, nor that I was able to fully understand the way in which

refugees manage spaces inside of the settlements. As this research is relatively original and there wasn't a lot of academic sources to rely on, I am cautious with declaring any general results. I feel privileged to have been granted access to the settlements, especially because I witnessed multiple attempts from journalists, who weren't allowed to record individual stories. It is important to me, that this study gives a voice to those living in these settlements and doesn't exploit the stories, that I have so generously been granted access to.

Chapter Five

Analysis: Understanding Governance in ITSs

How are ITSs in Lebanon governed?
What kind of informal leaders have emerged, and what hierarchies and tools of power exist within the settlements?

Based on two case studies of ITSs located in the Beqaa Governorate, in the central Beqaa district between Zahleh and the Syrian border, this chapter discusses their informal governance structures. Over the past years the critical importance of governance in achieving the SDGs has been voiced repeatedly. Sustainability governance as part of the SDGs can be located at the overlap of economic, social, and environmental dimensions. As Monkelbaan (2019) mentions, there is a "need for perspectives on forms of governance that are fit for working towards improved sustainability in complex, dynamic and interdependent societies" (Monkelbaan 2019, 1). At the intersection of governance and sustainable development, this research is concerned with the micro-level, to understand the structures and hierarchies in the settlement. In this sense, it is a contribution to research on how the governance structures in light of social, economic and environmental factors provide long-term sustainability of ITSs.

5.1 Two Case Studies of ITSs in Lebanon

In this section the two research sites of this study will be introduced in detail, to provide a general image of the two ITSs, whose governance structures will be analyzed later.

5.1.1 Research Site One: An ITS Governed by a Shawish

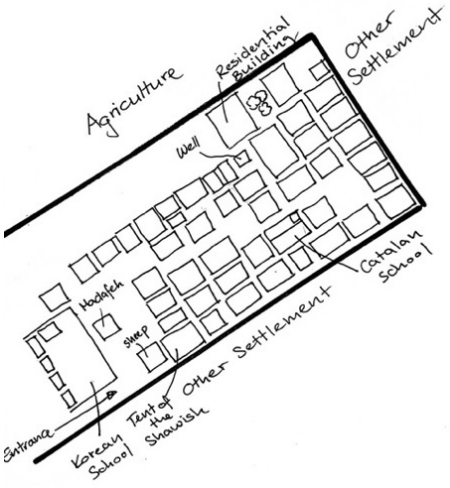

Figure 1: Drawing of First Settlement

The first case study is an ITS that was originally built in 2016 and over the years grew into a relatively big settlement. Since most of the families who live there entered Lebanon in the first years of the war in Syria, this settlement is their second or even third place of stay, as they were evicted from previous homes. In the beginning, the Shawish resettled with a group of families from a different settlement where they were evicted, to this space and over the past six years the settlement grew. The rented land is now fully occupied and at the time of this study it is home to around 55 families who live in 38 tents. The ITS is located relatively far from any main roads and surrounded by other settlements and agricultural land. Only a ditch, approximately one meter wide, where the wastewater gathers and flows towards the outside of the settlement separates one settlement from the other. A male Shawish is the informal leader and governs the space, while at the same time he functions as the work contractor, who provides agricultural work for the female inhabitants.

Shortly after the Shawish started to construct the settlement an NGO built a well, that to this day provides running water to the whole community. Drinking water is sold from a nearby water company and stored in water tanks next to each tent. The electricity is provided from a generator, owned by a Lebanese in a nearby cluster of houses. The responsible municipality passes by weekly to pick up the garbage from the settlement in exchange for monthly garbage fees.

The entrance to the settlement is a gravel walk that bypasses a school, run by a Korean NGO, where schoolchildren from all the surrounding settlements between the ages of 7 and 12 attend grade one to four. At the entrance of the settlement is the tent of the Shawish and his family, which is relatively bigger than the average tent. In the middle of the settlement, located in a tent, there is another kindergarten and school run by a Catalan NGO, where children between the ages of 4 and 7 attend

kindergarten and first grade. Since the settlement was constructed, there has not been any threats of eviction thus its location and existence are unofficially tolerated by the central government.

This study is based on ten interviews in this settlement, nine with inhabitants and one with the Shawish that took place in November of 2021. Half of the interviews were with women, and the other five with men living in the settlement.

5.1.2 Research Site Two: An ITS Governed by a Shawisha

This settlement is more visible than the first one, as it is located close to the main road and accessible through a cemented road. It is surrounded by agricultural land and its borders are marked by the ditch for the wastewater, similar to the first settlement. It was built six years ago, in the same year as the other settlement and consists of 55 tents, inhabited by 71 families. Around 20 of the tents are located in cement constructions covered by corrugated metal, that served as a turkey farm before the owner decided to rent the land to a Shawisha. The settlement is thus governed by a female Shawisha who lives in the first building, where she also runs a small food store. Located in the middle of the store is a big screen, where the pictures of the eight security cameras appear that the Shawisha installed. Through these, she mainly monitors the entrance of the settlement, but some cameras are also directed towards the inside of the settlement. In contrast to the first settlement the Shawisha doesn't work in agriculture.

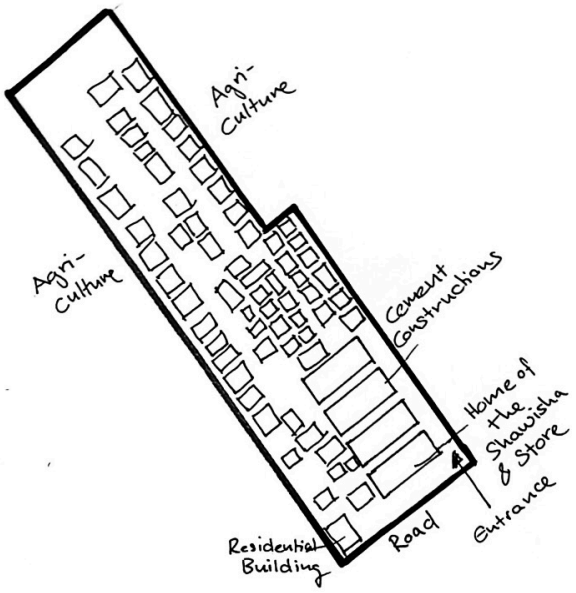

Figure 2: Drawing of Second Settlement

The water for the inhabitants is provided by UNHCR that comes by in trucks and fills the water tanks, drinking water is bought from the same company as in the first

settlement. Electricity is provided by the municipality of Zahleh, there is a counter that calculates the monthly use in the name of the Shawisha, who is responsible to settle the bills. Garbage is picked up by the municipality of Zahleh in exchange for fixed fees. There are no NGOs present in this settlement except from sporadic visits and situation specific aid.

In February of 2022 another ten Interviews were conducted in this settlement, nine with inhabitants and one with the Shawisha. Also here, half of the respondents were women, while the other half of the interviews were conducted with men.

5.2 Negotiating Spaces within the Settlements

In many cases the experienced world of the refugees is reduced to the settlement space, which emphasizes the importance of processes that take place within. The following pages focus on the way in which confinement to the settlement takes place; on social relationships between the residents of the settlement; on identification with the inhabited space; and how these structures shape informal governance.

5.2.1 Experiencing Confinement to the Settlement Space

Above chapters have discussed the situation of refugees in Lebanon and how a variety of state actors impose regulations, that reduce their mobility outside of the settlement space.[36] Furthermore, segregation from the surrounding area and containment to the settlement have been described as inherent characteristics of camps in general (McConnachie 2016). Other studies on ITSs in Lebanon have further concluded that residents voluntarily become invisible, to additionally reduce any form of tensions and remain within the settlement space (Kikano, Fauveaud and Lizarralde 2021). The inhabitants of both studied settlements are registered with UNHCR, but apart from that have no papers that legalize their stays in Lebanon. Fear of controls by security personnel clearly restrict their mobility beyond the given space. This except for the Shawishes: In the first settlement the Shawish was able to legalize his stay under the sponsorship system,[37] while the Shawisha of the second

[36] No legal residency, arbitrary arrests by security institutions, curfews, hostile environment.
[37] See 2.1.1. Legal frameworks regulating refugeehood in Lebanon.

settlement works as a domestic worker for a Lebanese household in Zahleh and moves around freely outside of the settlement space, even though she doesn't have a legal residency. Additionally, both Shawishes have a good social network and no reason to be afraid from becoming victims of arbitrary treatment by security forces.

