Naturalised Palestinians in Lebanon: experiences of belonging, identity and citizenship

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Abstract

This thesis explores the naturalisation of Palestinians in Lebanon. Drawing on a series of in-depth interviews, observations and secondary data, this research investigates the naturalisation process and its aftermath among Palestinians who were granted citizenship in the late 1940s and 1950s in Lebanon. Field research was conducted over the duration of almost one year between 2013 and 2014, during which 80 participants, both naturalised Palestinians as well as refugees, were interviewed.

The objectives of this study are twofold. First: to contribute to remedying the existing gap in the scholarly literature, which has for so long overlooked the naturalised and focused on the fate of the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon and elsewhere in the Arab world. Second: to shed light on the naturalisation process in Lebanon, about which little is known, and investigate its influence on expressions of self, identity, belonging and nationalism. Naturalisation, as this thesis suggests, does not exist nor take place in a political vacuum. It is orchestrated in accordance to preconceived political, demographic and economic objectives. Conditions of inclusion and exclusion in a nation-state do not take place in political isolation, as they serve broader political goals, and are critical to understanding the aftermath of naturalisation as they serve to explain expressions of belonging and identification with the nation-state.

Recently, studies of citizenship have aimed at illustrating the extent to which individuals extend some authority over their citizenship status by determining what citizenship means to them, and not vice versa. Such debates serve as a nodal point throughout this study, which aims to bring to light the personal dimension of power and authority upon which the meaning of citizenship is defined and determined.
For my daughter Leila who has given me life; for my mother Souad, my first and most important teacher; for my husband Hisham who has always been there.
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Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award to the candidate of any other degree or diploma, except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome. To the best of the candidate’s knowledge the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome. Where the work is based on joint research or publications, it discloses the relative contributions of the respective workers or authors.
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Preface

This research came about as both a personal as well as an intellectual pursuit. The initial interest was sparked several years ago while I was searching for documents of my family’s naturalisation. My paternal side was granted Lebanese citizenship some years after they fled from Acre in mandatory Palestine (present-day Israel) to seek refuge in Lebanon. My mother is Lebanese, but this does not explain why I had Lebanese citizenship, as citizenship law in Lebanon, and most Arab states, stipulates that citizenship is solely passed through paternal, and not maternal, lineage. My search was unsuccessful as the documents I was searching for were unavailable. The papers had not been lost nor misplaced; rather, they had never been issued as documents of naturalisation in the first place. I began searching for other sources that could explain the process of our naturalisation, as I was curious to learn how my family, and so many other families I knew, came to be Lebanese citizens. As importantly, I was curious to learn why other Palestinians continued to hold refugee status and reside in refugee camps.

The search led me on a long investigative journey. I spent much time asking other naturalised Palestinians and enquiring about how they, or their families, had acquired Lebanese citizenship. I learned information pertaining to naturalisation from individuals such as members of my family, and the larger network of naturalised persons, including family, friends and acquaintances. However, all this information was orally transmitted, and to the best of my knowledge, had not been recorded. I researched sources in both Arabic and English, and save for some articles that mention the first wave of naturalisation (in Arabic tawtin), the occurrence had been notably overlooked.

There are two waves in which Palestinians were granted Lebanese citizenship. The first, in which my family was granted citizenship and with which this thesis is concerned, began in 1948 and ended in the late 1950s. The last case of naturalisation about which I learned occurred in 1958, marked by the end of the Camil Chamoun government. The second wave took place with the issuing of the naturalisation decree in 1994 when late Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was in office, which saw the naturalisation of 154,931 ‘foreigners’, 32,504 of whom were Palestinian refugees (Kauffman 2006; Al-Hajj 2013). This second wave, granted citizenship according to marsoom al tawtin (naturalisation decree), had been extensively discussed in political discourse and scholarly debates.
(Kauffman 2006). Hariri’s decision stirred heated public debates; politicians and the general public blamed Hariri for making a very poor choice that contributed to further destabilising the already fragile country. While this second, and more recent, case of naturalisation received much attention due to its political and demographic influence (as will be discussed in the next chapter in detail), the first wave of tawtin has, for the most part, been somewhat ignored.

It is somewhat ironic that this significant gap in the literature exists, especially when considering that Palestinians in Lebanon, and in particular residents of the Shatila camp in Beirut, are one of the most over-researched communities of Palestinians anywhere in the world (Succarieh and Tanock 2013; Allan 2013). The lack of scholarly interest in the first wave is attributed to the process and policies upon which naturalisation took place. As the findings of this research contend, cases of naturalisation that occurred between 1948–1958 were not regarded as cases of tawtin, but instead were posited to be cases of istirdad jinsiyya (reclamation of citizenship), and it is in part because of this, that the first case of tawtin has been significantly under-researched.

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Today, there are approximately 449,957 registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. This number is often disputed, as some exaggerate or deflate these numbers to serve political agendas. Lebanese politicians have been known to inflate this number in order to augment the burden the refugee population poses on Lebanon’s resources.

Palestinian refugees are unable to acquire Lebanese citizenship due to restrictions placed on them by the Lebanese state. It is important to note that the majority of refugees do not wish to become naturalised (Qasmiyyeh 2016; Haddad 2003; Fincham 2012). For many refugees, tawtin represents permanency of settlement in Lebanon and the elimination of the possibility of return to historical Palestine, an option that many vehemently oppose. The majority of Palestinians in Lebanon today are holders of UNRWA-issued refugee status (Al-Husseini and Bocco 2009), and slightly more than half (51%) reside in one of the 12 UNRWA-run refugee camps (Ramadan 2013). Palestinian refugees are denied an array of rights, including but not limited to the right to own property and most importantly, the right to employment (Al-Natour 1997, Al-Natour and Yassine 2007), and so both men and women resort to working menial labour jobs when possible (Sayigh 2007).
The Lebanese state has long opposed the possibility of naturalising its Palestinian refugee population in the attempt to preserve rights to which they are endowed as Palestinians, most notably the Palestinian ‘right of return’. Upholding the Palestinian right of return is thus used by the Lebanese political elites as a pretext to reject tawtin as a possible solution to the refugee predicament. This position contributes to what is referred to throughout this thesis as the political rhetoric of tawtin, which, by drawing on these arguments against tawtin, the Lebanese political elites have successfully established a widely accepted discourse that equates tawtin with the elimination of Palestinian identity, and the possibility of return of Palestinians. The second, and arguably more important factor contributing to this opposition to tawtin, is Lebanon’s own internal sectarian fragility and instability, which, as many have suggested, cannot withstand the influx of the mostly Sunni Palestinian population (Haddad 2004; El-Khazen 1997; Salam 1994).

Although this rhetoric of tawtin posits that Palestinian identity would be challenged and the right of return eliminated if tawtin were to occur, the premise of these claims, as this thesis argues is lacking in precedent and foundation. It is important to acknowledge that this rhetoric is lacking in evidence and is arguably founded on strategies of fear that posit tawtin as a fazaa (scarecrow; see Hanafi, Chaaban & Seyfert 2012) to be avoided by both the Lebanese and Palestinians alike. Missing from these claims is the experience of the naturalised themselves, and an analysis of the aftermath of tawtin.

It is only in drawing upon the experience of naturalisation, and its influence on expressions of national identity and belonging that these claims would hold true. In shedding light on experiences of naturalisation as expressed by the naturalised, the findings of this thesis provide a litmus test upon which these claims are examined and subsequently challenged.

Any improvements to the Palestinian status quo, such as granting of even the most elemental rights (e.g. the right to employment), is equated and framed as a step towards tawtin (Peteet 2005; Salih 2013). This has impeded all progress, and resulted in prolonging the status quo, characterised by deteriorating refugee conditions, increased poverty, and legal ambiguity (El-Natour and Yassine 2007).

The importance of investigating the naturalisation process and aftermath – which is the main objectives of this study – extends beyond the case of the naturalised, as the thesis informs the refugee condition in various ways. The investigation into the naturalised in
Lebanon informs the refugee condition in that it sheds much necessary light on the aftermath of the much-feared process of *tawtin*. The ongoing legal liminality to which refugees are subjected in the host state is premised on the presumption that *tawtin* would eliminate Palestinian identity, and return and national character – ultimately leading to complete and total assimilation (Haddad 2004). In investigating whether *tawtin* has led to the complete and full assimilation of Palestinians into the Lebanese ethos, this thesis sets out to provide an approach to answering these concerns. Firstly, it takes into account the specific context in which naturalisation took place, and secondly it aims to account for the various factors that are central to its conceptualisation by the naturalised.
Chapter 1: Lebanon’s Naturalised Palestinians

There are approximately seven million Palestinians in the world today. The majority of these are not in historical Palestine or present-day Israel. They are in the diaspora, with significant concentrations in the Americas, the Arab world and Europe. The literature overwhelmingly focuses on the refugee narrative and experience (Peteet 2005; Hanafi et al. 2014; Masalha 2003; Akarm 2002; Sayigh 2011, 1995; Aruri 2001; Bisharat et al. 1997; Shiblak 1996). Despite its significance and importance to the broader Palestinian struggle, this focus falls short of illustrating the reality of the Palestinian experience around the world. The majority of Palestinians in the world today are citizens of somewhere.

The primary aims of this thesis are to provide an account of the naturalised experience in Lebanon. This thesis focuses on belonging, identity, territory, place, and ‘return’. This is achieved by drawing upon empirical findings gathered over a period of 10 months, as well as personal experiences, accounts and observations.

Lebanon, in contrast with Jordan, is not known for having granted citizenship to its Palestinian refugee population. While naturalisation did in fact take place in Lebanon, albeit on a much smaller scale compared to Jordan, little was documented about this significant occurrence. The first wave of naturalisation began as early as 1949, and continued until the outbreak of the first Lebanese civil war in 1958. According to Haddad, approximately 50,000 Palestinians were granted Lebanese citizenship in the 1950s and 60s (Haddad 2004: 478).

Together, this amounts to approximately 20 per cent of the total displaced Palestinian population arriving in Lebanon between the years 1947 and 1948. Naturalisation (tawtin) in Lebanon is a process that is feared and actively discouraged by both Lebanese political elites and Palestinians political factions alike. Threatening to destabilise the country, most Lebanese politicians posit tawtin to be a recipe for disaster. Similarly, the Palestinian factions relate tawtin with betrayal of the struggle, the end of Palestinian identity, and the abandonment of the inalienable right of return to which they believe all Palestinians are entitled. This rhetoric has contributed to prolonging the status quo of Palestinian refugees, characterised by legal ambiguity, poverty and denial of rights, often in difficult living conditions. The abundance of research on refugees in Lebanon, and the scholarly investigation into refugee life, including topics such as
education, sanitation, camp conditions and gender relations, have all contributed to amassing an extensive amount of scholarship that illustrated various aspects of the refugee experience in Lebanon (Ghattas et al. 2015; Chaaban et al. 2012; Allen 2013; Knudsen and Hanafi 2010; Peteet 1995, 2005). It is appropriate to point out that this is not a study of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon; it is important, however, to acknowledge that the abundance of scholarly work on refugees has influenced this study in various ways.

The deplorable refugee situation in Lebanon is attributed to a set of circumstances that prevents any forms of development (tatwir), and impedes any prospects of naturalisation. While opposition to naturalisation is agreed upon by both Palestinian factions and Lebanese political elites, as well as the refugees themselves, there are significant problems with this widely accepted rhetoric that equates tawtin with instability, disaster, fragmentation, erasure of identity, assimilation, complete integration and abandonment of the right of return. The problem therein lies in the presumption that tawtin would in fact lead to complete assimilation for Palestinians into a Lebanese civic ethos, ultimately contributing to the erasure of Palestinian national identity. These speculations, upon which the widely accepted rhetoric of tawtin is founded, assume that the aftermath of tawtin would be characterised by transference of identity: from Palestinian to Lebanese. Suggesting that this process may be far more complex than this dichotomised rhetoric suggests, this thesis sets out to test these speculations by drawing upon the naturalised experience in Lebanon, and investigating if a complete assimilation for those who were naturalised has actually taken place.

Thus, the principal aim of this thesis is to investigate perceptions, practices and the narratives of citizenship expressed by Lebanon’s naturalised Palestinians. The notion of practice draws upon participants’ narratives and their own perceptions of identity, citizenship, and place. It is crucial to note that I follow a grounded approach in this study. This approach purposefully foregrounds and gives voice to the experiences of identity, belong, and home. The aim is not to define these terms but to illustrate their ambiguity, flexibility, and fluidity.

It explores how the naturalised carve spaces to express a sense of place, identity, belonging and home using culture, their entitlement to political and social rights, and blurring the legal categories of citizen and refugee. The construction of a ‘naturalised Palestinian’ has not received the level of analysis that is accorded to the ‘Palestinian
refugee’ in scholarly debates. This has meant that the term remains open to different understandings, and is not invariably associated with the tropes that traditionally linked with ‘Palestinian refugees’: dependence, despair, poverty, liminality and legal ambiguity. Who is a naturalised Palestinian? While the most immediate response would be ‘any individual who was granted Lebanese citizenship in the aftermath of 1948 upon their or their families’ arrival to Lebanon’, this thesis argues that there is more to the story.

There are those who believe that they were naturalised because of an ancestral right to Lebanese territory that pre-dated the independent Lebanese state. Others dismiss their citizenship as simply a piece of paper, as a mere entitlement to rights and status with little political or national significance. Categorisation in this thesis of those who were naturalised in the late 1940s and 1950s does not assume a commonality of ideology.

In the absence of a readily available rhetoric of the ‘naturalised’, this study did not face the challenges faced by scholars contesting existing discourses about Palestinian refugees and arguing that refugees were actually empowered actors in their own right (Allan 2013; Fincham 2012; Peteet 2005). The aim of this thesis is not to dispel or even contest existing discourses; the real challenge was to create a space for a discussion of the naturalised within a field that is so dominated by refugee scholarship.

And yet, the experiences the naturalised embody, their political and cultural significance, is most relevant to understanding the aftermath of naturalisation. Moreover, illustrating in depth the relation between identity, territory, belonging and place in their case can offer a privileged point of observation for the analysis of citizenship. The relation between place and identity is of most significance for these Palestinians, for whom place is also negotiated vis-à-vis notions of a lost homeland, refugeehood, homelessness, and return. After almost seven decades as Lebanese citizens, among other questions, this thesis asks: is Lebanon a home to the naturalised? The complex relation between the naturalised and the territorial Lebanese state is further complicated when paying closer attention to the conditional requisites according to which naturalisation occurred. The nationalising requisites that were put into place necessitated a certain level of conformity and expressions of belonging to Lebanon. These requisites were aimed at fostering a sense of belonging to Lebanon.

The notion of place is central to the Palestinian experience, both refugee and naturalised. For Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and in particular camp residents, place is
negotiated with reference to present-day Israel/Palestine, while the camps have also become places of belonging, identity and affiliation (Hanafi and Long 2010; Peteet 2005; Sayigh 1977). For the naturalised, expressions of place are both metaphoric and physical; they navigate the known and the unknown, as they engage with a complex process of self-mapping. This process is evaluated by exploring anew the relation between ‘home’ and ‘host’. Reference to Lebanon as a ‘host state’ is often reserved to describe the refugees’ experience. However, as some scholars have recently argued, the actual negotiation of these categories was far more complex (Allan 2013; Hanafi and Knudsen 2010). Furthermore, the association of ‘host’ and refugees, and ‘home’ and citizens is problematic in that it overlooks the element of time, over which complex relations are formulated with regard to the states in which the refugees reside (Hanafi and Knudsen 2010; Allan 2013). This argument can be extended to the case of naturalised citizens. Categorising Lebanon as a ‘home’ to the naturalised can also be misleading in that such association overlooks the many dimensions that influence this association. The relation between place and identity is at the core of understanding the aftermath of the process of naturalisation, which is itself aimed at fostering a relationship of belonging and identification. The naturalised thus navigate a sense of place, belonging and identity through, and not outside of, state and national discourse. Nationalist rhetoric underpins the naturalisation process in Lebanon.