None of the inhabitants claim that they have personal connections to any Lebanese, that exceed work relationships. One male respondent stated that he doesn't walk alone outside of the settlement because he is scared from thieves stealing his personal belongings.[38] More generally many interviews reveal narratives of fear and threat from anything that is outside of the settlement space.

> "I feel safe inside of the settlement… me and my neighbors, I know them all … but I do not feel safe going outside of the camp[39] alone… me alone or I leave my son alone to go outside? No… but in the camp there is security, we know each other… only outside of the camp it's not safe."
> (Female (2), 50, 15P)[40]

Most female respondents claim that they are afraid to leave the settlement alone, one respondent even talked about her fear of being kidnapped when leaving the settlement.[41] Thus except for work, inhabitants generally stay inside of the settlement and especially conversations with men who can't find work, reveal frustration of being stuck inside the settlement.

5.2.2 Identification with the Settlement Community and its Implications

> "The camp, every family in the camp is from the same region, but every house is from a separate village, I am from Rif Halab, Sfira al-Hass... We are all from different villages, Al Hass has 350 villages… every camp here is from a specific area… if you go to another camp... they are for example from Rif Idlib, from Homs, from Daraa and so on... depending on your region, you settle."
> (Male (1), 52, 13K)

The mentioning of the geographical origin of the respondent and the other inhabitants of the settlement was central in all interviews without any exception. The

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[38] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Security (14)*, Row 16, Column V).
[39] Respondents of the interviews used the word "muḵajjam" (مخيّم) to refer to the settlement. The correct translation for this is "camping ground, camp, encampment" (Wehr and Cowan 1994, 310) thus in the following quotes the word "camp/s" refers to ITS/s.
[40] Female, (1): Number 1 is a reference to Settlement where respondent lives, 50: Age, 15 (theme) P (respondent): Reference to where statement can be found in excel sheet: "Coded Themes_A Micro-Perspective of Governance in ITSs".
[41] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Security (14)*, Row 16, Column I).

identification with the other community members, because of the same origin in Syria was a recurrent theme throughout this research. It was often coupled with the statement that the community was built and developed here in Lebanon and its members didn't know each other before in Syria.[42] As discussed in the literature review, recent studies (Kikano, Fayazi and Lizarralde 2015; Kikano, Fauveaud and Lizarralde 2021; Quist 2016) have concluded that inhabitants of ITSs in Lebanon live in enlarged families and settlement communities are relatively homogenous groups. This study suggests similar results, but even though the geographical origins of the inhabitants are similar, they are from multiple villages and thus settlement communities can be understood as gatherings that originate and developed in Lebanon. As reflected upon above, ITSs in Lebanon have to be discussed as particular cases and can't be understood with theories that were constructed based on refugee camps run by NGOs or UNHCR. Then communities in official camps are generally more divers, originate from many different places and on average provide a shelter to many more individuals than ITSs in Lebanon do.[43] Thus, the fact that most inhabitants of the settlements are from the same area in Syria shows, how geographical origin and consequently ethnic identifications dictate the choice of the ITS that individuals settle in.

The Shawishes in both ITSs are from Aleppo countryside (ريف حلب) and so are most of the inhabitants of the settlements and all the respondents of the overall number of interviews. The countryside of Aleppo is characterized by its predominant agricultural industry and the majority of rural residents work in this sector. Rural areas around Aleppo and Idlib are considered one of the poorest areas in Syria and developments following the 1958 Land Reform in Syria and the consequent redistribution of land led to agricultural intensification (Abdelali-Martini et al 2003). So, almost all respondents have a background in agricultural work, were either landowners, or used to work wage labor in the agricultural sector. Studies show that already before the Syrian war, there were big migration flows mainly consisting of young men from Aleppo countryside to urban areas or abroad due to rural poverty

[42] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Geographical Origin of the Inhabitants / Tribal structures (12),* Row 14).
[43] Refugee camps in Jordan: Za'atari Refugee camp: 80'000 Refugees; Azraq camp: 38'000 refugees (UNHCR 2022c).

(Abdelali-Martini, Ibrahim and Dhehibi 2016). This is reflected in the settlement communities, as some of its inhabitants came to Lebanon seasonally or full time to work, long before the outbreak of the war in Syria.

Similar to geographic considerations, is the reputation and personality of the Shawish central to the decision of the refugee to settle in a particular settlement. Identification with the settlement, means identification with the Shawish who governs, and it always stands in differentiation with other settlements and their Shawish.[44] Thus, this study concludes, that the general narrative of moving into the settlement is to move to a certain Shawish[45], who in most cases is from the same geographical origin as the refugee himself/herself. The identification with the Shawish becomes even more apparent by the way in which the inhabitants refer to their community as "al-'Arab" (العرب) followed by the name of the Shawish.[46] Thus, the whole settlement community is named after its Shawish by the inhabitants themselves, by the surrounding settlements and by the Lebanese community in the area.[47] The Shawish in this sense is understood as the origin or even owner of the settlement who built for the community, while the inhabitant moved in with him/her as a resident.[48] This clearly reveals general hierarchies between the Shawish and the inhabitant of the settlement, as the "owner" of the space has power to decide over his/her property.

Thus, the location of the settlement is not primary to the decision of the move, but its informal leader and the origin of the settlement community. In this way, more importance is assigned to social characteristics of the settlement, rather than environmental factors. The communities of both settlements inclusively moved to another place, the first due to an eviction from their previous location and the second

[44] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Origin and creation of the settlement / Means to become Shawish (1)*, Row 3).
[45] The own Shawish in the eyes of the inhabitant is always better than the other Shawishes in the area.
[46] The use of the term "al-'Arab" has a number of implications: "al-'Arab" means the Bedouins of the desert (Wehr and Cowan 1994, 703); Meaning of living in a tent, moving from place to place; With the terming of the settlement community as "al-'Arab" (plus name of the Shawish) respondents refer to the original meaning of the word that implies a nomadic way of living. According to the interviewees "al-'Arab" only refers to refugees living in ITSs and doesn't include those who live in residential buildings. The term is also used by Lebanese in the region to generally refer to refugees living in settlements.
[47] Observation based on uncountable conversations with taxi drivers in the area between August 2021 and March 2022.
[48] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Origin and creation of the settlement / Means to become Shawish (1)*, Row 3).

because the land the settlement was built on, didn't provide a safe space for the children to play. The perception of the settlement as a safe space is generally connected to the shared geographical origin, a feeling of being safe among the people from the same region in Syria. Initial reactions to questions about security institutions within the settlement were often that it is not required, because there is a level of trust between the community members that makes additional security unnecessary.[49]

As the conflict in Syria enters its 11th year, the communities in the settlements evolved and individual inhabitants developed a distinctive sense of belonging to the space and the community. Even though these settlements are referred to as non-permanent shelter, the use of the words indicate a certain permanency for its inhabitants as most of them have lived in this kind of shelter since they arrived in Lebanon. During the interviews the use of the word "bait" (بيت) which means house or home was repeatedly used to refer to the own tent. It seems that for its inhabitants, home in the settlement is not an exceptional situation anymore, but has become the normal through the protracted refugee situation they find themselves in. This attachment to the physical space of the settlement is coupled with a feeling of social inclusion in the settlement community.

> "The people here are my family now... it's a good camp… the neighbors are friends, if someone gets sick, we visit them… if someone gets married, we help prepare… if somebody gets engaged… if a baby gets born… if there is a celebration or someone gets sick, we go and visit them… we live, thank God, there is no problems here in the camp, the situation is good … everything is good here."
> (Female (1), 39, 14D)

This sense of living together as a community is put to the forefront especially in the first studied settlement, where it also becomes physically visible. Placed at the entrance, facing the tent of the Shawish there is the "maḍāfa" (مضافة)[50] a tent that is only there during the winter months and provides a space where the families gather, and where celebrations take place.

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[49] These statements stand in contrast to narratives of threat and fear when referring to the outside of the settlement space (for more on this see next chapter).

[50] The word "maḍāfa" comes from "ḍaif" which means guest, "maḍāfa" means guesthouse (Wehr and Cowan 1994, 641) it is also understood as the room at the entrance of the house, where guests are welcomed.

> "During the winter we stay together in the evenings, in the maḍāfa, it's a big room that the Shawish made for the community... we spend time together, we laugh, we watch football, like that... and our friends from outside come as well." (Female (1), 35, 14F)

While a lot of importance is assigned to the settlement community and the informal leader, intimate spaces of the families seem to overlap and boundaries between the tents become blurred. Notions of overcrowding and a resulting lack of privacy in the settlements have been expressed by many studies (El Helou 2014, Kiwan 2021). The spaces between the individual tents are narrow and neighbors often get in each other's ways, which often results in conflicts between families. Doors are open, sounds from neighboring tents are clearly audible and intimate spaces are very accessible to outsiders. Individual rooms inside of the tent are transferred according to the time and needs of the inhabitants.[51] A visitor doesn't just sit in the living room of the house, then the same room becomes the private bedroom of the family at night.[52] Furthermore, the shelter is constantly adapted to current weather conditions and the season. This has a great impact on the perception of the home, as the tent doesn't provide a space that protects the inhabitant from the weather outside and intensifies reliance on community members.[53]

5.2.3 The Role of the Shawish in the Settlement Community

All interviewees in the first settlement ascribe the position of the Shawish to the long presence of his family in Lebanon as seasonal workers, already before the war in Syria. Furthermore, they refer to his economic situation, as the means are necessary to be able to advance money to the inhabitants.[54] Similarly in the second settlement, the power of the Shawisha is ascribed to her social network in Lebanon, her character, and her economic situation.

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[51] I experienced this during my visits in the settlements during August 2021 and March 2022.
[52] Tents consist of an entrance room where most families have some plants, mainly herbs. Then there is a storage room, where the "mūna" (fermented vegetables in jars) for the winter is stored. In most tents this room is next to the kitchen, which also serves as the shower, as it is the only room in the tent with running water. The living room is transformed into the bedroom in the evening, as the mattresses are placed around the heater in winter to sleep on.
[53] Here it would be interesting to study the tent as a home considering Bachelard's "Poetics of Space" (1994); Inhabited, domestic space transcends the geometrical space; How does the domestic space in the tent shape the knowledge of other spaces? How do children that were born in these tents perceive their homes?
[54] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Origin and creation of the settlement / Means to become Shawish (1)*, Row 3).

> "It depends on the abilities/strength/power (قدرة), it depends on the strength/power (قوة) of the person… and it also depends on the money… the Shawish pays for the people… for the land, the electricity… if something happens, she pays… she needs financial strength (قدرة مالية) and has to be a strong character."
> (Female (2), 26, 3R)

The role of the Shawish is understood as being the one responsible (مسؤول\ة) for everything in the settlement, or even as the sponsor or guarantee (مكفول\ة) of the ITS.[55] S/he provides financial security to the inhabitants that appears in different forms. In the first settlement the Shawish advances money to the workers as the landowners pay their salaries only at the end of the year.[56] Similarly, is the Shawisha the owner of a store at the entrance of the second settlement, where refugees can get basic food on loan and pay whenever they are able to. In this way, the Shawish is essential in securing the livelihoods of the refugees, which creates a relationship characterized by the dependency of the inhabitants on their informal leader.

The need for a social network in Lebanon, financial means, and the importance of being a strong character clearly restrict access to becoming Shawish. Here especially references to the distinct character of the Shawish show, how s/he is considered capable of inhabiting the leadership role. At the same time, most respondents claim that they themselves would not be able to become Shawish, because they do not possess the needed means.[57] Generally, the Shawish is highly respected in the community and his/her role is discussed in a positive way.

> "The camp wasn't like this, a lot of things have changed… first of all there was no school when we came here… after we had been here for some months the school was built… and second now there is a system/order (نظام)… before someone came, someone left and it wasn't in order… now it's organized… for example this thing is like that now… the Shawish decides."
> (Female (1), 44, 4B)

The Shawish transforms the settlement for its inhabitants, from a space of disorder to an organized structure and generally acts in the interest of the respondents. Inhabitants of both settlements, either claim that there are no settlements without a Shawish or that moving to a settlement where there is no Shawish is not an option for

[55] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Power structures: Control and responsibilities of the Shawish (2)*, Row 4).
[56] More on agricultural work in the next chapter.
[57] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Origin and creation of the settlement / Means to become Shawish (1)*, Row 3).

them.[58] The informal leader takes over the role of the protector of the inhabitants and thus adds a layer of security for the community members, which is not accessible to people who do not live in a settlement. In this way, the role of the Shawish is understood as essential to the general functioning and security inside of the settlement.

> "So here he is the Shawish, he is responsible and that's it… he doesn't come to our house… he doesn't control us… the Shawish is like the owner of the house that you rent an apartment in... he is not responsible for us... we decide where we go... we are friends with the Shawish."
> (Female (1), 35, 4F)

Feelings of friendship towards the Shawish are stated in many of the interviews, s/he is not only seen as the leader, but as part of the settlement community and the personal network of the inhabitants.[59] Still, it is the Shawish who ultimately decides who is allowed to move to the settlement and s/he has the power to remove families from his/her rented land.[60] The position of the Shawish is thus two-fold, s/he is considered a friend, while at the same time, s/he has a lot of power over the inhabitants of the settlement.

5.2.4 Conflict Resolution

> "There is things where she (Shawisha) doesn't get involved, but if neighbors are not relatives, she needs to get involved… if for example me and my neighbor, he is from a tribe and I am from another tribe, if there is a problem between us, there will be a crisis in the camp… his relatives come, mine come… and the problem becomes big… but she gets involved and resolves it… if it is between brothers, they resolve it, but if everyone is from a different tribe, from a different house, she gets involved… it's better when she does… but if it's within the family, then no… the houses are secretive… no one knows."
> (Female (2), 31, 7Q)

The Shawish clearly has the power to resolve bigger conflicts within the settlement community, but conflicts that take place within the close family are resolved by the head of household. Both interviews with the Shawishes reflect that they do not tolerate any bigger issues between the families of the settlement. The above statement also confirms the conclusions made, that the inhabitants clearly feel the

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[58] My experience in the field shows, that there actually are some settlements where the inhabitants are in direct contact with the landowner, without a Shawish who takes the role of the informal leader.
[59] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Relationship between inhabitants of the settlement (13)*, Row 15).
[60] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Power structures: Control and responsibilities of the Shawish (2)*, Row 4).

need for a Shawish in their community. If there wasn't anyone who resolved the conflicts in a top-down manner, small issues might turn into bigger conflicts. At the end it is the word of the Shawish that counts, if bigger issues occur in the settlement. While in the first settlement, conflict resolution takes place between the men of the settlement with the Shawish in a leading role, in the second settlement it is more often the women who state, that they go to the tent of the Shawisha and ask for support to resolve conflicts.[61] In both settlements conflicts mostly originate between the children, which then escalate, and parents get involved, trying to ensure the rights of their children.[62] This is often explained based on narratives of containment, as there is no space for the children to play and the narrow paths between the tents become the playing ground for more than a hundred children.[63]

As the first settlement is surrounded by other ITSs, conflicts also arise between the neighboring settlements. In this case, it is the sole power of the Shawish to resolve them with the informal leader of the neighboring settlement.[64] As soon as conflicts cross the settlement boundaries the Shawish is the person responsible and takes over the undivided power to speak on behalf of the settlement community. Then, while the community seems to be confined to the settlement space, the Shawish moves freely across its boundaries.

5.3 Relationships Towards Outside of the Settlement

> "For example, my tent is here… I don't go outside... outside there is the Shawish ... he is responsible for outside... if something happens, he resolves it straight away."
> (Male (1), 50, 4G)

The use of the word outside, "barra" (برّة) in the interviews referred mostly to outside of the settlement and not outside of the own tent. While boundaries between the inside and outside of the tent seem more fluid, as intimate spaces become blurred and

[61] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Conflict resolution (5)*, Row 7).
[62] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Conflicts (4)*, Row 6).
[63] Discourse of children as problem-makers in the settlement, the children of the settlement are seen as different than children who grow up in houses. This could be a study on its own; generational differences in perceiving the settlement space; topophilic sentiments towards the settlement space (Tuan 1974); children who are being born in the settlement vs. adults who knew life in a house; before they had to flee and build a life in tents.
[64] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Conflict resolution (5)*, Row 7).

a lot of importance is assigned to the community, the dichotomy between inside and outside of the settlement is emphasized. In both settlements, the tent of the Shawish is located at the entrance and functions as a surveillance mechanism of who comes in and who goes out. As discussed above in the introduction of the research sites, the Shawisha of the second settlement even installed cameras for a 24-hour surveillance of the entrance.