The chapter begins by providing context to the Palestinian arrival to Lebanon. It then moves on to a discussion of the rise of citizenship, its relation with human rights, and the issues of refugees. The distinction between refugee and naturalised is then outlined within this study.

**Context and background: al Nakba**

Following 400 years of Ottoman rule, British colonial forces entered historical Palestine in 1916. Under the subsequent British mandate, Jews made up a small minority of the total population, but their number was steadily increasing with arrival of settler immigrants from Europe. The first wave of immigration (*aliya*) arrived under Ottoman rule in 1882, and continued to arrive intermittently until 1902, during which an estimated 25,000 Jews entered Palestine from mainly Eastern Europe (Morris 2001). The second *aliya* took place between 1904 and 1914, and saw the arrival of approximately 20,000 Jews. The third *aliya* was more significant, with 40,000 Jews immigrating to Palestine. They were primarily from countries where Jews were
systemically persecuted, such as Russia, Poland and Romania. The fourth and fifth waves occurred under the British mandate. 80,000 Jews arrived during the fourth aliya (1924–1928), with 12 per cent of these immigrants from Arab countries, Iraq and Yemen (Morris 2001). This aliya did much to strengthen and populate what were rapidly developing into Jewish towns and cities, such as Tel Aviv. The fifth aliya, between the years 1929–1939, saw the arrival of between 225,000 to 300,000 Jews (Gelber 1993: 327). The larger numbers in the fifth aliya are explained by the rising tensions in Europe leading up to the Second World War.

By 1940, the percentage of Jews in historical Palestine had reached one-third of the total population, and the Arab–Palestinian character of historical Palestine was rapidly changing (Morris 2001; Pappé 2004). The British played an integral role in the establishment of the State of Israel; the Balfour Declaration was issued on 2 November 1917. The declaration stated that the British government was in favour of the establishment of a ‘national home’ for the Jewish people in Palestine, but added: ‘Nothing that be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.’ The British promised humanitarian and social rights, but not political or national rights to the Palestinians (Peteet 2005).

On 29 November 1947, the United Nations proclaimed a ‘partition plan’, which recommended a partition with economic union of mandatory Palestine to follow the end of the British mandate in 1948. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution recommending the implementation of the plan as Resolution 181. With American and Soviet support, the resolution recommended the creation of independent Jewish and Arab states, with a special international regime for Jerusalem (Khalidi 1998). While the plan was officially accepted by the Jewish leadership, it was rejected by most Palestinians and the Arab states. They opposed the division of the land. The proposed boundaries would have placed more than 50 villages on the opposite side of their farmlands. Arab states also argued that Palestinians should have the right to determine their own destiny. It was this plan that ‘ignited the war for Palestine’ (Peteet 2005: 3).

What followed was the systematic expulsion of approximately 760,000 indigenous Palestinians to neighbouring states at the hands of Zionist militias (Morris 2001; Pappé 2004). Many Palestinians from the Galilee (northern Palestine) fled to Lebanon, as it was the closest safe country in which they could seek refuge. The majority believed they
would be able to return once the fighting ceased. Approximately 100,000 were able to remain in historical Palestine. They later became Israeli citizens (Khalidi 1992: 581).

The State of Israel was declared on 14 May 1948. Geographically, it included the areas allocated to Jews according to the UN partition plan, as well as large areas allotted to the Palestinians (Petet 2005: 3). The event is known as the Nakba (‘catastrophe’). The term resonates strongly with Palestinians who experienced the flight, as well as those who did not. It conjures a collective sense of loss, exile, and ghurbah (the experience of being a foreigner). It encapsulates the collective injustice to which many were subjected in exile. Sa’di and Abu-Lughod (2009) argued that the Nakba for refugees does not only refer to a past event, but is instead best understood as an ongoing calamity, exemplified by the experience of exile, denial and loss. The Nakba does not signify the beginning of history for the Palestinian people; it does, however, serve as an appropriate start date for this study.

Somewhere between 100,000 and 110,000 Palestinians arrived to Lebanon on foot, while a small population arrived by boat in 1947–1948 (Chatty and Hundt 2005: 11; Sayigh 1979: 99). Thinking that the violence would end soon and that they would be able to return to their homes, many set up tents alongside the border (Sayigh 1979). With time, refugees slowly moved inland, and many set up temporary residence in quasi-camp settings in South Lebanon and Beirut, all the while continuing to call for their return. Suleiman describes the early years of Palestinian arrival (1948–1958) as the years of ‘adaptation and hope’; this phase was marked by a welcoming posture towards Palestinians seeking refuge by the Lebanese ruling class as well as the local population at large (Suleiman 2006: 20; see also Haddad 2004). The refugees provided a form of cheap labour that could contribute to the country’s economy (Sayigh and Exile 1997; Suleiman 2006). The welcoming stance changed. Despite the warm welcome the Palestinians initially received, their presence was subsequently regarded as a burden on the country’s limited resources.

In order to provide direct relief and assistance in the wake of the mass humanitarian crisis the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (henceforth UNRWA) was established as a special division of the United Nations in December 1949. It offered services to Palestinian refugees. According to UNRWA, Palestinian refugees were defined as:
Persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict (‘Palestine refugees’, n.d.) UNRWA still offers humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees. It is separate from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) (on the political significance of this separation, see Akram 2002). UNHCR has a specific mandate under which it provides aid to the refugees it protects and assists. UNHCR works towards repatriation as the primary solution when possible, or towards eliminating refugee status by means of local integration in host states or resettlement in a third country (Al-Husseini and Bocco). UNRWA, however, took an ‘apolitical position’ from its establishment. It endorsed policies that were geared towards integration in host states through the provision of jobs as well as direct assistance. This stance ruled out repatriation as an option (Talhami 2003; Al-Husseini and Bocco 2009). This has resulted in negative sentiment towards UNRWA; refugees often accuse the agency of working against repatriation, and acting as an instrument to further their dispossession and exile (Al-Husseini and Bocco 2009). What is most relevant, however, is that, according to UNRWA policy, refugee status is inherited by the descendants of the displaced (see Appendix A):

Palestine refugees, and descendants of Palestinian refugee males, including legally adopted children, are eligible to register for UNRWA services. The agency accepts new applications from persons who wish to be registered as Palestine refugees. Once they are registered with UNRWA, persons in this category are referred to as Registered Refugees or as Registered Palestine Refugees. This means that refugee status is not only inherited; it is also not subject to expiration upon the acquisition of host or other state citizenship. Thus, if a Palestinian whose father was or is a refugee were to acquire Lebanese citizenship, for example, they would continue to be recognised as refugees and be eligible for UNRWA services. (For example, two participants in this study, Najat and her daughter Therese, both naturalised Palestinians residing in the Mar Elias refugee camp in Ras Beirut, continue to receive UNRWA aid in the form of healthcare. The relevance of this, as far as this study is concerned, is that it blurs the schism between two mutually exclusive legal statuses: citizen and refugee. In its most basic definition, citizenship delineates an individual’s membership in a sovereign polity, while a Palestinian refugee is defined as an individual
who lost their home and means of livelihood following the Nakba of 1948. By definition, an individual can be both a citizen and refugee simultaneously.

T. H. Marshall’s Liberal Theory of Citizenship

Citizenship provides entitlement to a variety of rights that depend on the context in which citizenship is granted. For Palestinians in Lebanon, citizenship enabled access to public goods, the possibility of employment, the legal ability to own real estate, and access to higher education.

Studies on citizenship routinely reference the works of T. H. Marshall, the ‘grandfather’ of modern citizenship studies (Smith 2016; Revi 2014). In a series of influential seminal lectures (‘Citizenship and the Social Class’, 1950), Marshall presented modern citizenship as founded upon three sets of rights: civil, political and social. Introduced in eighteenth-century England, the idea of equality for all members of society was developed in the form of civil rights, which granted equality to all members before the law. This civil element constitutes rights that are necessary for individual freedom (personal liberty, freedom of speech), thought and faith, property ownership, and the right to justice. The political element, which arose in nineteenth century, refers to the right to political participation, and refers to direct or indirect participation in political institutions. The social element, established and institutionalised in the twentieth century, referred to what Marshall calls the ‘whole range’ of rights: economic welfare, security, the right to a full share of social heritage, and to ‘live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society’ (1949: 31).

There are two primary critiques that challenge Marshall’s conceptualisation of citizenship offered by Turner (1993, 2001). First, Turner criticises Marshall’s British-centric focus, whereas the context of his analyses was self-evident: the postwar creation of a British welfare state. The problem therein was that Marshall’s analysis traced the emergence of rights in Britain. Marshall’s findings could not be universalised. The chronology of Marshall’s citizenship model is also criticised for its geographic bias. It assumes a ‘heterogeneous society in which regional, cultural and ethnic divisions were not important when compared to social class divisions’ (Turner 2001: 91). The British centrality of the model disregards the evolution of citizenship in other countries in Europe and elsewhere (Turner 1993). Placing Marshall within a wider debate, Turner emphasises how social rights are not recognised elsewhere. Moreover, different states
did not experience the evolutionary process experienced by Britain. For Turner, the British-centric approach of Marshall’s liberal theory of citizenship impedes its applicability elsewhere: ‘Marshall added a historical sketch of citizenship of the development of citizenship in Britain, which provided the historical setting for his specific views on the problems of social policy in modern society’ (1993: 6).

Turner also criticises Marshall for the teleological character by which he presents citizenship as emerging from the modern nation-state (1993). If modern forms of citizenship are necessarily linked to the nation-state, citizenship becomes premised on and statehood. According to Turner, Marshall neglected the cultural dimension of citizenship. However, as Turner notes, citizenship theorists address the missing cultural component in Marshallian citizenship by expanding the concept along ethno-cultural lines.

Citizenship and Human Rights

Citizenship was officially introduced into the universal political lexicon more than half a century ago when the right to ‘nationality’ (meaning citizenship) was included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Isin and Wood (1999) differentiate nationality and citizenship. Nationality, according to Isin and Wood, is a national expression, intimately linked to the nation-state and national identity. Citizenship on the other hand is presented through a lens of rights and entitlements. In this thesis, this distinction is not made. Nationality and citizenship are used interchangeably as an analysis of the relation between nationality.

In the nation-state system, the supposed rights of man are moot in cases when citizenship is absent or revoked. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 15, Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

While the declaration, aimed at normatively establishing the unconditional membership of all individuals in sovereign states, there continues to be a growing number of stateless persons, including Palestinians. They are denied the right to citizenship. A majority of
them are in the developing world (see Kibraeb 2003; Chatty 2014; Takkenberg et al. 2014).

The proclamations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNHDR) in 1948 and the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) established the standards for the practice of human rights on a global basis. The aim was to guarantee access to rights to all on par with the rights previously solely associated with citizenship, including the right to life, liberty and security of the person (UNHDR, Article 3), to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state, and to departure from any country including one’s own and to return (Article 13), to the right to nationality (Article 15), and to the right to own property (Article 17).

According to Universal Declaration of Human Rights, states are obliged to enforce human rights for citizens and non-citizens subject to their jurisdiction. The introduction of human rights law has normatively reduced the institutional difference between citizens and non-citizens. It is the absence of enforcement of such laws that reinforces the differences between the rights accessed by citizens and non-citizens. In the absence of human rights, or a ‘human rights sovereign’, the implementation of such rights under international law falls wholly upon the discretion of the states. Article 2(1) of the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) states:

Each State Party to the present covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognised in the present covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966)

An important exception exists in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which calls for state parties to guarantee non-discriminatory treatment of citizens and non-citizens, except in the condition of developing countries. According to Article 2 (clause 3) of the covenant, it is at the discretion of developing countries to determine the extent to which they would guarantee non-nationals the economic rights outlined by the covenant, including access to the labour market and vocational rights. The Lebanese state’s restrictive vocational laws for Palestinian refugees’ refers to the clause stated above. Lebanon argues that it cannot afford to open its labour market to Palestinian non-citizens.
Arendt famously asked if it was possible to protect the rights of man – as in the rights of the human being – separate from the rights of the citizen (1958). While Arendt asserted that belonging to humanity itself should guarantee access to rights, her conclusion is perhaps more relevant today than it was more than half a century ago: ‘The right to have rights, or the right of every individual to belong to humanity, should be guaranteed by humanity itself. It is by no means certain whether this is possible’ (Arendt 1973: 298). Theoretically, human rights are distinct and independent from the rights of the citizen, but in practice, they remain solely accessible through citizenship (see also Benhabib 2004; Agamben 1995; Malkki 1995; Arendt 1951). Access to rights is the premise upon which many seek to acquire citizenship.

The colonial origins of citizenship in the Arab World

Weil identifies four determinants upon which citizenship is granted, two of which feature most prominently in nationality laws:

1. *Jus soli* (right of the soil): delineates that citizenship is granted upon being born in a territory over which the state maintains has previously held or wishes to extend its sovereignty.

2. *Jus sanguinis* (right of the blood): is a principle of nationality law when citizenship is not determined by birthplace (*jus soli*), but by descent. Children may be citizens only if their parents (or father, as is the case in Lebanon and most Arab states) are citizens (Weil 2001: 17).

Two other determinants are often ‘forgotten or neglected’:

1. Marital status: where citizenship is granted through marriage which can lead to acquisition of the spouse’s citizenship.

2. Residence: this factor is determined by past, present or future residence within the country’s previous, future or intended borders (these include colonial borders; see Weil 2001: 17)).

A combination of these requisites determines the conditions upon which citizenship is granted. Citizenship law, as Weil points out, is regulated at the boundary of public and private law. As a matter of private law, citizenship determines and regulates the lives of individuals, pertaining to matters of property rights, travel, mobility, ownership, rights pertaining to gender equality, inheritance, and so on (see also Marshall 1965). While it remains a matter of international law (as determined by Declaration of Human Rights referred to above) that all individuals have the right to nationality/citizenship, again, the processes by which this is achieved are left to each state’s discretion.
In the cases of both Lebanon and Palestine, modern citizenship was first developed and institutionalised under Ottoman rule (1516–1918). It then continued under European colonial control in the early twentieth century. The Ottomans and the French put systems in place that divided residents in accordance with sectarian–religious criteria, and not geographic and regional demarcations, as had been the case elsewhere under colonial rule. This enabled the French to strengthen relations with the Maronite community at the expense of all other minorities in Lebanon. French colonial forces attempted ‘discover’ an ancestry for the people of the region suggesting that the history of the people of Lebanon and Syria dated back to biblical times (Kauffman 2001). This history presented residents of Mount Lebanon as the people of Lebanon, an area inhabited predominantly by Druze and Maronites. In this narrative, the Maronite-French relations supposedly began with the crusades, when the ancestors of Maronites provided troops in exchange for protection (Salibi 1988; Kauffman 2001). The ‘Phoenician idea’ resurfaced as a strategy to separate the ‘Mountain people’ of Lebanon from Arab identity. Phoenicianism established Lebanon as the ancestral home to the Christian people of Lebanon and the region at large. This rhetoric underpinned the naturalisation process, as discussed in the previous chapter. Christian Palestinians were favoured over Muslims. The Ottoman regime had favoured the country’s Sunni Muslim community, who were exempt from paying taxes (jizya) by virtue of their religious affiliation. Many Christian Lebanese had migrated to the Americas in waves in the late 1800s with the hopes of one day returning once Ottoman rule ended.

The ‘introduction’ of citizenship in the region by colonial powers has led many to suggest that citizenship is an inherently European concept. By means of colonisation, citizenship was adopted and appropriated by postcolonial states, and altered according to each state’s discretion. According to Weber citizenship was developed in the Western world; as he explains, ‘Oriental’ civilisations such as the Chinese, Indian, and Middle-Eastern ‘lacked’ such a concept (1981). Weber traces the origins of modern citizenship to the Greek and Roman civilisations, suggesting that citizenship as practised today developed from its earlier versions in European antiquity. According to Sassen (2002), however, drawing this linear historical trajectory where citizenship is situated along evolutionary lines dating back to its inception in ancient Greece is inaccurate because the polity in ancient Greece was the city-state, while today it is the nation-state as a whole (2002). More importantly, Sassen also argues that the definition of the polity
evolved in accordance to state development, which was a central component of the character citizenship took in the West (2002: 7). For Isin (2015), a putative lineage linking modern and ancient citizenships is especially detrimental. These images situate modern citizenship along a historical trajectory and mobilise an ‘invented tradition: that we are somehow inheritors of an Occidental tradition that is different and superior from an Oriental one’ (2015: 1).

Isin and Wood criticise Weber’s claim as both essentialising and Eurocentric. These authors argue that Weber’s claim is ‘problematic, if not ethnocentric, because what Weber was searching for in these civilisations was an already worked out conception of citizenship as a legal status’ (1999: 5). Isin and Wood dispute Weber’s claim and argue that each of these civilisations had a different conception of status and political membership, and, thus, had a different notion of citizenship altogether. In other words, ‘Weber made citizenship originate in the West in the sense that he worked out an ideal type and searched for its origins’ (1995: 5). As Isin explains:

At the root of the ‘Western’ conception of citizenship are two fundamental perspectives: Orientalism (a way of dividing the world into essentially two ‘civilisational’ blocs, one having rationalised and secularised and hence modernised, the other having remained ‘irrational’, religious and traditional), and synoecism (a way of seeing the polity as embodying spatial and political unification) (2015: 1).

Since the publication of Said’s Orientalism (1978), scholars have used the term in reference to patronising Western attitudes towards Asian, Middle-Eastern and North African peoples and societies. Said eloquently illustrated Western representations of the ‘Orient’ as underdeveloped and static to support his argument. These representations of the ‘East’ resulted in fabricated descriptions of ‘cultures’ that can be studied, researched and reproduced. Implicit in this reproduction, according to Said, is that the idea that Western society is superior. Extending Said’s argument to the context of citizenship, Isin (2015) illustrates how Orientalism mobilised images of citizenship as a uniquely Occidental invention, whereas ‘Oriental’ societies lacked the concept of the citizen as a virtuous and rational being.

Sassen (2002), Isin and Wood (1999) and Isin (2015) argue against positioning citizenship along a historical trajectory, as doing so works to marginalise and subordinate non-European cultures and societies’ own versions of political membership.
that pre-dated the introduction of modern citizenship by colonial powers. The Eurocentric focus of Weber’s analysis, which had been accepted uncritically for so long invokes a primordialism that subordinates non-Western cultures and societies. According to Isin (2015), the danger of casting citizenship as a de facto European concept overlooks the complex and context-specific forms of political membership that pre-date the introduction of modern citizenship to the ‘Orient’. Holding ‘European’ forms of political participation as the origin of all citizenships grants them prominence as an ideal against which all other citizenships can be measured.

**Naturalisation: open versus closed countries**

According to Janoski, naturalisation theories are underdeveloped in two main ways: ‘they are either ignored, or they are confused with theories of immigration’ (2010: 4). Emphasising this point, Janoski remarks that T. H. Marshall neglected naturalisation. Janoski suggests that this is perhaps why naturalisation is too often treated as a synonym of citizenship, and adds:

> Although one prominent group of theorists [Joppke 1999; Brubaker 1992] in a comprehensive review of international immigrants proclaim that ‘the means, mechanism, and policies by which immigrants adapt to and are incorporated within receiving societies’ are of ‘clear and ambiguous importance’ … they gloss over explanations of nationality and naturalisation, as do many others (2010: 4).

Thus, in his analysis, Janoski argues for distinguishing between immigration and naturalisation. As he goes on to explain, even though ‘naturalisation logically flows from immigration (i.e. people have to migrate to be naturalised) they are not correlated. Thus, theories of immigration and refugee policies, despite many claims, do not transfer well to nationality or naturalisation’ (2010: 5).

Economic conditions, war, political repression and persecution in many counties have led people to seek asylum and refuge in other countries. What is often thought of as a temporary condition often becomes a protracted situation of legal ambiguity and residency in host states. The Palestinians in Lebanon are a case in point. However, refugee policies are rarely connected to naturalisation policies, as Janoski points out, because ‘many countries would like to send refugees to a third country or back to their home countries when things get better. As a result, countries may accept or strongly
resist refugees, and refugees may accept assimilation or return home when the conditions improve’ (2010: 5). However, some refugees do sometimes become naturalised due to context-specific political or economic reasons. As Janoski also points out, such cases are arguably absent from the current scholarly literature of citizenship and naturalisation.

Janoski employs a useful categorisation to explain state policies pertaining to naturalisation and distinguishes between ‘open’ and ‘closed’ countries. In the former, immigrants can become naturalised, vote, and are able to form interest groups. This is reminiscent in Joppke’s (2007) argument regarding the liberalisation of the nation-state. In ‘closed’ countries, acquiring citizenship is a difficult and restricted process, and immigrants can face deportation if they lose their jobs or disobey the law, as is the case in many Gulf states, where fear of deportation (tasfeer) is always with the migrant. Children of immigrants in ‘open’ countries acquire citizenship according to jus soli principles of naturalisation. In ‘closed’ countries, however, children of immigrants may have to wait until adulthood to become naturalised, or may never acquire citizenship regardless of length of residence.

Janoski also addresses long causal mechanisms that bring about naturalisation processes: demographic and economic theories, cultural idiom approaches, and political economic and colonial theories (2010: 2, 3, 6). Economic considerations are useful in making sense of the selection process, but more relevant to my discussion of naturalisation within this study is the second mechanism: cultural idioms and considerations. With reference to cultural considerations, this approach uses culture to explain why some countries are more ‘open’ and others more ‘closed’ with their naturalisation policies. The specificity with which naturalisation policies are practised by states makes it practically impossible to draw general conclusions about trends in naturalisation that are not case- or country-specific, leading Janoski to argue that a causal analysis of naturalisation is not readily available.

**Naturalised versus refugee**

The naturalisation process has resulted in the construction of two legally distinguishable groups of Palestinians in Lebanon: refugees and naturalised citizens. This categorisation, applied throughout this thesis, is not intended to over-emphasise existing differences between these groups. Class, socioeconomic status and in some cases residence (camp
versus non-camp) are crucial. Instead, the differentiation between naturalised and refugee refers to the legal distinction that differentiates between categories of individuals. While I focus on the naturalised, I do not imply in any way that by virtue of their citizenship status they are not to be regarded as refugees.

While the majority of Palestinians live in designated camp (approximately 51 per cent), many refugees do not. The latter live in urban centres, villages, or quasi-camp settings (Ghattas et al. 2015). Those who live in Beirut are referred to throughout this thesis as ‘urban refugees’

**Identifying the problem**

Since their arrival to Lebanon in 1947–1948, the Palestinian presence has generated vast scholarly interest and research (Sayigh 1979, 2001, 2011; Peteet 1995, 2005; Shafie 2006; Al-Natour 1997, Al-Natour and Yassine 2007; Suleiman 2006; Hanafi and Long 2010; Klaus 2003;). Concurrently, their presence has also received negative political attention, framed by Lebanese political elites as a burden to be eliminated through soft and hard ‘push policies’ (Suleiman 2006). Palestinians are often blamed for the country’s instability, political fragility and much of its woes (Haddad 2004). Unwanted not only because of their status, but by virtue of being regarded as a group of undesired ‘foreigners’ in pursuit of their own political agendas and objectives, the Palestinian presence fits into the narrative of the Lebanese ‘civic myth’ (Joseph 2000). This myth often posits the Palestinian presence as a ‘foreign’ element amidst a relatively ‘homogenous’ body politic.

To date there have been no scholarly works conducted on Lebanon’s naturalised Palestinians of the first wave. The second wave of naturalisation in 1994 has generated a vast interest, due to the unusual timing of the case, and because of its political significance. The Ta’if Accords, the document which ended the Lebanese civil war, was issued three years prior to the passing of the naturalisation decree. It explicitly warned against the naturalisation of foreigners in Lebanon. Furthermore, the naturalisations of 1994 were of political significance as citizenship was granted to a predominantly Shiite Palestinian population; the process was strongly supported by the Shiite political party Hizbullah (see Kauffman 2006). Together, these reasons generated an interest in what was termed the case of the ‘Seven Villages’ (*al-qura al sab’a*) in reference to a few Palestinian villages in South Lebanon whose residents were granted citizenship.
The first wave, however, has remained understudied. The reasons for this neglect relate directly to the conditions upon which naturalisation took place in the 1950s. Broadly speaking, two groups of Palestinians were favoured for naturalisation: the Christian Palestinians, as they fell into country’s narrative of being a safe haven and refuge to the region’s persecuted Christians (Salibi 1988), and, less numerically significant, wealthy Muslim Palestinians, most of whom had been cosmopolitan urbanites par excellence (Sayigh 2007; Peteet 2005). Naturalisation occurred through conformity to a set of predetermined requisites, at the core of which was conformity to the Lebanese civic myth of sectarian pluralism. As Joseph notes:

Citizenship law [in Lebanon] reflects the divergent themes scripted in competing or compatible national narratives rather than uniformly representing a single coherent story. In Lebanon multiple civic myths overlay each other and manifest themselves in different legal arenas – myths of economic liberalism, of social conservatism, of communalism, of individualism of the autonomy of state and religion, and of the state as a patron of religious institutions, of gender equality, of the primacy of patriarchal authority and the like. The hegemonic civic myth of the Lebanese nation, however, has been the myth of sectarian pluralism … which is critical to the practices of citizenship in the Lebanese state (2000: 108).

According to the myth of sectarian pluralism, naturalisation fell along sectarian lines, whereas claims were made to posit that the true origins of both Palestinian Christians and Sunni Muslims were in fact Lebanese. A similar claim was made for the naturalisation of the Shiite Palestinians in 1994, claiming that there were no Shiite Palestinians, and that by virtue of their sect they were, in fact, always ‘Lebanese’ (Kauffman 2006). These arguments lay claim to a broader narrative, a rhetoric that aims at binding the citizen to territory by establishing a primordial historical connection that pre-dates the establishment of the modern nation-state in 1943.

While these narratives will be discussed in the next chapter, it is worth mentioning here that those who wished to naturalise had to conform to the civic myth, and claim somehow a primordial connection with the modern Lebanese state that pre-dated the Nakba of 1948. These myths invariably underpinned the naturalisation process. The Lebanese state, cautious of weakening its national identity, put these policies in place in the hope that they would work to foster national sentiment among naturalised Palestinians, eventually leading to expressions of belonging and national sentiment. It is this conformity to the civic myth that has led to the assumption of full integration of naturalised Palestinians into the Lebanese body politic (one of the reasons why no
investigation into the first wave of naturalisation and its aftermath was conducted). The naturalised are presumed to have assimilated into the Lebanese ethos. Despite the relevance of these myths to the naturalization process, Lebanese confessional construction ultimately played a very significant role as will be discussed in the chapter that follows.

The prevalent rhetoric of tawtin in Lebanon, the notion that naturalisation will lead to disaster, ultimately resulting in instability and even fragmentation (Knudsen 2005), prompts this exploration into the aftermath of the tawtin process. Similarly, Palestinian political factions, as well as Palestinian refugees, have long proposed that tawtin would weaken the Palestinian cause, its national identity and aspirations. This rhetoric is dangerous, as it has so far prevented any form of development (tatwir) in the refugee condition. The suggestion is that tatwir would ultimately lead to tawtin.

The shared rhetoric about tawtin links territorial belonging with a transformation of identity (i.e. from Palestinian to Lebanese). There is therefore a need to differentiate between the political rhetoric of tawtin and what is referred within this thesis as practices of citizenship, and tawtin as individual narratives of tawtin. There is value in separating these two distinguishable modalities of tawtin and overcoming narratives that posits tawtin to be in opposition of Palestinianness.

Scholars of citizenship have, since the mid-1990s, emphasised the important role played by citizens in giving meaning to their citizenship status, arguing that it is only in investigating and exploring practices of citizenship that the true meanings of these complex concepts are best understood (Soysal 1994, Tambini 2001; Ong 1999). Many scholars make a distinction between the normative conceptualisation of citizenship (which paralleled the rise of the nation-state and was underpinned and founded upon notions of belonging, identity, nationalism, territory, and service), and the ways individuals make sense of their own citizenship status. It is with the latter of these modalities, the practice of citizenship and tawtin, that this thesis is concerned.

**Etymology of tawtin and tajnis**

The term tawtin, is generally translated into English as naturalisation, implantation or resettlement. Linguistically, tawtin derives from watan, meaning homeland. There is some disagreement among scholars on how exactly to translate tawtin in English. More recently, scholars have resorted to translating to tawtin into ‘implantation’, deeming it a
more suitable translation (see, for example, Hanafi and Long 2008; Meier 2010; Knudsen 2005; Haddad 2004; Sayigh 1995, 2001; Hudson 1997). Implantation also defines the movement of a group of cells to a new region of the body, and thus signifies the ‘unnatural’ and deliberate movement of an entity from one place, status, condition or state of being to another. In this sense, as a consequence of *tawtin*, ‘implanted’ Palestinians are perceived to have been subjected to a procedural uprooting (from a Palestinian ethos) as they were implanted into Lebanese society. Comparatively, in English the term ‘naturalisation’ alludes to a more fluid and organic process of assimilation into host state culture and society, subtly implying in this case the natural dilution of Palestinianianness into the Lebanese ethos upon the acquisition of citizenship. I initially translated *tawtin* as implantation to signify the top-down mechanisms that guided the process, but the majority of participants in this study translated *tawtin* as naturalisation. It is my intention to remain true to participants’ responses; thus, I too shall translate *tawtin* into naturalisation and use these terms interchangeably.

Another term that is used interchangeably in Arabic to mean naturalisation is *tajnis*. According to Davis et al., *tajnis* is rooted in the Arabic word *jins*, which means sex, species, gender, or type (1997: 53; see also Wehr 1980: 141). Also referring to the process of citizenship acquisition, *tajnis* is void of the national and top-down connotations with which *tawtin* is laden. This is why Palestinian refugees often refer to naturalisation in Western states as *tajnis*, while *tawtin* is reserved for resettlement in Arab states. Other terms that are derived from *jins* include *jinsiyya*, the commonly used term for citizenship, and *mujannas*, which refers to an individual who acquired *jinsiyya*, a naturalised person. This differs for *tawtin*, as the process of naturalisation is then referred to as *muwatana*, and the individual is referred to as *muwattan*.

Despite the abundance of literature on the topic of *tawtin* (Hanafi et al. 2012; Misselwitz and Hanafi 2009; Masalha 2002; Nasrallah 1997; El-Khazen 1997; Hanafi and Long 2010), there is a lack of consensus on its etymology and whether it is different from the term *tajnis* (see Ghandour 2003). It is often stated that Palestinians would accept *tajnis*, but never *tawtin* (Meier 2010). Legally, *tawtin* and *tajnis* refer to the naturalisation process through which individuals acquire host state citizenship and become full citizens of the state in which they are naturalised.