5.3.1 Humanitarian Aid Organizations

The initial relationship that humanitarian organizations have, that want to provide relief for the inhabitants of these settlements is with the Shawish. The Shawish has a list with all the names of the inhabitants of the settlement, that s/he gives to the organization. Based on this list and the statements of the Shawish, the organization decides the kind of aid, that is distributed in the settlement.

> "She is responsible for the water[65]… it's given/presupposed (مفروض) that the Shawish is responsible… when it comes to organizations… she talks for us… she is the delegated (مندوب) of the camp… she doesn't allow them to enter the camp… help is not allowed to enter except for the water… only water comes to us… she is the committee, when help comes, they take her opinion, no one knows."
> (Male (2), 42, 4O)

As shown in the literature review above, recent studies (BouChabke and Haddad 2021; Chatty 2016; Clarke 2018) have pointed out the disconnect between the practices of humanitarian organizations in the field and the realities of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. One evident reason of this has been seen in the sole reliance of many humanitarian agencies on the informal leader of the ITS (BouChabke and Haddad 2021; Clarke 2018). Over the past years, this approach replaced relief based on more inclusive studies of refugee needs (Chatty 2016).

In the first settlement recent distributions of aid, mentioned in the interviews mainly include bread and food boxes, while the inhabitants of the second settlement mentioned receiving construction materials to prepare their tents for the winter. Overall, the respondents state that there is generally no humanitarian aid in their

[65] Referring to the water trucks from UNHCR that monthly fills the water tanks of the whole settlement.

settlements, compared to others that apparently receive constant support.[66] This statement is in most interviews coupled with the mentioning of the responsibility of the Shawish to bring aid to the settlement.[67]

> "She should help… like you are the Shawish… you talk to the organizations because of the camp… but here the Shawish doesn't help with this whole issue… organizations talk to her… She brings the organizations, she has the number of UNHCR and everything… we tell her talk to UNHCR tell them to come and clean,[68] but she doesn't answer us."
> (Male (2), 22, 12V)

It seems that over the past years, humanitarian organizations have established and enforced their reliance on the informal leaders of the studied ITSs to a point, where for most inhabitants the only way of receiving humanitarian aid and even accessing humanitarian organizations is through the Shawish.[69]

> "So, the organization goes to *** (Shawisha) and says, we want to bring this and that… if it's her opinion she tells them yes, if not she says no… it would be better if they came straight to us… I want that they knock on my door, go from person to person… give us your papers, what do you need… and I explain my situation… but she talks for us… not just her… that's the work of any Shawish."
> (Male (2), 42, 12O)

The lack of mechanisms that control the interactions between the aid organization and the Shawish, and the feeling of not having a voice to state the own need and impact the humanitarian aid that is provided, is very frustrating to many of the inhabitants of the settlements.[70]

Moving beyond the initial contact of the organization, the actual aid distributions that take place inside of the settlement reveal additional hierarchies.[71] Distribution events are based on the list that the Shawish created, mentioning all the names of the inhabitants of the settlement. Initially the material aid, be it food packages or construction materials are unloaded in the tent of the Shawish. The people of the settlement have to wait outside of the distribution space, that is only accessible to representatives of the organization, the Shawish and young men who help lifting and

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[66] General narrative across all inhabitants of ITSs who I encountered between August and December of 2021.
[67] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Humanitarian Aid (10)*, Row 12).
[68] Refers to removing the rainwater that flooded the sanitary facilities.
[69] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Responsibility for humanitarian aid (11)*, Row 13).
[70] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Control Mechanisms / Managing Exploitation (6),* Row 8).
[71] Based on own experience in the field, witnessing multiple of these aid distributions in Settlement 1 between August 2021 and March 2022.

carrying material. The Shawish reads the names and the called person comes forward and picks up the amount of aid that the NGO provided per family.

> "*** (Shawish) is the one who takes care of this process (aid distribution). It's not our job, when it comes to his place we don't go. If our name was in the list we take, if it's my brother then it's his share he takes it to his own house."
> (Female (1), 39, 12D)

While the organization dictates the amount and kind of aid provided[72] the distribution itself is governed by the Shawish. Distributions are based on the number of families and number of persons per family.[73] During the whole distribution process inhabitants of the settlement constantly examine and control each other, to ensure that distributions are fair. Thus, during the process everyone is an observer while being observed at the same time. Similar structures have been observed in a Burmese refugee camp in Thailand, where the examination of aid delivery revealed specific "micro-structures" and a "social order" of the camp (Bochmann 2019).

The Shawish in the ITS in Lebanon is excepted from these observations and leftovers are stored at his tent where he later, after organizations have left the settlement, solely commands their further use. It is thus not surprising, that aid distributions are a constant source of conflicts in the settlement that the Shawish has the sole power to resolve, as he is empowered by the organization to command over the donated goods. At the same time, the single reliance of organizations on the Shawish over the past years, has developed into hierarchies where the Shawish now has the power to deny access of humanitarian actors to the settlement space and the vulnerable community.[74]

5.3.2 Landowners

> "My relationship with the landowner is good, but I don't really have anything to do with him... when it comes to paying the rent of the land... then he goes straight to the Shawish... the Shawish is between me and the landowner."
> (Male (1), 50, 10G)

[72] Mainly based on initial information given by the Shawish.
[73] Families with less than five or five members receive one unit, while families with more than five members receive two units.
[74] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Responsibility for humanitarian aid (11)*, Row 13).

The landowner rents out the land directly to the Shawish, the Shawish pays him a yearly rent and collects the money from each tent inside the ITS. In both studied settlements the relationship between the Shawish and the owner of the land that the settlement is built on, is described by the inhabitants and the Shawish himself as very close and at the same time very secretive. The inhabitants of the two settlements make clear, that their relationship is with the Shawish and not with the landowner, and that the relationship between the Shawish and the landowner doesn't concern them.[75] Although, the landowner lives in the area, in the first settlement his house is but a few meters away, the inhabitants have no interaction with him. Some of the elder men in the first settlement claim that they know him, while all the women have no information about who the landowner is.[76] In the second settlement everyone says that they have never seen the landowner or know his name. It furthermore seems very important that the landowner doesn't enter the settlement. So, even though he officially owns the space, there is an agreement that his physical presence in the settlement is not asked for.[77]

Thus, the landowner stays in the background, is never seen by the inhabitants but still he has a very permanent presence in the settlement. He is the one who is asking for the money, while the Shawish positions himself/herself just as the mediator between him and the inhabitants. While officially the landowner sets the price, the Shawish just collects the money and forwards it to him.

> "I wish I could meet the landowner… for example, sometimes the Shawisha gets upset from one of us, so she threatens to remove (expel) us even if this person did nothing, so if this person knows the landowner, he has the chance to defend his standpoint."
> (Female (2), 50, 10P)

The absence of any direct relationship between the inhabitant and the landowner gives the Shawish power over the inhabitant without any control mechanism present.[78]

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[75] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Relationship to Landowner (8),* Row 10).
[76] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Relationship to Landowner (8),* Row 10, Column B-K).
[77] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Relationship to Landowner (8),* Row 10, Column M-V).
[78] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Control Mechanisms / Managing Exploitation (6),* Row 8).

5.3.3 State Institutions

The Shawish is in permanent contact with security institutions and the municipalities. He reports about what is happening in the settlement, who lives there, who moves in and who leaves, if there is a bigger conflict, or any suspicious behavior of the inhabitants. Through that there is a constant surveillance of the inhabitants of the settlement through the Shawish. The inhabitants are aware of the contact between the Shawish and different institutions, but they do not know the details about the flow of information over the Shawish from the settlement to these institutions.[79] As mentioned by other studies (Ghaddar 2017; Stel 2020) the Shawish is located between state institutions and the refugees. Many municipalities insist on the existence of a Shawish in the settlement and s/he is used to stay in control of its residents (Stel, 2020).