*Tawtin* differs from *tajnis*, according to Meier, in that *tawtin* ‘expresses the idea of resettlement of foreigners, [while] *idraj* [integration] and *tajannous* [verb of *tajnis*]
imply the idea of common identity which, through progressive assemblage, leads to assimilation’ (2010: 150-151). The term *idraaj*, or ‘(re)integration’ was introduced by UNGA Resolution 393 (V) of 2 December 1950, which stated that ‘the reintegration of the refugees into the economic life of the Near East, either by repatriation or resettlement, is essential in preparation for the time when international assistance is no longer available, and for the realisation of conditions of peace and stability in the area’ (UNGA res. 393 (V), Dec. 2, 1950). The formal articulation of reintegration, as early as 1950, was understood in diplomatic circles as a form of *tawtin* (Joffe 2012). While *tawtin* does in fact differ from *tajnis* in Palestinian lexical usage, contrary to what Meier claims, *tajnis* does not refer to a process of assimilation. *Tajnis* is the favoured solution by the majority of Palestinians, as in their understanding it does not necessitate a process of integration and top-down assimilation in the way that *tawtin* does. Furthermore, *tawtin* emerged from a discourse of resettlement where it was presented as an alternative to repatriation, and was proposed as part of an international agenda that sought to resettle Palestinians permanently into host states.

**Objectives of this study**

This study fills a gap in existing scholarship by examining the narratives, perceptions, expressions and practices of citizenship among Lebanon’s naturalised population. The aim is to shed light on the relationship between expressions of citizenship and notions of belonging, territory, and Palestinian/Lebanese national identity. The lack of empirical analysis from the perspective of the naturalised in Lebanon has resulted in a narrow focus on the refugee narrative. However, the refugee experience is not necessarily representative of the entire Palestinian experience. It is important to note that, while Palestinian refugees make up 4.5 million (UNRWA website) of the total Palestinian population, the remainder of the estimated 6 to 7 million are naturalised in countries all over the world.

The exclusion of naturalised Palestinians has allowed an understanding of *tawtin* that equates the acquisition of citizenship with the elimination of Palestinian national identity. The lack of empirical analysis from the perspective of the naturalised, as well as shortcomings in the theoretical concepts utilised to explain naturalisation processes and their aftermath, have resulted in a scholarly gap. While many scholars have endeavoured to allow refugees ‘to speak’, a crucial task, there is danger in overlooking those who do not fit neatly with assumptions about Palestinian refugees. Long (2010)
also questions the notion of who exactly is a Palestinian refugee. Developing a detailed response remains important.

While the question of who is a Palestinian refugee has a clearly defined legal answer – a specific set of individuals who lost their homes and livelihood as a direct consequence of the events of 1948, including their descendants – its practical answer refers to individuals who hold UNRWA-issued refugee status. This latter definition reiterates the assumption that the naturalised cannot be considered Palestinians. This is because:

(1) They were naturalised by claiming Lebanese origin;

(2) They are fully integrated and assimilated into Lebanese society to the extent that empirical investigation into their expression of Palestinian national identity is unwarranted; and

(3) They make no political demands to be recognised as a national minority.

Together, these factors are the basis upon which the exclusion of the naturalised from scholarly investigation and political discourse can be explained. However, when applying a more detailed lens, the importance of questioning these presumptions becomes evident. It is upon a presumption of complete assimilation that the *tawtin* narrative mentioned above becomes crystallised.

Ideological expressions of *tawtin* as assimilation see it as a threat to Palestinian identity. But this thesis aims to hand over agency to the naturalised and allow them to speak about their own experiences. As mentioned, scholars engaged in refugee studies, and in particular those studying Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, aim to finally recognise the agency to refugees. The aim of this thesis is to extend this argument to the naturalised. Despite their perceived empowerment, it is nevertheless important to recognise their voice. They are also unheard.

Empirically focusing on naturalisation, the thesis aims to inform the broader discourse on citizenship and naturalisation in the Arab world. Theories of citizenship that draw upon practices of citizenship have mostly focused on Western states as the primary models in which migrants formulate complex and often contradictory relationships between notions of host, home, national identity, belonging, home and territory. Excluded from these debates are the experiences of the naturalised in Arab states. Beyond the Palestinian experience, this thesis also aims to contribute to broader debates on citizenship as practice.
Research questions

In light of the research aims and objectives discussed, the core research questions of this thesis aim at broadening the conceptual scope of naturalisation. The research questions formulated below, aim to shed light, from a new perspective, on the historical process of tawtin as a tool for assimilation and integration of Palestinian in Lebanon. They also aim to bring to light practices, narratives and perceptions of tawtin expressed by the naturalised. The three main research questions addressed within this study are:

(1) How do the naturalised express their Palestinianness?

(2) How do the naturalised define, construct and negotiate their citizenship status, and in what ways does this expression conform or challenge the political rhetoric of tawtin?

(3) In what ways do the naturalised articulate nationalism, identity and belonging; how do they express their Palestinianness?

Overview of chapters

The second chapter of this thesis discusses the methodological approaches utilised to gather and analyse data.

The third chapter reviews the events that led to the Palestinian arrival in Lebanon. It presents the political and social histories and context of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, and the selective process of tawtin. It outlines the political conditions that facilitated naturalisation, and sets the foundation for discussing its aftermath.

The fourth chapter draws upon primary data to illustrate how the naturalised negotiate categories of belonging.

The fifth chapter discusses the perspective of the refugees (both camp residents of Ain el-Helwe and urban refugees) pertaining to tawtin, the naturalised, and their relation with the host state.

The sixth chapter reflects upon the participants’ conceptualisations of home and belonging, and reflects on what being a naturalised Palestinian in Lebanon means.

The seventh, and final chapter of data analysis, draws upon expressions of home, and reflects upon the meaning of return.

The eighth chapter draws upon the various themes, insights, and narratives that precipitated from the findings of this study. This final chapter draws upon commonalities that undercut the experiences of participants and brings to light the
bridges between the thematically categorised chapters. One of the main objectives of this study is to carve spaces for the presentation and engagement with alternative narratives. The chapters bring together expressions, narratives, and experiences of the naturalised. The final chapter sheds light on the relation between expressions and practices of citizenship and notions of belonging, territory and Palestinian/Lebanese national identity.

**Conclusion**

While the history of the Palestinian people did not begin in 1948, the Nakba serves as a relevant starting date as it marks the arrival of Palestinians in Lebanon. The naturalised Palestinians have not received a vast amount of scholarship. While this is understandable given the vulnerability of the refugee community in Lebanon, the thesis contributes to filling this existing gap. Overlooking the naturalised has occurred in two ways: the naturalised narrative and voice is silenced; and there is scarce knowledge about *tawtin* processes, what it entailed and how it occurred. While naturalised Palestinians are at the core of this study, the refugee experience comes through and is relevant in a variety of ways. In many ways, the two categories are defined vis-à-vis each other. Despite the clear legal, social and political demarcations that distinguish the refugee from the naturalised – at the core of which is access to citizenship – these two groups remain in conversation. The importance of this study extends beyond the Palestinian experience in Lebanon and taps into the experiences of Palestinians elsewhere in the diaspora, the majority of whom are citizens of somewhere.
Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methods and methodology used to gather and analyse data for this study. This chapter defines, explains and justifies the approaches used and explores how they achieve the overall aims and objectives. Due to the circumstances under which Palestinians arrived in Lebanon and the process of their naturalisation, as discussed in the previous chapter, few secondary sources were available on the naturalised. This necessitated following a qualitative approach to gather primary data. The chapter begins by outlining the primary resources of data collection and the relevance of interviews as a source of primary data for this study. I then move on to discussing the fieldwork component which lasted for a period of 10 months in 2013–2014. The next section reflects upon my position as a naturalised Palestinian myself and discusses the notion of reflexivity and the implications it may have had on the data gathering, recruitment process and analysis. The limitations of the study are then discussed, followed by a discussion of data analysis.

Methods and methodology

The research questions mentioned in the previous chapter are primarily concerned with investigating meaning (for example: Question (2) sets out to explore how citizenship is conceptualised, defined and given meaning by individuals), as well as practices of citizenship, and their relation to expressions and sentiment of Palestinianness expressed by Lebanon’s naturalised. The aim is not to reach an ultimate truth about how all the naturalised conceptualise and make sense of their citizenship status. The relatively small sample of participants (total of 80) would not justify making broad and general sweeping statements about the rest of the population. Thus, a qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate for this study.

Maxwell (2008) outlines the key ‘intellectual goals’ of qualitative research. The first is somewhat broad, and involves an understanding of meaning. For participants in this study, this refers to the events, situations and actions with which they are involved, and to the meaning they give their lives and experiences. It is an open approach. As Maxwell explains:

In a qualitative study, you are interested not only in the physical events and behavior taking place, but also in how the participants in your study make sense of these, and how their understandings influence their behavior. The perspectives on
events and actions held by the people involved in them are not simply their accounts of these events and actions, to be assessed in terms of truth or falsity; they are part of the reality that you are trying to understand, and a major influence on their behavior (Maxwell 2008: 221: 30; see also Geertz 1973).

The second key intellectual goal involves an exploration into the particular context within which participants act, and the ways context influences actions (Becker 1996). Chapter 4 of this thesis, for example, focuses on context as crucial to understanding. The context in which identities are negotiated and constructed differs significantly when the experience of camp dwellers and naturalised are taken into consideration. That expressions of belonging and identification differ between the two groups should not surprise.

**Primary sources and data collection**

There are two primary sources for this study. The first is empirically grounded, and draws upon qualitative interviews conducted over a period of 10 months in Lebanon, as well as observations and personal experiences. The second source of data is the existing literature on topics of citizenship, *tawtin*, and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

As this study is the first empirical study of naturalised Palestinians in Lebanon, finding relevant literature on both the implementation of *tawtin* and its aftermath was particularly challenging. The reasons for this are twofold: (1) the extent to which the naturalised are ‘assimilated’ into the Lebanese social ethos has arguably led scholars to assume that full integration has already taken place; (2) Scarcity of scholarly interest in the naturalised is due to the extreme plight of the Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon, which has generated much scholarly interest.

**Gathering the data**

The first of the two primary sources is semi-structured in-depth interviews, conducted over a period of ten months in Lebanon. The second is a review of the relevant literature, reports, and analysis. A total of 80 interviews were conducted: 40 with naturalised Palestinians, and 40 with Palestinian refugees, 20 urban and 20 camp residents. The term ‘urban refugee’ refers to individuals who are not naturalised and live in non-camp settings. All those interviewed for the purposes of this study were residents of Beirut, and thus categorised as urban refugees.
Fontana and Frey (2005) outline three approaches to qualitative interviews: the unstructured, semi-structured and finally, the structured. These approaches, according to Norman and Denzin (2005) indicate the freedom and flexibility available to the interviewee to ask questions from participants. According to Yin (1994), no interview can really be considered unstructured, as some are relatively structured and others (what is often referred to as ‘unstructured’) flow like guided conversations. Semi-structured interviews are most useful when the researcher’s interests are limited to specific themes and topics (Norman and Denzin 2005; Conti and O’Neil 2007). An interview that is semi-structured follows a loose guideline of questions or enquiries, but provides room for further exploration. It allows for the exploration into unpredictable trajectories, and provides for the capacity to probe participants’ responses (Norman and Denzin 2005). The semi-structured in-depth interview is meant to be a personal encounter with open, direct, verbal enquires used to elicit narratives, perceptions and expressions (Crabtree and Miller 1999).

For Dillard the interview resembles its own miniature and coherent world (Dillard 1982: 152). Regarded in this way, the interview then functions as a narrative device that enables individuals to tell stories about themselves. The terms ‘narrative’ and ‘narrative investigation’ are used throughout this thesis. However, the meaning of narrative varies according to discipline. In social history, for example, a narrative can refer to a life story, woven together from a combination of interviews, observations and documents. As used throughout this study, the concept of narrative is more restricted: ‘referring to brief, topically specific stories organised around characters, setting, and plot’ (Riessman 2008: 1-2). Narratives, however, do not speak for themselves, and require interpretation and analysis when used as data in social research. The chapters that follow are aimed at investigating and engaging with the narratives of and about the naturalised.

According to Denzin, an interview is an ‘active text’, a site where meaning is improvised, performed and created (see also Dillard 1982: 32). When meaning is performed ‘interview text creates the world, giving the world its situated in meaningfulness’ (Denzin 2001: 25). According to this perspective, the interview is a construction, a reordering of selected materials from the actual world, ‘but every interview text selectively and unsystematically reconstructs that world, tells and performs a story accordingly to its own version of narrative’ (Denzin 2001: 25). As the interviewee reconstructs and reimagines the world, the researcher is also part of – and
perhaps for a brief moment in time – not outside of the world that is imagined. This interaction during the interview is the site at which knowledge is processed and constructed intersubjectively between the researcher and the researched. It is precisely because of this that the reflexive dimension of this study is foregrounded.

Simply put, an interview is a conversation that has both structure and purpose (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). It goes beyond the spontaneous interaction of views in everyday conversations; an interview is questioning and listening with the purpose of obtaining knowledge. However, merely referring to an interview as a conversation is inaccurate, as it is not an equal exchange between two equal parties. An interview is not an interaction between equal partners because the researcher poses the questions that direct the interaction. To regard the interviews conducted for this study as mere conversations would be misleading, as it would blur the authority that I, the researcher, have on the data. It is, however, important to note that during interviews, responding to questions was left to the discretion of the participants; they could at any point stop and walk away, or refuse to answer without needing to give a reason, and they were encouraged to ask questions at any point. In some instances, participants refused to be recorded when answering particular questions.

In-depth interviews were deemed to be the most suitable method of data collection because they provide a much-needed voice to the naturalised in Lebanon. In addition to disclosing perceptions, narratives and expressions of naturalisation, they allowed for an investigation into the process of tawtin, about which little has been documented. As this thesis investigates how citizenship is negotiated among the naturalised vis-à-vis notions of Palestinianness, conceptualisations of home/host and the notion of return, the existing political and social structures within which these negotiations take place, prompt complex accounts even if, or precisely because, existing social and economic structures cast the naturalised outside the realm of ‘Palestinians in Lebanon’ and render them as Lebanese for statistical, demographic and social purposes. In-depth interviews allowed individuals who are regarded as de facto Lebanese citizens (as far as the Lebanese state is concerned), whose ancestral origins are attributed to modern-day territorial Lebanon, to reflect on their Palestinianness.

Furthermore, many of the naturalised chose to conceal their identity for reasons such as social inclusion and assimilation, which contributes to render them ‘invisible’ to the state as well as the society at large. Palestinian origins and identity were sometimes
concealed from friends, peers, co-workers and even family members. ‘X’, for example, chose to conceal his Palestinian origins from his in-laws in order to marry his wife (see Chapter 5). There are two more important factors to consider. First, as the Lebanese state has not gathered statistics on its population since 1936, there is no data that categorises naturalised citizens in accordance to their ethnicity or background. Secondly, many have falsely altered information about their places or ancestry in order to acquire citizenship. Together, all these factors render the naturalised ‘invisible’ as Palestinians in Lebanon.

The exclusion of the naturalised from virtually all studies pertaining to Palestinians in Lebanon illustrates how the notion that these Palestinians have become Lebanese, and the need not to be studied within the context of studies pertaining to Palestinians is widespread. However, beyond invisibility and presumed assimilation exists a complex conceptualisations of identity, belonging, relation between home/host, about which little is understood. In my in-depth interviews, the aim was not to answer what each of these concepts meant to the naturalised, but to focus on how they are negotiated, practised and experienced. The following sections outline the research design of this thesis, the fieldwork, the position of the researcher, and limitations of the research.

**Research design**

Making a case against standardised research design, Maxwell argues that qualitative research does not allow for fixed research approaches (Maxwell 2012). A qualitative approach, according to Grady and Wallston (1998) requires a non-sequential and flexible design (1998: 10). As Maxwell points out, this does not mean that qualitative studies lack design. To illustrate this, Maxwell refers to Yin’s conclusion that ‘Every type of empirical research has an implicit, if not explicit, research design’ (1994: 19). In line with Maxwell’s (1992) conclusion, this thesis adopts a qualitative in-depth approach.

**Fieldwork: July 2013 to February 2014**

I began my fieldwork in July 2013 when I relocated from Melbourne to Beirut. The first fieldwork trip lasted eight months, and ended in February 2014. I revisited Lebanon several times after that trip to conduct more interviews and access material. These visits lasted a few weeks each. During my first and longest fieldwork trip, I rented an apartment in central Beirut, knowing that it would be easiest to meet with interviewees if
I were in a densely populated area, as opposed to the suburbs. I had lived in Beirut for a period of four years while enrolled in an undergraduate program at the American University of Beirut (AUB). I was familiar with the city, and had an already established network of family and friends there. The majority of paternal family members resided in Beirut. My father’s family settled in the capital in 1950 after spending two years in the south of Lebanon near what became the Israeli–Lebanese border. They had rented a small apartment in Nabatieh, a southern city close to the border, before moving to Beirut. Thinking they would soon be able to return to their homes, my family remained wished to remain as close to the border as possible in order to ensure ease of return. My grandfather resisted moving to Beirut, wishing to remain as close to Acre as he possibly could. He passed away a few years later from heart complications. My grandmother, his wife, was heard saying that he died of a ‘burning heart’ after losing his home, life, livelihood, and homeland.

Many naturalised Palestinians, like my own family, eventually settled in Beirut following their arrival in 1948. The country’s capital was also its economic and business centre. Another reason why Beirut was deemed an ideal base for me was that unlike other areas of Lebanon, Beirut’s residents are both Christians and Muslims, and given that the naturalised were also from Muslim and Christian backgrounds, Beirut was deemed the most suitable location.

For various reasons discussed in the chapters that follow, the naturalised Palestinians did not form a recognisable political entity in the way that naturalised Armenians did, for example. Armenian political parties represent the country’s Armenian naturalised, and two seats in parliament are reserved for Armenians. Also, unlike the Armenians (the majority of whom reside in an area called Burj Hammoud north of Beirut), the naturalised Palestinians are not geographically concentrated in particular areas of the city; they are scattered all over Beirut as well and its suburbs, and in smaller cities such as Sidon and Tripoli.

During the course of fieldwork I learned that the many (naturalised) Muslims resided in the Mazraa district of Beirut. My family and many others are an example of this. Mazraa is a traditionally Sunni area, and many of the Sunni Palestinian families that took up residence there after 1948 showed a preference towards Sunni areas over Christian areas of the city. Naturalised Christian families were not geographically concentrated. The refugee camp of Dbaye housed a significant Christian population who have now all
become naturalised. Dbaye is an interesting case because it is populated by Christian Palestinians, many of whom were granted Lebanese citizenship. The camp no longer represents what one might imagine a refugee camp to look like. It is integrated and cannot be distinguished from the neighbourhoods that surround it.

While the demographic make-up of many areas in Beirut has somewhat changed in the post-Civil war era, they remain largely characterised in accordance to religious (and in some cases political) sect and following. The Lebanese civil war lasted for 15 years, from 1975 to 1990. It resulted in political paralysis that led to mass Lebanese migration (see Traboulsi 2007 for further reading). Dbaye, for example, remains overwhelmingly Christian. Recently, due to the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon in the wake of the ongoing Syrian crisis since 2012, many areas have witnessed a demographic shift.

Although urbanised now, Mazraa (meaning farm) was known for its orchards and open green spaces in the 1950s. Revealed by fieldwork research, two other significant areas where the naturalised Palestinians have concentrated are Sidon and Dbaye (north of Beirut).

Beirut was the main site of fieldwork. Eighty in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted in total. All took place in Beirut and its surrounding suburbs in a range of locations, such as cafes, libraries, restaurants, and in some cases in participants’ residences. Twenty interviews were conducted with urban refugees (i.e. refugee status holders who resided in Beirut), and 40 were conducted with naturalised Palestinians. The remaining 20 interviews were conducted with refugee residents in Ain el-Helwe. Due to security concerns, I was unable to visit the camp, so interviews were conducted with residents in various locations in Beirut.

I had spent much time in the camp in 2011–2012. I was thus able to build on my already established network of individuals through whom I could reach potential participants. The time I had spent in the camp improved my knowledge of the camp community and contributed to increasing the level of trust between the participants and myself. I was not regarded in the way an entirely unknown researcher may have been, since they were referred to me by a person they knew and trusted.

I selected to research residents of Ain el-Helwe in particular due to the constant negative attention they received in the media. It was for this reason that I began visiting the camp several years ago before I began my fieldwork. In part, I was driven by a curiosity...
towards this much-feared concentration of Palestinian refugees. I had spent time in other
camps, primarily in Beirut, and was curious to learn more about the residents of Ain el-
Helwe. The opportunity presented itself when I met Bayan through a mutual friend. She
was in early twenties at the time and had spent the majority of her life in the camp. She
was not surprised upon learning that I had never visited the camp, and she invited me to
have dinner with her family in their home in Ain el-Helwe. I frequented the camp
following this initial visit and met various people with whom I established lasting
friendships.

Participant selection for this research comprised of snowballing or chain sampling
technique. Snowballing is a non-probability technique which uses existing network to
recruit future participants. This technique ‘identifies cases of interest from people who
know people’ (Miles and Huberman 1994: 24).

The participants’ ages ranged between 18 and 85. Participants were not viewed as a
‘representative’ sample of a specific population, and I do not proceed to draw
generalisable conclusions about the entirety of the naturalised or refugee population in
Lebanon based on my results. Instead, the aim was to give voice to the naturalised,
convey their narratives, and retrieve narratives about them.

The research goals are centred upon exploring the naturalised. The inclusion of the
refugee participants has however worked to further broaden the scope of this research by
offering a different perspective on process of naturalisation. Chapter 4 of this thesis is
focused on both urban and camp refugee narratives. Refugee narratives about
naturalisation serve as a point of comparison that offers a different perspective to that
offered by the naturalised. They provide a broader and more comprehensive picture of
the Palestinian experience in Lebanon, and most importantly, the naturalised often
referred to refugee life and the refugee experience to explain their own, which
necessitated the inclusion of a refugee voice. My intention was not to speak about them,
but allow them to speak about and for themselves.

The criteria for inclusion for the naturalised were:

(1) Directly naturalised, or direct descendants (maternal or paternal) of naturalised
persons who were granted Lebanese citizenship between 1948 and the 1960s (in some
cases the father was Lebanese and the mother was a naturalised Palestinian – these cases
were included in the study).
(2) Individuals who have resided in Lebanon for a minimum period of five years (preferably as an adult).
(3) Holders of Lebanese citizenship.

The criteria for inclusion for the urban refugees were:
(1) Individuals who have never resided in a camp (although this was not intentional, all those interviewees had received university degrees).
(2) Individuals who hold UNRWA-issued refugee status

The criteria for inclusion for the camp refugees were:
(1) Residents of Ain el-Helwe.
(2) Individuals who hold UNRWA-issued refugee status.

Regarding the criteria for the naturalised, there are two composite considerations. Patriarchal citizenship laws in Lebanon posit that citizenship is acquired through paternal, and not maternal, lineage (Joseph 2000). This is the case in the majority of Arab countries. This in turn meant that it is socially acceptable, if not expected, to refer to oneself solely by the citizenship or ancestry of the father and not the mother. This is a contentious issue and there is an ongoing campaign titled, ‘My nationality is a right for me and my family’, which was started in February 2010. The campaign calls for gender equality and advocates for the right of Lebanese women to pass their nationality to their children. Political elites in Lebanon have opposed this prospect, stating that far too many Lebanese women have married foreigners, and arguing that their naturalisation would tip the demographic balance in favour of Sunni Muslims. This is generally understood to be a reference to marriages of Lebanese women to (Muslim) Palestinians and Syrians.

Due to these laws, it is common to solely refer to oneself by the nationality of the father. However, in rejecting this patriarchal practice, I expanded the criteria for participation to individuals whose mothers were naturalised and whose fathers were full Lebanese citizens by birth or ancestry. This included four individuals whose mothers were naturalised by marriage to their (Lebanese) fathers.

Naturalisation processes slowed down significantly towards the late 1950s. The rise and militarisation of the PLO also helped in slowing down the naturalisation process in Lebanon in the early 1960s, as the narrative surrounding the refugee population was
being transformed from that of ‘helpless’ refugees to that of ‘active’ resistance fighters, a transformation that threatened the already politically fragile state (Sayigh 1979; Rougier 2007). What was more significant was the outbreak of the first Lebanese civil war in 1958, which halted the naturalisation process entirely. During the course of the fieldwork, I did not encounter any naturalised person or their descendants who were granted citizenship after the early 1960s (this excludes individuals granted citizenship in 1994 with the passing of the naturalisation decree under the Hariri government).

The second criterion for inclusion necessitated that individuals reside in Lebanon for a period of at least five years, was introduced during the course of my fieldwork. I began my fieldwork during the summer months (July, August, September), which was an advantage because it was prime time for Lebanese emigrants to visit the country. I met some individual naturalised Palestinians who had only visited Lebanon a few times in their lives, often for a few weeks at a time during summer holidays. Born and raised abroad, in the Gulf counties or the United States, these individuals had never experienced living in Lebanon as adults. Some had left during the civil war (1975–1990) and never returned. Others were born and raised abroad.

Upon reflection, their narratives of belonging and identification were in many ways determined by the communities with whom they interacted and engaged in the diaspora. I recall one individual I interviewed, Nora, who was born and raised in Southern California. A daughter of naturalised parents who fled to the US during the civil war, Nora lived in Anaheim, a predominantly ‘Palestinian suburb of Los Angeles’ where ‘the majority of Arabs in the area are Palestinian’, not Lebanese. By virtue of this, Nora identified strongly with her ‘Palestinian side’, and regarded Lebanon only as a place she liked visiting: ‘We like coming here,’ she noted. ‘We come and visit my family every few years, but it’s definitely not where I’m from – I’m Palestinian–American, this is how I’ve always identified.’

Nora’s case exemplified the many external variables that play into expressions of belonging, affiliation and notions of home and territorial attachment for naturalised Palestinians in the diaspora (especially those who have also become citizens of other countries). She was later therefore excluded from the study. This dimension of her identity (the Western/American) needed to be considered if expressions of belonging and identification were to be analysed and studied. A second prerequisite for participation was thus put into place.
There were individuals who contributed to this research in valuable ways, yet were not recruited as participants because they did not fit the criteria for participation, or were contacted for other investigative purposes. Information was gathered from non-naturalised participants as well. I met Lebanese anti-\textit{tawt"in} activists, lawyers and journalists. I also interviewed prominent Palestinian lawyer and author Souheil Al-Natour, as well as lawyers specialising in Lebanese citizenship and marriage law, and key individuals from the ministry of interior.

**The interviews**

Follow-up interviews were conducted with 15 per cent of the 80 interviewees. Follow-up interviews were arranged in order to ask some questions that may have been missed during the first interview or in order to elaborate on specific responses. Ninety per cent of the interviews were recorded. The remaining 10 per cent chose not to be recorded in order to protect their identities. In these cases, I resorted to copious note-taking. The duration of the interviews ranged. On average, interviews were one hour and 15 minutes long. The longest was two hours and 40 minutes, and the shortest was around 35 minutes. While questions varied and were dependent on responses, a few standard questions were asked to all participants.

(1) Where are you from?

(2) How and when did your family become naturalised?

(3) How would you define \textit{tawt"in}? 

Follow-up questions depended on original responses. Individuals were given the choice to answer questions; if they felt uncomfortable or were unwilling to respond, they were encouraged not to answer. They were also given the choice of changing their responses if they wished to so during or after the interviews.

As I was following a snowballing technique, I did not select potential participants according to their gender or age. To the best of my abilities I tried to diversify participants with regard to age, gender and socioeconomic status. My aim was to ensure a diverse sample that would not be skewed in favour of one age, gender or socioeconomic bracket over the other.

The emergent socioeconomic and educational disparities between urban refugees and camp residents were due to the fact that the urban refugees I met and knew were highly educated and belonged to a higher socioeconomic bracket than their camp resident
counterparts. There is a clear distinction between urban and camp refugees, in particular those who reside in Beirut. Generally, UNRWA aid, for example, is only provided to registered camp dwellers. This means that many of those who reside in quasi-campus settings, locations that often surround camps, are not eligible to receive aid and are often in worse conditions than the residents of the camp themselves (Ramadan 2013). While urban refugees may be eligible for UNRWA aid, none of the participants with whom I met received it, and it was explained that there were others more in need than themselves.

My family
As a naturalised Palestinian with a relatively large extended family in Lebanon, I interviewed three members of my own family. Their ages were 23, 85, and 49. My paternal uncle, at 85, recalled the day of his arrival to Lebanon with vividness and detail. He did not wish to discuss this during our meeting, as it conjured difficult memories which he did not wish to share at the time. This was something I had experienced with many members of my family, of the older generation in particular. They did not wish to speak about their personal experiences of coming to Lebanon. While my cousins (not born in historical Palestine) and I spoke about these issues frequently, family members who had experienced the Nakba were often reluctant to engage in our conversations. The experience of the Nakba for many, like my own family, was extremely traumatic and difficult. Relaying and recalling this experience was not something they were readily willing to do.

I chose to limit the participation of my family members to only three because I wanted to ensure diversity. But the role of my family in this research goes far beyond these three interviews. Many family gatherings and discussions have all contributed to my own learning process and led to my early interest in this topic. I come from a politically active family; my father’s cousins and brothers were involved, at various times, in different Palestinian political factions and groups. However, not all members of my family are politically conscious, active, or engaged, and many have contradictory perspectives on questions pertaining to Palestine.

Every Sunday, the family gathered at my oldest uncle’s house. I frequented these gatherings during my fieldwork. As all my family was aware of my research topic, much
of our discussions revolved around naturalisation, *tawtin*, and related themes. However, this was not a formalised component of my research.

While these meetings were not formalised in the same way the interviews were (they were not recorded or guided), they were as informative, important and enlightening as many of the interviews I conducted. I reflected on these meetings with my family in my ‘fieldwork journal’, which I kept throughout the fieldwork journey. Upon returning from these gatherings, I would jot down sentences that had struck me and reflect on the conversations and encounters that took place during the meetings.

These gatherings, which took place every Sunday for eight months, were an invaluable contribution to this thesis. They contributed to my understanding of the naturalised experience in various ways that cannot be easily pinpointed. It would be inaccurate if I were to refer to interviews as the only source of data collection that took place in this research. I am part of the ‘people’ I am studying. My experiences, and my identities as Palestinian and Lebanese, as a woman, and as a researcher all informed this research.

**Positionality and reflexivity**

As many Palestinians in the diaspora, I grew up as a ‘foreigner’. Born and raised in Kuwait and the United States for some parts of my childhood, I struggled with my own identity for many years. It was only as a young adult, in my early twenties, that I began to rationalise and make sense of my roots, ancestry, and my family’s very painful history. I now introduce myself as a Palestinian/Lebanese/American in order to account for all parts of my identity and to honour my parents’ ancestry.

Shortly into my fieldwork, I learned the importance of this identification and how it would affect and guide my conversations with the participants. I encouraged participants to ask any questions they had at any point during, before, or after the interviews. A majority of them were interested in my story, my background, and whether I too was Palestinian. Most people asked: ‘Where are you from?’

One of my concerns through the fieldwork component of this study was the question: ‘Who am I in relation to my subject and the people I interact with?’ I do not mean this in an existential sense, but in relation to those with whom I met and interviewed, those whose stories and narratives are the foundation of this study. I then thought that it would perhaps be more fitting to rephrase this question and ask: ‘Who am I to others?’ The problem with this, however, is that it essentialises both myself as well as the other. The
‘other’ is not a fixed community to be entered and tapped into. And ‘I’ am not an individual who is perceived in the same light by all those I encounter. My own identity/ies are adaptable, shifting and flexible. Both categories are unfixed, negotiated, and changing and, most importantly, depend on the context within which they are negotiated. I recall many instances in my life when I was reluctant to tell others I was Palestinian in fear of judgement. At other times, I was hoping to avoid uninvited political insights into the root of the conflict that had for many years left me questioning my own identity and experience.