> "The state here wants a Shawish, because he informs them what happens here... they even want to know if we renew the sheets of our tents... if someone leaves from the camp the Shawish has to tell them... if he doesn't... he gets problems... but the Shawish is good."
> (Male (1), 52, 9K)

Every three months the Shawish of the first settlement has to deliver a list to the responsible municipality, naming all the families in the settlement, their contact, the number of children and the tent they live in.[80]

5.3.4 Work in Agriculture

During working season,[81] the Shawish takes the female workers of the first settlement to the fields, where they work for the Lebanese landowners, who are referred to as "mu'allim" (معلّم) which means master or teacher (Wehr and Cowan 1994, 744).[82] The landowner tells the Shawish in advance, how many workers he wants for a certain task and the Shawish brings them to the fields with his truck, and takes them back to the settlement.[83]

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[79] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Surveillance/ Information channels from the settlement towards outside (7)*, Row 9).
[80] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Surveillance/ Information channels from the settlement towards outside (7)*, Row 9, Column B-K).
[81] Usually from March/April until November.
[82] Only applies to the first settlement as the Shawisha in the second settlement doesn't work in agriculture.
[83] Work shifts start very early in the morning, around 4am; one shift lasts 5 hours, depending on the season women work one or two shifts a day.

As discussed above, agricultural work is highly feminized as harvesting fruit and vegetables is seen as work for women. So, in the first studied settlement most of the unmarried women and some of the female inhabitants that are married, work during the season with the Shawish in the fields. During the work outside of the settlement, the general narrative is that the Shawish takes over the responsibility for the girl while she is away from her family and ensures her rights.[84]

> "I take her there and bring her back, I'm responsible for her rights, a lot of the Lebanese farmers deceive me and don't give me my money, but the girl takes her money to the last lira, I don't take anything from them, if the Lebanese discounted from the money for some reason... I go to them."
> (Male Shawish (1), 34, 5J)

In this sense, it is very important that the Shawish is a friend and from the same area in Syria, as he inhabits the role of protecting the women as soon as they leave the settlement. The narrative exists, that without the Shawish it is not secure for the women to work outside of the settlement which makes the existence of the Shawish necessary.

This type of hired labor in agriculture exists in Northwest Syria where labor contractors (Shawish) recruit and supervise agricultural workers for the landowner. A study of the feminization of agricultural work and its impact on woman empowerment, found similar gender structures in Syria. There, contractors also come from local communities "so local families were comfortable entrusting their womenfolk to work in the contractors' gangs, even in other villages or abroad" (Abdelali-Martini and Dey de Pryck 2015, 8).

> "There (in Syria) it is called agent/representative (وكيل) ... but here the Shawish has power over the people… it's is not ok… he takes money and talks a lot… there are Shawishes in Syria but not like here… he takes the girls to work and brings them back, but the atmosphere and the salary are not like here… here if the Shawish does his work of course he benefits more than in Syria."
> (Male (2), 42, 4O)

Clearly the role of the Shawish was expanded from its original responsibilities in Syria, as s/he became the informal leader of entire refugee communities in Lebanon. This resulted for example in the fact, that women living in the first settlement are not

[84] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Work in Agriculture (3)*, Row 5, Column B-K).

allowed to work with another Shawish or directly with the landowner. The Shawish's approval for them to live in his settlement is bound to their commitment to work with him, in case they work in the fields.[85] Furthermore, it is mostly the men of the family who decide if their daughters or wife work for the Shawish or not.

> "We used to work with him in the beginning, but now not... we don't want to... my husband doesn't let us... I have children so I can't and she (points to her sister), he (husband) doesn't let her."
> (Female (1), 35, 17H)

As participation in the labor market is not necessarily empowering for women (Elson 1999), this study suggests that existing forms of agricultural work in ITSs do not challenge the gender power structures but rather enforce them. The same conclusion has been made for the feminization of agricultural work in Northwest Syria as female farmworkers continue to be responsible for all traditional tasks and their income is just seen as additional to the male income (Abdelali-Martini and Dey de Pryck 2015).

> "The Shawish says… for example me and some girls (بنات) with this employer (معلّم)… he decides… there is still girls who cry, they don't want to go… if he says you go to this employer, you go… for example… you go to the beans, you to the zucchini, you go to the cucumbers, like this… I can't decide, he decides… very rarely for example we say we want to go there (specific employer), and he lets us… but he decides in the morning, you go there, and you go there."
> (Female (1), 44, 5C)

The worker in this way is completely powerless to take decisions. In the beginning of the year the workers, or in most cases their families either commit to work for the Shawish or not. If they do, they are obligated to work for the whole year. Here the interviews show that there is a difference between married and unmarried women. As long as the woman is still unmarried, a "bint" (بنت), she is obliged to go to work with the Shawish if she committed to it in the beginning of the year. Women who are married and have children are allowed to only work a few days a week or stay home if a child is sick and needs her.[86]

> "The landowner pays the Shawish and the Shawish pays the girl... of course he takes money from it... a lot... we don't know how much... he says he takes 7'000... but I don't know if this is right... he doesn't let me know how much…that is a secret in his head… him and the landowner."
> (Male (1), 50, 8G)

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[85] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Work in Agriculture (3)*, Row 5, Column B-K).
[86] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Work in Agriculture (3)*, Row 5, Column B-K).

The Shawish gets the salary for each worker from the landowner at the end of the season and keeps a percentage for himself.[87] During the year, he records who works how much and at the end of the year he calculates the salary of the worker and subtracts the price of the yearly rent and additional fees, like the garbage or loans that he gave out to the family during the year. In most cases there is nothing left at the end[88] and the worker never gets access to her salary.[89] Again here, there is a clear absence of control mechanisms concerning the money of the salaries. The worker doesn't have any direct relationship to the landowner and no way to access any information to manage the salary. As currently work in agriculture is for many families in the first settlement the only source of income, except from UNHCR support, the Shawish at has complete control over the economic situation of the family. The location of the settlement in the middle of agricultural lands, further facilitates the empowerment of the Shawish. Especially now, transport costs are very high, to go from the settlement far off from any main roads to factories or institutions that offer work for refugees is very expansive and the salary is not worth the transportation.[90]

In the second settlement that is studied here, run by a female Shawisha these structures do not exist. Inhabitants who work in the fields, either work with other Shawishes, or in rare cases directly with the landowner.

> "The only difference is that I don't take forbidden money, I didn't see my son for twenty years. Do you think I can send someone to work and share his wage… if he earns 50, I take 30 and give him 20? Why would I do that? I will never do it; I don't take advantage of others… is it fair to send girls for work in the field the whole day and take their money… my neighbor does that, I don't… it's a wrongful act."
> (Female Shawisha (2), 37, 5M)

The Shawisha clearly condemns the way in which different Shawishes work as contractors for agricultural work and makes existing gender structures responsible for exploitative treatment of the workers.

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[87] Currently the salary that the worker receives for one shift (5 hours) is 17'000 LBP (current exchange rate for 1$ fluctuates between 20'000 and 30'000: this means that workers are paid less than 1$ for 5 hours of work. It is unclear how much the Shawish receives per worker, estimations made by the inhabitants are, that the Shawish takes between 7'000 and 15'000 per worker per shift.
[88] In previous years this wasn't the case, as salaries were higher relative to the costs.
[89] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Work in Agriculture (3)*, Row 5, Column B-K).
[90] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Recent changes in Lebanon that impact the communities in ITSs (15)*, Row 17).

"The amount is collected by the Shawish, if the Shawish wants to earn extra on other's interests, then they have to pay more, you see one decent woman is better and more honored than hundreds of men. I don't do haram."
(Female Shawisha (2), 37, 8M)

As Helou (2014) already concluded earlier, the power of the Shawish in the first settlement reproduces patriarchal gender roles. At the intersection of race, gender and citizenship, structures in ITSs in Lebanon, where the Shawish works in agriculture reflect severe forms of work exploitation.[91] This is also reflected in the interviews with the inhabitants of the second settlement.