When I began writing the earlier chapters of the thesis, I was very reluctant to make any references to myself and I did not use the pronoun ‘I’ at all. While ‘I’ references are used in abundance throughout the thesis, they were introduced in the editing processes and were not used in earlier versions. The exclusion of ‘myself’, as I later realised, was my attempt to distance myself from the research, a stance motivated by my desire to give my study more credibility, legitimacy and ‘objectivity’. I was encouraged to write myself into the work more, but I was reluctant to do so simply because I did not regard my own story or perspective to be more important than the stories of others.

Porter (2000) describes the process of interviewing as experienced by the interviewer as having a performative function: as contributing to the commonality of interviewer and interviewee. In addition to functioning as a narrative device, which allows persons to tell their stories, an interview allows teller and listener to share an experience that reveals a sense of sameness (Porter 2000).

The self–other binary is central to our conceptualisation of identity, and is expressed in various ways (for example: gender/sexual orientation, race, legal status). Needless to say, this conceptual difference is central to the construction of political and cultural identity (Hall 2001; Anthias 1998; Seidman 1997; Gilroy 1997; Benhabib 1996). As every search for identity is a search for how to differentiate what one is from what one is not, identity politics are ultimately a politics of difference (Benhabib 1996). Identity is always particular, and works to formulate the ‘we’ factor, which dangerously depends on marking the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Gilroy 1997). So, what happens when the difference between the self and the other cannot be perceived by either party?

My identity, as a naturalised Palestinian, played a role in bringing me ‘closer’ to the participants. This was made clear when participants made references to ‘we’, i.e. the naturalised, and when they uttered statements such as ‘You know how it is’, and ‘I’m
sure you would understand’ when referring to experiences that they as naturalised Palestinians had gone through. Participants also asked about my family’s naturalisation story and compared it to their those of their own families. This ‘shared experience’ blurred boundaries that exist between (Schwedler 2006; Stacy 1998). This familiarity was precipitated into encounters that were more open and honest, where participants interacted with me as a familiar ‘other’ who could and did relate to their stories in deeply personal ways. There was a bond that was created between the participants and myself, as they perceived me as someone who could directly relate and understand the stories and narratives they conveyed. The boundaries between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ (me, the researcher) were bridged and blurred as a result of shared experiences, ancestry, and identity.

In her reference to feminist anthropologies, Abu-Lughod illustrates that the self is neither a natural nor a fixed entity, despite its appearance as such. These notions of the ‘self’ and ‘other’ are more fluid and adaptive than bold categorisations may suggest. To posit the self as negotiable and flexible is the right place to begin if we are to understand how processes of identification work. Abu-Lughod argues that the study of the ‘other’ has been, for the most part, established upon the divide between the West and the non-West, ‘even if its new guise is to give voice to the other or to present a dialogue between the self and other, either textually or through an explication of the fieldwork encounter’ (1992: 52). The relationship between the West and non-Western world has been, for the most part, characterised by Western domination in the social sciences (Abu-Lughod 1995; see also Zureik 2003). This bias problematises the possibility of ‘studying’ one’s own people.

Identifying the self from the other is a negotiated and ongoing process, is responsive and adaptive. Abu-Lughod addresses instances where the researcher is at the nexus of the self and the other in what she refers to as the ‘halfie’ phenomenon. The term ‘halfie’ was coined by Kirin Narayan, but is widely known through Abu-Lughod’s ‘Writing against culture’ (Abu-Lughod 1996). The ‘halfie’ refers to ‘people whose national or cultural heritage is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education or parentage’ (Abu-Lughod 1996: 137).

The issue of positionality cannot be easily avoided in research conducted by halfies, because for the halfie, ‘The self is split, caught at the intersection of systems of difference.’ Abu-Lughod thus raises the important question: ‘What happens when the
“other” that the anthropologist is studying is simultaneously constructed as, at least partially, a self?’ (1991: 53) For halfies, the other is also – wholly or in part – the self. An issue particular to research conducted by halfies pertains to objectivity and bias. While social scientists can agree on the prevalence of bias in all empirical research, research conducted by ‘halfies’ has garnered more attention in this regard. The alleged problem in studying one’s own society or people is the issue of gaining enough distance. ‘Distance’ is attributed to increasing objectivity and minimising bias, because being part of the ‘other’ that one studies is posited to subject the researcher to the danger of being partial. However, as Abu-Lughod notes, these problems presuppose that the researcher must stand apart from the other. This may, however, be an advantage. When ‘halfies’ present the other, they are at the same time presenting themselves, and thus speak with a heightened awareness of circumstance and positions of those whom they study.

Regarding the notion of subjectivity and bias in ‘halfie’ research, El-Kholy and Al-Ali suggest that the boundaries separating self and other, and insider and outsider are overly emphasised, and instead should be perceived as negotiated and context specific (1994). The authors criticise the usage of the term ‘halfie’, because it wrongly implies being simultaneously (and equally) from both places/cultures/worlds, and suggests instead a conceptualisation that encompasses the notions of ‘here’ and ‘there’. For El-Kholy, the debate of whether a ‘native’ can achieve objectivity when researching their ‘own people’ is problematic in its own right: is ‘doing fieldwork at home’ possible? (1994: 16). El-Kholy and Al-Ali reflect on their own experiences as halfie/native researchers to illustrate how differently ‘others’ perceived them, depending on variables such as class, gender, residence, language, ethnicity or nationality. This in turn problematises the importance given to practices of self-labelling. Labels they attributed to themselves did not match those given to them by others. And yet, regardless of fluidity between the self and the other, gauging how the other perceives the researcher is a necessary practice when considering the limitations of the research. Al-Kholy and Al-Aly conclude that insiders’ research is not biased. Rather, it can be deep and self-reflective.

Their analysis resonates strongly with my own experiences as a researcher. I first attempted to distance myself from my participants, and from my research, in order to increase objectivity and reduce bias. I eventually began to understand that identity/ies are integral to managing the relationship between researcher and participant, and that they can in fact be an advantage. My own background bridged the demarcations between
me and participants. It necessitated a rethinking of whether this ‘othering’ was in fact relevant, or whether our identities were too similar to regard ourselves as ‘others’. This encouraged the building of a stronger rapport between myself and the participants, which allowed many of them to share insights and experiences which they may have been reluctant to do had they categorised me as the ‘other’. Further, many naturalised participants explained that they had never asked or been asked these questions about their own identities, and one individual explained that I was one of very few naturalised Palestinians, like herself, that she knew. These factors worked to build a connection which led to a relationship of openness and trust.

Limitations of this study

While my identity/ies opened many doors, they also posed limitations. My position as naturalised Palestinian allowed the establishment of a strong rapport, a sense of understanding and mutuality of experience with the participants. Many regarded me as one of them, which in turn allowed for the establishment of a sense of sameness. This is especially relevant and important in Lebanon, where Palestinians are institutionally and socially discriminated against, and where many still conceal their origins. Upon reflection, however, the similarities shared between myself and participants may have also limited their responses. Participants may have been reluctant to disclose information in fear of being judged, or alternatively, may have overly emphasised some information for that very same reason. Knowing that I too was Palestinian, perhaps some overstated their Palestinianness in fear of being judged by a ‘fellow Palestinian’.

Many naturalised Palestinians in Lebanon do not identify as Palestinian. As many actively conceal their origin, recruiting participants was not always easy. Dorothy Klaus (2003) found that many Palestinian refugees concealed their Palestinian origins in order to assimilate or avoid social discrimination. I make a similar argument in this thesis regarding the naturalised. Unlike ‘minorities’ in other countries, naturalised Palestinians in Lebanon are indistinguishable from their Lebanese counterparts. This made the recruitment process rather difficult as there was no known community of naturalised to tap into. Recruitment had to rely on social and family networks. I initially selected the participants myself, and many were individuals I previously knew or became known to me through friends and acquaintances. This reliance on my own networks excluded individuals who may have been important to this study. The majority of individuals I knew in Lebanon, I had met at university. I lived in Lebanon as an undergraduate
student for the duration of four years. As the participant selection drew from this initial pool, this may have led to the over-representation of educated members of the middle class. While I tried, to the best of my capabilities, to include a diverse socioeconomic range of persons, the majority of participants identified as members of the middle class, and the overwhelming majority, with the exception of two, had university degrees.

**Data and analysis**

The majority of the interviews were conducted in Arabic and English. Some were all in Arabic, and one was entirely in English. Many were conducted in a combination of both languages, especially with younger naturalised participants. Upon completing the initial fieldwork, I began translating and transcribing the recorded interviews. During this process, various recurring themes emerged, and so I began to organise interviews, or sections of interviews, into thematic categories.

This form of analysis emphasises context. This approach allows to draw common threads across a number of cases, and to find common thematic elements that span across the research participants’ experiences. These themes were not predetermined. I followed a grounded approach to thematic categorisation. In the words of Riessman, I collected ‘many stories and inductively create conceptual groupings’ (Riessman 2008: 2).

These themes revolved broadly around the following: notions of home and belonging, the meanings of citizenship, and the conceptualisations of return. These themes were then developed into the four chapters. It is important to note that although many narratives are grouped into similar thematic categories, this does not mean that all those whose narratives are expressed in the same category mean the same thing by what they say (Riessman 2008). There are various perspectives and narratives that are encompassed within a specific category, and differences are emphasised in each chapter.

**Conclusion**

The absence of relevant resources on Lebanon’s naturalised Palestinian population necessitated following a qualitative approach to gather and analyse data for this study. Interviews were at the core of this process. The interview provided voice to the naturalised as well as their refugee counterparts, both urban and camp residents. Data was analysed following a thematic approach, whereby findings were categorised and organised into relevant emergent themes. The four chapters of data analysis that follow
are organised into themes as they emerged from the fieldwork. The next chapter draws upon the notion of *tawtin*, and shifts from the dominant rhetoric on the issue to bring to light narratives of *tawtin* as expressed by those who have undergone the process themselves.
Chapter 3: Tawtin in Lebanon

The previous chapter broadly discussed the concept of tawtin. This chapter examines and explains what tawtin means within the Palestinian/Lebanese context, discussing its origins and implementation, and explains why some Palestinians were favoured over others.

Tawtin remains little understood. Posited as a political process, existing discussions of tawtin fail to contextualise its many facets and its relation to Lebanese national narratives. These discussions also overlook how Palestinians conformed to tawtin, and the process they underwent in order to acquire Lebanese citizenship. This chapter highlights the policies that guided tawtin. While scholars can agree on the rejection of tawtin by both parties involved, they fail to address its complexities and the rationale behind this rejection for the Palestinians and Lebanese alike (Salih 2013; Knudsen 2009; Haddad 2004).

The first part of the chapter addresses the historical context of tawtin, beginning with the years leading up to the Nakba, and the early years of Palestinian presence in Lebanon. Highlighting the involvement of international actors in shaping this process, the United States for example, illustrates how tawtin involves various dimensions, actors and interests. Opposition to tawtin has for the most part stemmed from a desire by Palestinians (and Lebanese) to preserve the right of return and so the next section explores the relation between repatriation and tawtin.

1947–1948

On 14 May 1948 the State of Israel was pronounced in Tel Aviv. The proclamation did not officially become effective until the following day (Masalha 2003; Morris 2007). The Palestinians remember and commemorate 15 May as the official day of the Nakba, the day that Palestinians were exiled from their homeland, although the majority of those I met had fled as early as 1947 (Pappe, 2007). Approximately 85% of the total indigenous population of historical Palestine sought refuge in neighbouring states or became internally displaced persons inside regions under Arab control. Approximately 15% of the total population managed to remain in what was to become the State of Israel (Morris 2004: 252-258). They later became Israeli citizens, and today make up approximately 20% of Israel’s population (Rouhana and Sabbagh-Koury 2015).
Not a single house or family in historical Palestine was unaffected by the events. The day of the Nakba on 15 May marks a symbolic moment that is commemorated and remembered by Palestinians everywhere (Sa’di and Abu-Lughod 2009). Although less commonly used, other terms that refer to the events of 1948 are al-hijra (the migration) and sanat al-hijra (the year of migration) (Sayigh 1979: 67). The word hijra, most commonly used by camp Palestinians, evokes ‘the Prophet Muhammad’s hijra to Medina’ and symbolises a painful reality (Sayigh 1979: 246).

The establishment of Israel

There are contested perceptions of history. The work of Israeli ‘new historian’ Benny Morris is fundamental to this contest. Israeli ‘New Historians’ are a loosely defined group of historians who have challenged traditional narratives of Israeli history. They challenged the notion that Israel was founded upon a ‘land without a people’. According to a New York Times article, the new historians have sought ‘to advance the peace process in region’ (Bronner 2003).

According to Morris, Palestinians fled from historical Palestine in four consecutive periods between 1947 and 1948 as a result of violence inflicted by the Hagana Zionist militias (Morris 1987; see also Byman et al. 2014). The Haganah was a Jewish paramilitary organisation that operated under the British Mandate of Palestine (1921–1948). They were then developed into the Israeli Defense Forces (Pappe 2001: 33-34). Pappe’s influential study analyses the events leading up to the formation of the state of Israel. His findings confirm that what took place was an ethnic cleansing of the indigenous population of historical Palestine (Pappe, 2007).

The first wave of exodus occurred before the official establishment of the State of Israel, at a time when the prospect of violence motivated the upper and middle classes from large cities to evacuate (Morris 1987: 59). The second and most significant of these migrations took place between April and June 1948, when somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000 Palestinians were exiled from their homes as a result of the escalating violence (Morris 1987: 128). The third wave occurred some months later, between 8 and 18 July 9 1948. The final evacuation took place in October of the same year. While the Nakba resulted in the largest number of Palestinian refugees, a significant number of Palestinians who remained in the Palestinian Territories (the West Bank and Gaza) were
made into refugees once more as a result of the 1967 Six Day War. This latter conflict displaced another 500,000 Palestinians (Sayigh 1995). The Six Day War was fought between Israel and neighbouring Arab states of Jordan, Egypt and Syria. Following the war, Israel seized the Gaza Strip and Sinai region in Egypt.

Khalidi (1988), a prominent critic of Morris, argues that Morris takes a banal approach towards the military operations and to military Plan D, or Plan Dalet, which led to the Palestinian exile (see also Schulze 2013: 52). In ‘Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine’, Khalidi accuses Israel’s new historians of describing the Palestinian flight as a tragic situation born out of conflict and war. This focus disregards the Zionist plan to seize Arab land. According to Khalidi, they still place the moral burden ‘on the invaded, who by resisting or panicking brought permanent exile upon themselves’ (1988: 8).

Morris’s position on the issue of Palestinian exile has received much criticism (Masalha 1991; Finkelstein 1992; Abdel-Nour 2013). His analysis of the military operations suggests that exile was inevitable. He deems violence as necessary for the establishment of the nation-state:

The creation of the problem was almost inevitable, given the geographical intermixing of the Arab and Jewish populations, the history of Arab-Jewish hostility during 1917–48, the resistance on both sides to a binational state, the outbreak and prolongation the war for Israel’s birth and survival; the major structural weakness of Palestinian Arab society, the depth of Arab animosity towards the yishuv and Arab fears of falling under Jewish rule; and the yishuv’s and Arab fears of falling under Jewish rule, and the Yishuv’s fears of what would happen should Arabs win and of what would be the fate of a Jewish state born with a very large, potentially or actively hostile Arab minority (Morris 1987: 286). While Morris’s rationalisation and naturalisation of someone else’s exile is problematic (see Filkenstein 2005), rationalised or not, exile became an unavoidable reality.

**Palestinian arrival in Lebanon**

The exact number of Palestinians who arrived in Lebanon in 1948 and its aftermath is disputed. Following the Nakba, somewhere between 700,000 and 900,000 Palestinians sought temporary refuge in the neighbouring states of Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt (Al-Husseini 2007; Chatty and Hundt 2005: 11; Sayigh 1979: 99). Conservative Israeli
sources estimate the total number of those who were expelled to be at around 560,000, British sources suggest it is somewhere between 600,000 and 760,000, and the United Nations Refugee and Works Agency estimates that a total of 720,000 Palestinians fled historical Palestine (Morris 2004: 602). Arabic sources often refer to between 900,000 and 1 million refugees. UNRWA figures draw from the number of refugees registered with the organisation after its establishment; they are regarded as the most accurate (El-Abed 2005).

In September 1949, one year after the Nakba, the Economic Survey Mission (ESM) estimated the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon to be between 97,000 and 110,000 (Al-Husseini 2007: 34). While not all residents of the Galilee fled the violence, the majority of those who did, fled northwards towards Syria and Lebanon (2001; 217). This, as Bisharat (2001) points out, further troubled the prospect of their return, as the cities from which they fled quickly changed character as they were populated with Jewish migrants to Israel.

When Palestinians sought refuge in Lebanon, their stay was not thought to be permanent, and so many set up tents near the Lebanese-Israeli border in order to ensure ease of return (Sayigh 1979, 2005; Al-Husseini and Bocco 2010). As time went by, refugees were coerced to moving further inland to designated camps, set up by UNRWA to house and provide services to them (Peteet 1995). A total of 15 refugee camps serviced by UNRWA were set up across Lebanese territory as a temporary solution to a humanitarian crisis (Hanafi and Long 2010; Sirhan 1975). During the Lebanese civil war three of the 15 camps were completely destroyed and never rebuilt. The camps of Al-Nabatiyah al-Tahta, Tel al-Zaatar and Jisr al-Basha, were destroyed between 1974 and 1976 by Israeli shelling and the fighting between Lebanese militias and Palestinian armed factions. Twelve officially recognised camps remain today. There are also five unofficial camps.

UNRWA was founded by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1949 to assist refugees with their immediate needs (Takkenberg 1998). UNRWA’s mandate, as specified by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302(IV) of 8 December 1949, was twofold:

To carry out, in collaboration with local governments, the direct relief and works programs as recommended by the Economic Survey Mission and to consult with interested Near Eastern governments concerning measures to be taken in
preparation for the cessation of international assistance for relief and works projects (UNGA Res. 1949).

UNRWA was tasked with providing emergency relief. Previously, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of the Red Cross Societies (LRCS) and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) (Al-Husseini, Bocco et al. 2011) carried out this work. According to the Economic Survey Mission report upon which UNRWA was established, the agency was tasked with implementing public programs aimed at the economic and social integration of Palestinian refugees (Al-Husseini 2007). UNRWA’s role was and remains focused on providing direct relief in the form of economic, educational and financial assistance (Forsythe 1971). Its mission, however, remains undefined, as explained by Al-Husseini, Bocco et al. 2011

[UNRWA] was never provided with a specific statute or charter … the UNGA has offered little guidance concerning the evolution of UNRWA’s mandate … this has proven problematic because the agency’s top management has had to take critical decisions due to the changing environment in which it operates (2011: 232).

The creation of UNRWA marks a shift. Initially, the problem was to be solved through political means, i.e. by repatriation or resettlement, but with the creation of UNRWA, economic means were proposed instead. As its name suggests, UNRWA set out to provide work opportunities for refugees so they could eventually sustain themselves (Al-Husseini, Bocco et al. 2011). Thus, UNRWA was established as a transitory agency to provide immediate relief and services, and ensure a sustainable economic transition into host states.

However, this did not go as initially planned. Attempts to socioeconomically integrate refugees through the provision of work opportunities were met with ardent opposition by Palestinian refugees for whom any form of ‘integration’ was akin to permanent resettlement into host states (Al-Husseini 2007; Al-Husseini and Bocco 2009). UNRWA’s attempt to integrate and resettle Palestinian refugees into host societies through economic means was interpreted in Palestinian circles as an attempt by Western powers to liquidate their right to return (Al-Husseini 2000). As a response to increasing opposition to UNRWA’s initiatives, the agency was obliged to reorient its programs towards vocational and educational initiatives (Al-Husseini 2000). UNRWA weakened the possibility of repatriation. This was an incentive to seek host state citizenship and naturalisation (Talhami 2003).
While UNRWA provided some relief in the form of health care, education services and food rations, the Palestinians regarded it as an apparatus in the machinery of dispossession (Khalili 2007; Al-Husseini and Bocco 2010). A well-known anecdote, which I have heard several times, tells the story of a time when UNRWA attempted to plant trees in the camp vicinity in order to beautify camp spaces. In response to these attempts, residents proceeded to uproot the trees and return them to UNRWA in a symbolic gesture to affirm that they were not there to stay, and that their roots would remain in historical Palestine.

As Al-Husseini points out, the role of UNRWA extended beyond the services it provided (2000). In order to facilitate its work, the agency issued identification cards to refugees; these were the only form of identification held by refugees. The UNRWA-issued identity cards soon took a political character, as they constituted an official piece of documentary evidence that attested to a physical link to Palestine. They became a symbol of Palestinian identity and steadfastness. The significance of this politicisation surfaced when the question of naturalisation/resettlement arose. As Al-Husseini argues, many refugees refused the prospect of naturalisation, as this would mean having to give up the only physical evidence that attested a connection with their homeland. Upon naturalisation, Palestinians were not legally obliged to return their UNRWA cards, although the majority failed to renew them once acquiring the Lebanese passports. There are some exceptions to this however, such as the case of Rashida, who was naturalised by virtue of marriage. She explained during an interview that she continued to receive medical assistance from UNRWA even after she was naturalised. Rashida was born and spent the majority of her life in the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut. This in turn problematised the question of naturalisation. Naturalisation contended with return, preservation of Palestinianess, and refugee status.

**Repatriation/the right of return**

At the time of their arrival to host states, many members of the newly created refugee population rejected the term ‘refugee’, and instead referred to themselves as ‘returnees’ (*a’idoun*) as they expected to return to their homes (Zureik 1996; Peteet 1995; Sayigh 1994). But, as the prospect of return receded, their predicament in Lebanon and other host states began to appear more permanent (Peteet 1995; Hanafi and Knudsen 2011). Return and repatriation are used interchangeably within this thesis, and refer to the
return of Palestinians to present-day Israel/Palestine, as stipulated by Article 11 of UNGA Resolution 194, which was ratified in December 1949:

The refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date … compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the governments or authorities responsible.

Few issues are as controversial, and the future of the Palestinian national movement is shaped by the question of return/repatriation. Palestinian political factions continue to demand an Israeli recognition of the right to return, a right that they continue to deem ‘sacred’. For Israel, the matter continues to be a non-starter, as the return of refugees, most of whom fled from what became present-day Israel, would compromise its ‘Jewish majority’ (Rouhana and Peled 2007).

Shortly following its establishment, Israel quickly passed laws that made repatriation legally impossible for Palestinians who had fled to neighbouring states. Following its establishment, Israel put what Morris refers to as ‘Israel’s defensive anti-infiltration measures’ (Morris 1993: 135) in place. They prevented Palestinians from returning to their homes. These ‘measures’ meant that any ‘illegal returnees and infiltrators’ – i.e. any person found within the borders of Israel who was not registered in the census of 1948 – would be in violation of the law (Masalha 1996; Pappé and Hilal 2010). Those not registered were categorised as ‘absentees’; they did not possess an Israeli identity card or military pass (Morris 1987: 240). Absentees were individuals who left their residences before 1 August 1948, or who for any reason moved to parts of the territory controlled by the Arab states or other forces opposed to the creation of the State of Israel between the dates of 19 November 1947 and 18 April 1948 (Morris 1987). In accordance with the Absentee Property Law, properties, homes, possessions, lands, business and movable goods were confiscated, or could be confiscated within 10 days notice if the area was declared to be a ‘security zone’ by Israel’s newly appointed Minister of Defense (Bouqai 2006: 37).

By 1950, the majority of the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon began moving further inland, and those who could afford to do so rented or purchased properties in Beirut and neighbouring suburbs (Sayigh 2005; Bisharat et al. 1997). The remainder moved to one of the newly established refugee camps that were set up by UNRWA in various parts of the country.
One month after the establishment of the State of Israel, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion expressed Israel’s position towards repatriation: ‘I believe we should prevent their return … we must settle Jaffa, Jaffa will become a Jewish city … we must prevent at all costs their return … I will be for them not returning after the war.’ Foreign minister Moshe Shertok responded: this ‘is our policy. They are not returning’ (quoted in Morris 1987; 141).

**Resettlement in International discourse**

*Tawtin* emerged out of international efforts to foster settlement and keep refugees in the countries in which they had sought refuge. Naturalisation was proposed as a solution to the Palestinian predicament when international powers, and principally the United States, proposed that refugees become naturalised and remain in the countries in which they sought refuge (Talhami 2003; Al-Husseini 2007).

As a consequence of this, refugees regarded *tawtin* as a strategy to further their dispossession, and deny repatriation. Members of the refugee community organised grassroots-level campaigns to oppose *tawtin*. This mobilisation even preceded the establishment of a recognisable Palestinian leadership. After the PLO was established, it quickly adopted an anti-*tawtin* position.

Talhami makes an important and compelling argument when she suggests that opposition to the prospect of *tawtin* was not necessarily a position against the acquisition of citizenship, but a rejection of the schemes put into place by parties whose interests were vested in the permanent resettlement of Palestinians (2003). An integral and rudimentary tool in a wider discourse of resettlement, *tawtin* was perceived by Palestinian refugees and their supporters as a catalyst – a speedy solution – to eliminate repatriation as a viable option and ensure that the Palestinian ‘problem’ would be dissolved within the context of host states.

Shortly after the signing of the first armistice agreement that ended the Arab–Israeli war of 1948, the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCC) organised a peace conference in Lausanne, Switzerland to determine what was to be done with the refugee crisis. The major issues discussed at Lausanne between April and September 1949 sealed the fate of over 700,000 Palestinian refugees. They have not been allowed to return (Al-Husseini 2007). In preparation for the Lausanne conference, an Arab League meeting was held. Participants included representatives of Israel, Egypt, Jordan,
Lebanon and Syria. The Arab Higher Committee delegation, and a number of refugee delegations were also in attendance (Talhami 2003). The Arab governments maintained a unified stance and issued Resolution 231 of 17 March 1949. It stated:

> The Council considers that the lasting and just solution of the problem of the refugees would be their repatriation and the safeguarding of all their rights to their properties, lives and liberty, and that these should be guaranteed by the United Nations (quoted in Al-Husseini 2007: 437).

The Arab delegations decided to abandon their political differences on this issue (Suleiman 1999; Talhami 2003). However, behind the veil of this joint position, each Arab delegation pursued individualistic strategies, dictated by its own political and socioeconomic interests (Al-Husseini 2007; Talhami 2003: 25-26). According to Al-Husseini (2007), on 9 May 1949 the Syrian delegation secretly informed the French member of the UNCCP that it would accept to resettle up to 250,000 refugees (almost three times the estimated number of Palestinian refugees residing in Syria at that time). It was also ready to draft a separate peace treaty with Israel in exchange for territorial compensations in the Galilee and international aid packages (Suleiman 1999: 9). Generous financial packages were offered to countries that considered resettling refugees at this time. King Abdullah of Jordan had from the onset of the crisis expressed his utmost interest in the economic and political opportunities deriving from an agreement with Israel. Abdullah hoped the agreement would secure access to the Mediterranean and lead to the annexation of the West Bank (Suleiman 1999: 11). Moreover, with resettlement came a flow of financial and technical assistance, which was likely to boost Jordan’s economy, and was thus encouraged (Talhami 2003; Al-Husseini 2007). In July 1949, the Jordanian delegation informed the UNCCP and the Israelis of its intention to resettle about 200,000 refugees (i.e. double the amount of refugees in Jordan at that time), if considerable financial assistance was obtained from the United Kingdom (Al-Husseini 2007) The outcomes of the Lausanne Conference offer a clear example of the Arab states’ ambiguous positions towards the Palestinian refugee question.

For the most part, and despite Syria’s attempt at negotiations, the majority of Arab states (with the exception of Jordan) did not proceed with major resettlement initiatives. Furthermore, they continued to avoid moves that could be interpreted as resettlement. Due to its negative implications on the right of return, the very concept of tawtin
eventually became taboo in official discourse (Al-Husseini 2000). As the US ambassador to Egypt testified after an Arab League meeting in early 1951:

They [the Arab leaders] are of course certain in their own mind that the refugees are not going to get back and that resettlement work must be started … Politically they do not dare to admit such a possibility and the very word ‘resettlement’ would be ruinous to their careers (quoted in Al-Husseini 2007: 448).

Talhami concludes that repatriation was never an option that was ever seriously considered or advocated by international actors or host states (El-Abed 2009; Talhami 2003; Suleiman 1999; Al-Husseini 2007).

While it was in Lausanne that the possibility of resettlement first entered the realm of solutions, various commissions were later formed which also put forward the idea of resettlement as a prospective solution to the refugee predicament. Of these, the most significant was the Economic Survey Commission, most commonly known as the Clapp Commission of 1949, named after its chairman Gordon Clapp. The American-led commission undertook extensive surveys to evaluate the capabilities of host states to permanently absorb and resettle refugees (Talhami 2003: 55). The significance of the Clapp Commission was that it marked a shift in proposed solutions to the refugee crisis. From political, the focus became economic (Takkenberg 1998; El-Abed 2009: 158; Talhami 2003: 56). Thereafter, the commission proposed financial and economic solutions to the refugee crisis. The prospect of a political solution receded. According to Peteet, this shift was mirrored in UNRWA’s mandate and operations, which had an ostensible focus on the provision of jobs and relief (2005: 63). It was firstly at Lausanne, and then through the operations and outcomes of the Clapp Commission, which sought to permanently keep refugees in the countries in which they had sought refuge, that the dangers to the Palestinian right of return began to materialise (Meier 2010: 146-147; Sayigh 1979: 67).

It became increasingly clear that the refugees, the camps and UNRWA would become semi-permanent features of the Middle East for the foreseeable future (Al-Husseini and Bocco 2009). It was also clear that Arab states (again, with the exception of Jordan), would not endorse plans that could undermine the refugees’ rights or threaten their internal stability. Despite the absence of national leaderships that could represent their interests, the refugees had nonetheless proven to be a forceful influence in national politics, a force that could not be underestimated. As the host authorities had feared from
the outset, refugees could be instrumentalised by opposition parties. They would protect their interests, and most particularly the right of return (Al-Husseini 2007; Peteet 1995).

Following this brief exploration of the international implications of tawtin, the discussion shifts in the next section towards the particular case of tawtin in Lebanon. Tawtin in Lebanon was more problematic than it was for other states due to the country’s internal sectarian–sociopolitical make-up. Tawtin was never seriously considered by Lebanese political elites; the Lebanese anti-tawtin position has to do with lack of stability and fears of fragmentation.

**Palestinian naturalisation (1948-early 1960s)**

Citizenship was granted to some of Lebanon’s Palestinians in two waves. The first began in 1948 and lasted approximately 10 years. The second was in 1994. The second wave of naturalisation, which falls outside the scope of this thesis, occurred with the issuing of a naturalisation decree in 1994 under the Rafic Hariri government. The decree granted citizenship to 154,931 foreign residents, 32,504 of whom were Palestinians from the Seven Villages (Kauffman 2006; Shrayyem 2013). As mentioned in the introduction, empirical data was only gathered from individuals and their descendants who were naturalised in the first wave. The reason for this is due to the extensive research that has been conducted pertaining to the second wave (Kauffman 2006; Hourani and Dabbous 2011: 189; see also Maktabi 1999; El-Khazen 1997). The first wave remains under-researched.

Sayigh (2005) notes that during this first period citizenship was primarily granted in accordance with two main characteristics. If displaced Palestinians were Christian or if they had been wealthy urbanites in historical Palestine, it would be granted. The Lebanese state was keen to augment its Christian population and contribute positively to its weak economy.