"They (Shawishes agriculture) make deals, they agree to unite one price, one wage for the worker, all of them are cruel… if it was my choice, I would never allow anyone to be a Shawish,[92] let the landlord pay the workers directly without the interference of the Shawish, in this way the worker will be more comfortable, we do not have Shawish (agriculture) in this settlement. You feel we have freedom in here because we deal directly with the landowners…here the Shawisha does not interfere with us she only deals with NGOs and make sure that supplies are provided and she collects the rent and bills, this makes us happy."
(Female (2), 50, 5P)

[91] On another occasion, it would be interesting to examine these forms of agricultural work in light of older feudalistic systems like Serfdom in Russia or Silk trade in Syria.
[92] Refers to Shawish in agriculture.

Chapter Six

Findings: Implications of Informal Governance Structures

ITSs in Lebanon are hybrid spaces with complex informal governance structures that vary between settlements. They differ according to the characteristics of the Shawish, the origin of the community, the location of the settlement and access to the labor market. The above discussed informal governance structures, found in the two studied ITSs in the Beqaa, include a number of important implications for the hierarchies, tools of power and gendered processes that shape the way in which the spaces within ITSs are negotiated.

6.1 Boundaries Between Inside and Outside

> "My role here is to be the Shawish, the president of the camp and I'm responsible for everyone in the camp, that means if anyone wants anything, I go and bring it to him, if anyone is sick, I take him, I'm responsible for everyone from the beginning to the end. All the tents here are under my responsibility I go I come… if for example there is an organization, I take care of their demands for everything in the camp, I'm responsible and if anything happens in the camp I need to know first."
> (Male Shawish (1), 34, 4J)

The examples above show how the Shawish is positioned at the border between the inside and the outside of the settlement and takes over the role of a mediator across its boundaries. While physically his/her tent is located at the entrance of the settlement, he/she monopolizes the relationships that go across the settlement borders. Landowners, NGOs and any state institutions access information about the settlement solely through their relationship with the Shawish. This empowers the informal leader of the settlement as he/she controls the information channels across the borders of the settlement. By taking over all the responsibilities and contacts with stakeholders outside of the settlement, the Shawish simultaneously controls the kind of information that reaches the settlement community. In this sense the collection, production, and circulation of information, managed by the Shawish alone, functions as a governance strategy in the settlement. It allows the Shawish to shift responsibility away from himself/herself to external stakeholders, while his/her

figure is understood as the innocent mediator, who generally acts in the interest of the inhabitants.

On one hand, landowners and NGOs do not directly interfere with the informal structures in the settlement and give the refugee community the power to decide over the space the settlement is built on. On the other hand, the fact that there is no direct relationship between the inhabitants of the settlement and these stakeholders, takes the possibility from the inhabitants to monitor and manage issues like rent prices and the kind of humanitarian aid that is provided. Furthermore, through monopolizing access to resources and the provision of anything that the inhabitants of the settlements need, the Shawish succeeds in creating a microcosmos. In this sense, there is no need for the inhabitants to have any contact towards outside of the settlement, making interaction between the Syrian and surrounding Lebanese community unnecessary.

These microcosmos can be understood in the words of Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) as a self-contained topophilic space for its inhabitants, where the presence of the community produces notions of belonging, and that because of its enclosure signifies security and protection from the outside. Simultaneously, the limited access of the inhabitants to anyone that directly influences their lives, has to be understood as reinforcing the physical containment to the settlement space. The containment to the settlement space in combination with the role of the Shawish, reporting back to state institutions creates a panoptic environment, where inhabitants experience a feeling of being constantly watched (Evans 1971). As state institutions rely on the Shawish, a usually exceptional situation, that requires constant surveillance is made permanent within the structures of the settlement (Foucault 2008). This reflects mechanisms of power that have become institutionalized over the past decade and now function as a governance strategy in ITSs in Lebanon. As discussed in the literature review above and confirmed by this study, the Shawish here is in a position, where the state pressures him/her to take over this role and can be made responsible in case s/he doesn’t inform the state institutions.

In this way, the Shawish can be understood as a gatekeeper between inside and outside of the settlement, that reproduces notions of exclusion, keeping any external

stakeholders out and simultaneously contributing to the surveillance and containment of the inhabitants within. At the same time, on a communal level he is perceived as a friend and his role is understood as adding a layer of protection to the settlement community. Consequently, over the past years, inhabitants of ITSs as well as external stakeholders developed a dependency on the informal leader and for many, ITSs without a Shawish are not imaginable anymore. This positive perception of the role of the Shawish overshadows the disempowering effect that the empowerment of the informal leader has on the settlement community, as it encourages the inhabitants to consent to the existing conditions and governance structures in the settlement.

Furthermore, the rising prices in Lebanon and stricter applied shelter policies make it more difficult for families to move permanently from one settlement to the other. As it is not allowed to build new tents and construction material is not affordable anymore, the option to move to another settlement is not as viable and makes refugees vulnerable to unpredictable and exploitative Shawishes.

6.2 Evolution of the Role of the Shawish

> "We don't know from where she has her money, she is only responsible for the settlement's security and she collects bills, but she has no relation with the people who work… she works with organizations and answers their questions not like other Shawishes, the rest control you in everything … they agree with each other." (Female (2), 50, 4P)

The origin of the word Shawish (شاويش) goes back to ottoman where the word "Çavuş" means military sergeant or messenger. In the ottoman empire the word can also be found as a family name. Hans Wehr (1994) tracks the Arabic word Shawish back to Egypt and Sudan and translates it with police sergeant or policeman (Wehr and Cowan 1994, 527). Thus, the word clearly refers to a person, whose role is to protect and defend the rights of the people, while at the same time he inhabits a position of power and control. Evidence of prisons in Lebanon and Syria show, that the word Shawish is also used to describe a prisoner who inhabits a privileged position, as he reports back to the official prison guards. He is respected by the other prisoners and is relied upon by the guards to communicate new rules and regulations (CLDH 2013).

Only later, the word is used to describe the role of the mediator between landowners and workers in Syria and Lebanon. This understanding of the Shawish remains relatively local, as only people in rural areas, who work in agriculture are familiar with the use of the term in this way. For others, the meaning is still associated with prisons, military, or police. As discussed in the literature review above, with the outbreak of the war in Syria and the transformation of settlements for agricultural workers to refugee shelter, the role of the Shawish was expanded to the informal leader of the ITSs. At the same time, the Shawish of the first settlement kept his original role in agriculture. Overall, the initial governance structures in the settlement can be understood as a replication of processes back in Syria, taking place in rural communities to manage work in agriculture. With the outbreak of the war in Syria, these processes in Lebanon, are now applied to additional organization structures, taking over the governance in ITSs.

The information collected for this study from the second settlement clearly shows an evolution of the role of the Shawish over the past years. The Shawisha in the second settlement is considered the informal leader, even though she doesn't occupy the role of a mediator between agricultural work and the refugee. Furthermore, she didn't inherit the position as the Shawish in the first settlement did, but she was a refugee who came to Lebanon in 2012 for the first time. I contend here that even though, as Cassani (2021) states it can be rendered true that originally ITSs in Lebanon were organized around the labor market, the second settlement suggests, that the role of the Shawish has evolved over the past years. Now the labor market is not central to the empowerment of the Shawish anymore but rather existing governance structures of agricultural settlements (first settlement) are copied and adapted (second settlement) according to the individual informal leader.

6.3 The Role of the Shawish through the Lens of Ethnicity and Gender

> "I have been here for three years... I came to this camp because I knew the people, from before, from Syria... so I came here... if they were people I don't know, I wouldn't live here... I have daughters, so I have responsibilities, if they

leave my house, I know the Shawish, I know who is responsible.... I knew they[93] were good."
(Male (1), 50, 17G)

The role of the Shawish as a protector and the person responsible for the inhabitants of the settlement, can be understood as a replication of deeply rooted hierarchal traditions of the communities back in Syria. This becomes especially visible in the role of the Shawish as the mediator between the work in agriculture and the women in the first settlement. Women who work in the fields in the first settlement clearly state, that as soon as they leave the settlement to go to work with the Shawish, he becomes responsible for their security. As he is from the same area in Syria, having the same background, he can become responsible for the workers while they are away from the settlement and from the men of their family. In this way patriarchal gender structures from home are replicated to the bigger community of the settlement and the Shawish takes over the role of the head of the household of the imagined family enlarged to the settlement.

While individual intimate spaces become blurred and are replaced by community space, the whole settlement community imitates one big family. Quist (2016) who studied "traumatic masculinities" in ITSs in Lebanon shows, how gender roles are being renegotiated, as men are not able to live up to their provider role of the family anymore, while increasingly it is the women who work. This study shows that generally gender roles in the family have not changed, as almost all respondents claim, that the main responsibilities at home are the same as back in Syria.[94] Still, the understanding of the Shawish as being responsible or even the sponsor of the community suggests, how the traditional power of the head of household is being transferred to the Shawish.

It is thus interesting to try and understand, how in the second settlement it is a woman who takes over the role of the informal leader of the settlement. Then generally the researched communities here, still have to be understood as highly patriarchal societies, where women inhabit relatively marginal roles. It is thus not

[93] Inhabitants of the settlement.
[94] Retrieved from Interviews (See *Disruptive effects of forced displacement on gender roles (17),* Row 19).

surprising, that the Shawisha is known in the whole region around her settlement, even though only a few have actually met her in person. “She is practically a man” (هي رجوليّة) people say when they talk about her, referring to her leadership skills and the way she acts. Furthermore, inhabitants refer to her in the masculine form Shawish, unless they are pointing out, that she is a woman. Thus, her self-proclaimed status of being Shawisha, overshadows the fact that she is a woman, and her gender becomes secondary. The same way in which the feminization of agricultural work in Syria as discussed above created a group of female contractors, who are respected in the community and could be understood as a “modest evolution in social norms” (Abdelali-Martini and Dey de Pryck 2015, 912) the emergence of female Shawishas in Lebanon indicates a renegotiation of gender roles. The Shawisha is seen as having strong leadership skills and is highly respected in her community.

As the settlement communities identify themselves and the Shawish based on their ethnic background, dynamics of inclusion and exclusion are reproduced based on the geographical origin. Even though, both Shawishes claim, that anyone can move to the settlement and in fact there is some families in both settlements who have different geographical origins, most of the inhabitants are from the same region as the Shawish himself/herself. The size of the land that the settlement is built on is limited and so is the number of families that can live in the settlement. Clearly direct or indirect relatives of the Shawish are prioritized in decisions about who can move to the land.[95]

6.4 Constructing a Group of Empowered Refugees

> “According to the personality of the person… if someone (eats) has a heart of a bird then he can’t talk and negotiate with landlords... I can, I’ve been having a good relationship with all the farmers for 10 years now we are intertwined … there is no difference anymore… there is no difference between Syrian and Lebanese and so on... it became common interest and business (مصلحة) now.”
> (Male Shawish (1), 34, 3J)

[95] As of now, both settlements that are studied here are fully occupied and both have families requesting a place to stay. This can be explained with the current numbers of Syrian families in the country who are looking for cheaper places to stay, as rent prices are becoming more and more expansive and are not affordable anymore.

While governance structures in ITSs had disempowering effects on its inhabitants, I would like to focus here on how the Shawish can be understood in many ways as an empowered refugee. More than ten years into the Syrian refugee crisis, Shawishes in Lebanon have become necessary figures in managing Syrian refugees living in ITSs in the country. Today this group of refugees are informed, empowered, and respected in the Lebanese community and they can now be understood as Shawish before they are refugees. In the words of Derrida (2007), the utterance of being Shawish has thus become performative and assigns power to a certain group of refugees, who apart from their position of being the informal leader of the ITS are not different to its inhabitants. Introducing himself/herself as the Shawish of an ITS, instantly transforms the way in which the refugee is perceived by any stakeholder (Derrida 2007).

Shawishes in Lebanon have strong social networks, move around freely in the country, have a stable income and possess a lot of information concerning the legal situation of Syrian refugees in the country. The Shawisha in the second settlement claims, that she talks to authorities if any family in the settlement need residency permits. The position of the Shawish suggests to a certain extent successful integration in Lebanon and a level of empowerment, that other Syrian refugees in Lebanon do not possess.

Chapter Seven

Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

In this thesis I have sought to bring attention to the complex micro-structures of informal governance in ITSs in Lebanon. The results based on the two cases suggest, that there are processes that generally take place in these kinds of settlements, while at the same time there is to be found individual governance structures, based on the informal leader.

Both settlements show that the Shawish/a inhabits the role of a gatekeeper, who contains the residents to the settlement space by creating a microcosmos within, in contrast to narratives of fear and threat of anything that takes place outside of the settlement boundaries. The creation of a perceived safe space within, is in both settlements closely connected to the shared ethnicity of the inhabitants. This reproduces notions of inclusion and exclusion, as refugees with the same geographical origin are prioritized. Over the years, the Shawish has become essential to the general functioning of the ITSs, is understood as the figure responsible for transforming the space from disorder to order, and its inhabitants have become dependent on their informal leader. While this had an empowering effect on the Shawish/a, it clearly disempowered the refugees living within these structures. External stakeholders have largely submitted to these power structures: For humanitarian organizations the reliance on the Shawish facilitates the work in the field; landowners profit by renting out land that is not fertile enough for agriculture anymore; farmers profit from cheap agricultural labor; the Shawish has higher profit margins than before; and state institutions can rely on an internal control mechanism, established in the role of the Shawish.

However, this thesis suggests an evolution of the role of the Shawish from the first, to the Shawisha of the second studied settlement. The first settlement is still organized around the labor market and agricultural hierarchies reveal exploitative

structures, especially of female labor in the settlement. The Shawisha of the second settlement clearly distances herself from these agricultural structures that have existed for years and were intensified when migrant workers became refugees. The fact that in the second settlement a woman takes over the role of the informal leadership and doesn't exploit female labor, suggests a renegotiation of gender roles. This is implied in the empowerment of a woman to a higher position than many men in the hierarchy of the settlement. Furthermore, it is reflected in the fact that some women in the second settlement work directly with landowners or in other industries, as they are free to choose their employer. Furthermore, as conflict resolution in the first settlement takes place mainly between the men, structures in the second settlement suggest that women have a voice and feel more comfortable to ask for the support of the Shawisha. Still, it remains to be proven, if this shift in gender roles in the community, that simultaneously impacts the men and women of the ITSs in different ways is applicable to other settlements. However, during this research I have heard of other female Shawishas in the region and in Northern Lebanon. Thus, further research needs to be done on ITSs run by female Shawishas.

This thesis has to be understood as a preliminary study and there is a need for additional research on these ITSs. Each of the mentioned governance structures above, call for further studies to get more inclusive insights of all the processes that are taking place. Furthermore, and as already mentioned in the methodology section, there is a need to interview external stakeholders to get a more comprehensive perspective on the described processes. Thus, the following recommendations should be read, keeping these limitations in mind.

7.2 Recommendations

For achieving long-term sustainability of ITSs, successful governance structures need to produce the right balance between Economic, Social and Environmental factors. The observed governance structures in the two studied ITSs are primarily based on informal institutions that are socially and economically enforced while environmental factors remain secondary. Socially, governance structures are built on relationships, often based on ethnic identifications and gender of the inhabitants and their Shawish. Economically the Shawish plays an important role in securing the

livelihoods of the inhabitants and in the first settlement even has the power over the salaries of the women who work for him. While inclusion in the labor market, makes settlements more sustainable in their organization, existing exploitative processes are very problematic.

In the following a few recommendations are proposed that can be extracted from the results, discussed above. The recommendations address external stakeholders and call for the consideration of existing informal governance structures, while working in the field for more effective and successful responses. I will start with the most urgent recommendations that have been empirically proven above, and then go on to make more long-term suggestions that clearly need additional research, in order to be successfully implemented.

Recommendation #1: Humanitarian organizations need to conduct more extensive fieldwork in ITSs for a fairer, more inclusive, and need-based response.

Currently humanitarian organizations rely on the Shawish of the ITSs to plan and execute their work in the field. These practices go against the principles of human rights and take the opportunity from inhabitants of ITSs to voice their needs. There is clearly a need for more extensive fieldwork of humanitarian organizations, to better understand the situation and needs of the refugees, instead of just relying on information provided by informal leaders. Thus, organizations should take back the power over their aid distributions, limit the power of the Shawish and instead additionally rely on statements of inhabitants. This also means to reduce the reliance on social factors while working in the fields, and increasingly rely on environmental factors that influence the specific needs of refugees in particular contexts.

Recommendation #2: Establish control mechanisms to limit the power of the Shawish and manage the exploitation of Syrian agricultural labor.

The fact that ITSs in Lebanon are governed by a refugee and not by an NGO or UNHCR, makes their organization generally more sustainable, as no external institution is needed to manage the refugee spaces. However, especially inhabitants of ITSs who are governed by a Shawish working in agriculture, are vulnerable to exploitative labor practices. There is a need to introduce control mechanisms that

manage the power of the Shawish and limit the opportunities of the informal leader of the ITS to exploit the labor of the inhabitants of the settlement. The aim should be to reduce the vulnerability of refugees to exploitative Shawishes, limit their dependency on the informal leader and empower the refugees, by providing additional channels that go around the Shawish.

Recommendation #3: Better collaboration between aid organizations to ensure the fair distribution of humanitarian aid.

The big number of NGOs that work in ITSs in Lebanon follow very individual approaches and there seems to be no or only little exchange of information between organizations. These leads to a highly fractured humanitarian aid sector and uneven access to support in the different ITSs. Better coordination between organizations could lead to a more effective, fairer and more sustainable response and reduce rivalries between the ITSs.

Recommendation #4: Use existing approaches and insights of "Community Governance" to work in ITSs.

In the introduction I have mentioned a general trend in the humanitarian sector, that pays more attention to communities in refugee camps, as a tool to reduce dependency on humanitarian aid and produce empowered refugees. I argue here that the described governance structures in ITSs in Lebanon can be understood as a particular case of community governance based on pre-existing social networks that are mobilized in the settlements. Governance structures of ITSs show how responsibility is shifted to an empowered group of refugees, which simultaneously has disempowering effects on the refugee community. While these structures show the capacity of refugee communities, to manage their space and take control of their own protection, as pointed out by Bulley (2014), they simultaneously encourage refugee communities to accept their live in the camp, instead of resisting precarious conditions (Ilcan and Rygiel 2015). Thus, a lot of findings on "community governance" can be directly applied to the refugee communities in ITSs in Lebanon and I recommend here that external stakeholders should use these insights while working in the field.

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Appendix

IRB Approved Interview Guide

دليل المقابلة النوعية

مفهوم الحاكمية في المخيّمات غير الرسمية خِلال رُؤية جنّدريّة
دراسة حالة لِمجتمع اللاجئين السوريين في تربل

مقابلة شبه منظمة

هياكل الحاكميّة في أنظمة المستوطنات غير الرسمية ودور النوع الاجتماعي

1) أخبرني عن المستوطنة التي تعيش فيها، هل تشعر بالراحة هنا؟
2) ما هو شعورك حيال وضعك الشخصي في المستوطنة الغير رسمية؟
3) من هي العائلات التي تعيش في نفس المستوطنة؟

أسئلة فرعية:

هل يمكن لأي شخص الانتقال إلى المستوطنة أم عائلات معينة فقط؟
من أين العائلات؟
لماذا قررت الاستقرار في المستوطنة هذه؟

4) كيف يتم تنظيم الخيَم المختلفة في المستوطنة؟ من يعيش بجانب من؟
5) كيف يتم حل النزاعات والمشاكل في المجتمع المحيط؟

أسئلة فرعية:

هل هناك أي قصص يمكن أن تخبرني بها عن مشاكل أو نزاعات في المخيم؟
كيف تم حلها؟
ما هو دورك في حلها؟

6) ما هي أسس تقاسم الموارد مثل الماء والكهرباء بين المجتمع؟ من يتخذ هذه القرارات؟
7) كيف يتم ضمان الأمن في المخيم؟ هل تشعر بالأمان؟
8) كيف تتخلص من القمامة؟ كيف يتم تنظيمها؟
9) ما هو دور الشاويش في المستوطنة؟

أسئلة فرعية:

بماذا يساعدك؟
ما هي مسؤولياته؟
ماذا يحدث إذا اختلفت مع الشاويش؟
كيف يتم انتخاب الشاويش؟
هل يمكن أن تصبح شاويش المخيم إذا أردت ذلك؟
هل يرى الجميع أن الشاويش شرعيٌ في دوره؟

10) كيف يتم التفاعل بين صاحب الأرض وسكان المستوطنة؟ ما هي القوة التي يمتلكها عليكم؟
11) ما هي المنظمات غير الحكومية التي تدعمكم؟

أسئلة فرعية:

من يتفاعل مع المنظمات غير الحكومية؟
كيف تعرف المنظمات غير الحكومية عن الوضع الخاص في المستوطنة؟
كيف يعرفون عن الاحتياجات؟
هل يتمتع كل فرد في المستوطنة بنفس إمكانية الوصول إلى المساعدات الإنسانية؟
هل التوزيعات عادلة؟

12) ما هي المؤسسات الأخرى التي تتخذ قرارات بشأن المخيم؟
13) كيف يبدو يومك العادي؟
14) ما العمل الذي تقوم به؟

أسئلة فرعية:

من الذي يقرر من يعمل وما هي نوبات العمل؟

ماذا يحدث إذا مرض شخص ما او تغيّب؟

هل هناك دائما عمل كاف؟

إذا لم يكن الأمر كذلك، فمن الذي يتم منحه الأولوية؟

15) كيف هي حال المستوطنة اليوم مقارنة بالوقت الذي وصلت فيه إلى هنا واستقريّت في لبنان لأول مرة؟
16) ما الحدث الذي جعلك تتخذ القرار وتغادر سوريا؟
17) كيف كانت تبدو حياتك في سوريا قبل مجيئك إلى لبنان؟ كيف تختلف حياتك في لبنان عما كانت عليه سابقاً في سوريا؟
18) من الذي يوفر الدخل الرئيسي لأسرتك؟ في لبنان؟ في سوريا؟
19) من يتخذ القرارات في المنزل؟ من المسؤول عن المال؟ في لبنان؟ في سوريا؟
20) كيف تغيرت وجهات نظرك حول المسؤوليات في البيت منذ مجيئك إلى لبنان؟

List of Interviews

Settlement 1

Settlement. Nr of Interview & Date	Gender	Birthyear	Status	Literacy	In Leb. since	Origin	Residency
1.1.B (16/11/2021)	male	1972	married	literate	2016	Rif Halab	No
1.2.C (16/11/2021)	female	1977	married	literate	2016	Rif Halab	No
1.3.D (16/11/2021)	female	1982	single	illiterate	2012	Rif Halab	No
1.4.E (17/11/2021)	male	1955	married	illiterate	1994	Rif Halab	No
1.5.F (17/11/2021)	female	1986	married	literate	2014	Rif Halab	No
1.6.G (18/11/2021)	male	1971	married	literate	1987	Rif Halab	No
1.7.H (19/11/2021)	female	1986	married	literate	2018	Rif Halab	No
1.8.I (26/11/2021)	female	2000	married	literate	Birth	Rif Halab	No
1.9.J (26/11/2021)[96]	male	1987	married	literate	2012	Rif Halab	Kafala
1.10.K (26/11/2021)	male	1969	married	literate	2014	Rif Halab	No

Settlement 2

Settlement. Nr of Interview & Date	Gender	Birthyear	Status	Literacy	In Leb. since	Origin	Residency
2.1.M (14/02/2022)[97]	female	1985	married	illiterate	2012	Rif Halab	No
2.2.N (14/02/2022)	female	1991	married	literate	2014	Rif Halab	No
2.3.O	male	1980	married	literate	2013	Rif Halab	No

[96] Shawish
[97] Shawisha

(14/02/2022)							
2.4.P (14/02/2022)	female	1972	married	literate	2013	Rif Halab	No
2.5.Q (15/02/2022)	female	1991	married	literate	2014	Rif Halab	No
2.6.R (15/02/2022)	female	1996	married	literate	2017	Rif Halab	No
2.7.S (16/02/2022)	male	1945	married	illiterate	2012	Rif Halab	No
2.8.T (16/02/2022)	male	1975	married	literate	2014	Rif Halab	No
2.9.U (16/02/2022)	male	1947	married	illiterate	2014	Rif Halab	No
2.10.V (16/02/2022)	male	2000	married	literate	2013	Rif Halab	No

Coding

Excel sheet “Coded Themes_A Micro-Perspective of Governance in ITSs” electronically available upon request: katrin.hermanek@gmx.ch.