**The significance of Christians and wealthy Muslims in the tawtin process**

The Maronites played a proactive role in the naturalisation of Christian Palestinians in the first wave. The strong Maronite lobby, with the support of Maronite Patriarch Antoun Arida, advocated granting citizenship to Christian Palestinians. This was aimed at countering the mass Christian migration to Europe and the Americas, which began under the Ottoman Empire and continued under the French mandate (Haddad 2003).
Naturalization of Christians has always been encouraged in Lebanon as it would contribute to increasing the country’s Christian demographic. An increase in Lebanese Christians was regarded by Lebanese political elites as a step towards further stabilizing the country (Maktabi 2000). The strong Christian lobby ensured the naturalization of Christian Armenians for example, while Muslim Kurds were denied Lebanese citizenship.

The efforts of the Maronite lobby led to the naturalisation of 28,000 Palestinian Christians who acquired Lebanese citizenship in 1949 (Al-Natour 1993: 15, 40; Hudson 1997: 250). Some wealthy and urban Muslim Palestinian families were also naturalised, though their numbers were significantly less compared to their Christian compatriots. Their wealth and status was perceived to be a positive contribution to the weak Lebanese economy (Haddad 2004). Under Camille Chamoun’s presidency (1952–1958), another 3,000 Palestinian Christians were granted Lebanese citizenship (Haddad 2004).

Access to citizenship, colloquially referred to as bab al-jinsiyya (citizenship door), was open to wealthy Muslim Palestinians during the 1950s and in the mid 1990s with the case of the ‘Seven Villages’. Sayigh explains: ‘Naturalisation was easy for Christian and wealthy Muslim Palestinians in the early years of exile’ (1995: 42). Wealthy Palestinians injected money into the weak Lebanese economy, and were thus favoured candidates for naturalisation, as citizenship granted them the freedom to work, or open and own businesses. As urbanites, many had relations with Lebanese politician, and businessmen with whom they had traded under Ottoman and later British and French colonial rule. These historical connections proved useful to some, and facilitated tawtin.

The restrictive climate led many Palestinians to seek Lebanese citizenship. As refugees, Palestinians were unable to work or own a business. As noted by Al-Natour, the ability of foreigners to work in Lebanon was limited by a law passed in 1962 (Law Regarding Entry to, Residency in and Exit from Lebanon), which forbids non-Lebanese foreigners from working in Lebanon unless licensed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, he goes on to state:

The legislation referred to above does not address, directly or indirectly, the status of Palestinians in Lebanon. This is not surprising in the case of labour legislation framed prior to 1948. What is surprising is that legislation issued after that date also fails to address the issue, thereby leaving the Palestinians in a legal limbo.
When Palestinian entry into Lebanon began in 1948, as a direct consequence of the tragedy that befell Palestine that year, labour laws did not incorporate severe legal restrictions on the presence or employment of foreigners in the country. To this fact should be added the stream of official statements underscoring the need to embrace the Palestinians, allay their suffering, help them to endure their exile and facilitate employment and residency for them until such time as they could return to their land. These statements remained mere promises and have not been given practical form. Indeed, in late 1951 important domestic changes occurred in Lebanon that had a direct bearing on the status of the Palestine refugees (Al-Natour 1997: 366-367).

In the early 1950s, Lebanese authorities imposed restrictions on Palestinians, especially those who worked in professions such as law and medicine. These restrictions gave many of the naturalised an incentive to naturalise, especially since the prospect of return was appearing to be increasingly bleak.

**Against tawtin: demographic and political reasons**

The early years of the Palestinians’ presence in Lebanon (the late 1940s) were marked by a warm Lebanese welcome. The refugees were warmly welcomed by then Lebanese president Bishara El-Khoury (Hadadd 2004). The Maronite Presidents’ welcome was linked to electoral politics as it was his intention to express favourable attitudes towards the newly arrived refugee population.

The Patriarch of the Maronite Church, Antoun Arida, ordered church followers to help and assist their Palestinian brothers and sisters in their plight (Haddad, 2004). A plot of land owned by the church was allocated to temporarily house Palestinian refugees. This plot of land has now become the Mar Elias refugee camp in central Beirut. The small camp once hosted a predominantly Christian Palestinian population, but today most of its residents are Sunni Muslim.

Suleiman (1999) categorises the Palestinians’ presence in Lebanon into historical phases, and labels the early years of arrival as the phase of ‘adaptation and hope’ (1948–1958). Despite the crisis, there was hope at this time that the Palestinians would either be repatriated, or that the international community would propose a quick solution to solve their crisis. Their stay in Lebanon, as far as the Lebanese and Palestinians were concerned, was temporary until a solution was proposed. Despite this warm welcome, the Lebanese state (unlike Jordan) took a firm anti-tawtin policy towards the majority of
the Palestinians (Hanafi et al. 2012; Al-Natour 1997). The reasons for this are claimed by Lebanese political elite to be predominantly demographic and political.

Demographically, the Lebanese Government has consistently warned that the inclusion of the predominantly Sunni Palestinian population would tip the sensitive demographic balance upon which the governmental structure is established (Masalha 2002; El-Khazen 1997; Salam 1994). As a pluralist state home to a number of different sects, Lebanon established itself as a consociational democracy from its independence in 1943 (Lijphart 1977; Salibi 1988). The pluralist nature of the state was instituted by the unwritten ‘national pact’ (Salibi 1988; El-Khazen 1997). The consociational nature of the state was further reinstated by the written National Reconciliation Agreement (Ta’if Agreement), which ended the prolonged civil war in 1989 (Hudson 1999; Norton 1991).

The national pact acts as an amalgamating building block for a plural society (O’Leary and McGarry 1994). Lebanon’s consociational democracy, according to Lijphart, who writes extensively on the topic (1977, 1997), is a conflict management solution based on agreement among different elites rather than by competition. In Lebanon, for example, the Lebanese Government is premised on a proportional principle that mirrors the country’s diverse population (as recognised by the national census of 1936; see Salibi 1988 and Appendix B). Eight decades have passed since the people of Lebanon have been officially counted. And while in most countries, a census is undertaken for the purpose of population study, in Lebanon, a census would be instrumental to the country’s politico-sectarian representation in government.

After the data gathering ended on 14 September 1932, Decree 1 was issued, indicating seat distribution among religious sects. According to the consociational structure, the government’s make-up was related to the demographic statistics (see Lijphart 1977). The numbers of the population count in 1936 indicated that Lebanese citizenry was comprised of 29 per cent Maronite Christians; Sunni Muslims made up 22.5 per cent, Shiite Muslims 18 per cent and Greek Orthodox made up 11 per cent of the total population, and the rest was made up of other religious sects such as Druze and Alawites (Lijiphart 1977). This meant that the president had to be Maronite Christian, the prime minister was to be Sunni Muslim, and the head of parliament a Shiite Muslim (Maktabi 1999, 2000).

These numbers were inclusive of the whole Lebanese citizenry, including Lebanese emigrants and their offspring, who in most cases were citizens of receiving countries and
did not intend to return to Lebanon (Maktabi 1999). According to Maktabi (1999), the census was skewed in favour of religious sects with large numbers of emigrants, namely the Christians at that time. Also, as a precautionary measure, many individuals had traditionally refrained from registering for the census in fear of forced recruitment in the Ottoman Army. As Maktabi argues, the ambiguity of data collection methods, coupled with the misrepresentation of the resident population undermined the authority of the census.

The significance of this consociational system to the prospect of Palestinian resettlement is twofold. First, it meant that increasing the country’s Sunni population was discouraged. Secondly, due to the over-representation of Christians in the census, an increase in the country’s Christian citizens was encouraged. It would reaffirm existing power sharing structure, which allocated a significant proportion of power to Christian (mainly Maronite) parties. Many of my informants remembered how easy it was for them to acquire citizenship when compared to their Muslim counterparts. Further, the naturalisation of Christians supported Lebanon’s state narrative as a refuge and safe haven for the region’s persecuted and exiled Christian minorities (Salibi 2003).

A second factor contributing to Lebanon’s anti-tawtin position was its fragile economy, which would not be able to sustain a significant population increase (Chaaban et al. 2010; Haddad 2004: 472). Today, 479,957 Palestinians are registered with the United Nations Refugee and Works Agency (UNRWA 2016). The actual number of Lebanon’s Palestinian refugee population is thought to be half that amount, as many have migrated elsewhere but remain registered with the organisation (see Doraï 2003). This number is often exaggerated for political reasons and to augment the threat posed by the prospect of tawtin.

Historically, the Lebanese Government adopted two contradictory strategies towards the Palestinian refugees. As Masalha points out, while the Lebanese state opposed any attempts by the international community to resettle Palestinians, it simultaneously encouraged a free market economy in which a Palestinian middle class prospered in the post-Nakba period (2002: 110). The Lebanese economy experienced a significant boost as wealthy Palestinians brought capital and augmented its labour force. Leverage was granted to the educated Palestinians in industries such as banking, as many were fluent in English, which was an asset in post French colonial Lebanon, where the second official language was French, not English. Sfeir (2008) points to the socio-economic
diversity of Palestinians who fled to Lebanon illustrated by the family records of 1951. Less than one third of the total Palestinian population in Lebanon identified as peasants. The proportion of administrative professionals, craftsmen business owners was significantly high (Sfeir, 2008).

The proportion of employees, administrative professions, workers and craftsmen was quite high. Farmers were concentrated in the Lebanese south and the latter lived in Beirut and its surrounding areas in search of employment opportunities.

The influx of this new ‘labor force’ was met with hostility from Lebanese political elites and members of the general population. The Palestinian labour presence was believed to be stripping employment opportunities from the local Lebanese population (Sfeir 2008). However, Sfeir’s findings posit quite the opposite (2008). Palestinians’ contribution as a form of cheap labour enabled economic development in Lebanon. The Palestinian middle and upper middle classes also contributed to the Lebanese economy through the establishment of businesses. Several participants, particularly those of the Nakba generation (i.e. those who recall their arrival to Lebanon from mandatory Palestine in 1947/48), spoke of the positive impact naturalized Palestinian entrepreneurs had on the Lebanese economy.

According to Meier, class and status played an important role in the naturalization process. Their significance was two-fold. First, Palestinians from upper and upper middle class were favoured for naturalization over their lower class and sometimes less educated counterparts. Second, upper and upper middle class Palestinians were integrated and assimilated more easily.

The economy also benefited from Palestinians as a source of cheap labour (this relative advantage became less prominent after the Syrian labour influx into the country; see Sayigh 1997). The Ministry of Labour issued Decree 38/11, which restricted refugees from a large number of professions (Al-Natour 1997), and so much of this work was conducted under the table, which meant that the workers were unprotected and often underpaid.
Political concerns: weakening Lebanese national identity

Politically, the question of resettlement in Lebanon was more problematic than it was in other host states. In a small country made up of 18 officially recognised sects, the prospect of naturalising 100,000 (mostly Sunni) Palestinians was met with much opposition by all political parties (Haddad 2004; Salam 1994; El-Khazen 1997). The inclusion of Palestinians into the Lebanese body politic threatened not only to skew the sensitive demographic balance, but also to alter the country’s fragile national character.

Lebanon’s position on tawtin has not changed since Palestinian arrival in 1947–1948. As Suleiman notes, the fear of tawtin re-entered public debates following the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 (2008; see also Rougier 2007; Meier 2007). As the PLO officially recognised the State of Israel, and in turn Israel recognised the PLO’s role as ‘the representative of the Palestinian people’, the prospect of return receded even further. The Oslo Peace Accords marked the start of what is referred to ‘the peace processes’, aimed at eventually establishing an independent Palestinian state. But as Roy notes, what came from the talks, as far as refugees were concerned, was a marginalisation of the refugee question (2002). Pappé and Hilal note how ‘Oslo’ did not address the ‘most outstanding issue since the creation of Israel, i.e. the refugee question’ (2010: 214)

This was understood by states hosting the Palestinian population, and by the refugees themselves, as an abandonment of the right of return (Roy 2002, 2012; Shikaki 2009). As Roy notes (2002), it became very clear in the post-Oslo era that refugees were no longer a priority for the PLO. This realisation simultaneously alarmed both the refugee community and the states that hosted it. The refugees felt abandoned; a second Nakba. A popular saying goes: ‘We had our first Nakba in 1948; our second Nakba was in 1993.’

The talks reaffirmed what the refugees and the host states already knew. Repatriation, as Talhami (2003) has argued, for example, was never an option that was seriously considered or pursued. While the façade of the situation told otherwise, the reality of the matter had been obvious for many since the onset of the crisis in 1949.

Tawtin for Lebanon is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it works to bind the national collective in a bid against the possibility of including foreigners into the body politic, and maintaining a sense of relative homogeneity. On the other, it is a looming threat that could potentially destabilise the political and social fabric of society.
Debates surrounding the issue of tawtin remain topical in media outlets, as the constantly looming fear of tawtin is posed to never be too far away. Palestinians were thus transformed in the Lebanese rhetoric from refugees to enemies (during the civil war) and then to unwanted burdens, as their proposed tawtin threatens the illusion of political stability (El-Khazen 1997; Sayigh 1979, 2010). Meier explains:

In a context marked by tension and polarisation, one can see how the term tawtin has the potential to mobilise: it pinpoints the enemy’s intention and that which is threatened – the homeland and the nation. It is used, therefore, to mobilise and delimit groups, creating a principle of perception that divide the reality (Meier 2010: 147)

While Lebanon’s political elites have changed over time, their positions on tawtin have not. The state’s firm rejection of naturalisation, due to the issues discussed above, has long since dominated the tawtin debates and contributed to fuelling political rhetoric that posits tawtin to be the antithesis of both Lebanese and Palestinian national identity. Politicians resort to proclaiming their opposition to tawtin as part of their election platforms in hopes of securing more votes, as though opposing tawtin is an assertion of patriotism and nationalism.

The Lebanese refusal to naturalise highlights the links that are thought to exist between the ongoing Lebanese national project and the country’s demographic balance. Refusing tawtin is thus necessary to ‘keep Lebanon for the Lebanese’ (Peteet 2005: 174). The Ta’if Accord, also known as the National Reconciliation Accord, was an agreement reached to end the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990). Negotiated in the city of Ta’if, Saudi Arabia, the agreement reasserted Lebanese authority, particularly in South Lebanon (in regions then still occupied by Israel) and accommodated the demographic shifts to a Sunni Majority. This resulted in reinstitutionalising the balance of power and concentrating more authority to the position of the Sunni prime minister. Importantly, Ta’if included a clause concerning the fate of the Palestinians in Lebanon, which stated: ‘There shall be no fragmentation, partition, or settlement of non-Lebanese in Lebanon’ (see Appendix C).

This clause reiterated the pre-existing policy, policy that had already been enacted through the National Pact of 1943. However in linking settlement (tawtin) with fragmentation and partition, the Ta’if agreement demonstrates the extent to which the Lebanese rhetoric posits tawtin to be detrimental to the country’s stability, development and progress.
The Lebanese civic myth of kinship and tawtin

Another relevant dimension to explore in the case of tawtin in Lebanon is the conditions and requisites upon which citizenship was granted to select Palestinian families in the late 1940s and 1950s. The relevance of the civic myth is that it served as a condition for the naturalisation of Palestinian families. For example, Palestinian families were encouraged to proclaim their putative Lebanese status in order to fit in with the civic myth of common ancestry, homogeneity and shared bloodlines.

The civic myth of Lebanon is little studied in relation to citizenship or naturalisation (for an exception, see Joseph 2000). This civic myth is, however, of much relevance to this dissertation because it helps in explaining the specific characteristics of Palestinian tawtin. The narrative of tawtin in Lebanon falls within a discourse that is intertwined with notions of stability, nationalism and (imagined) homogeneity. Like all nation-states, Lebanon has its own myths of origin defining its ‘people’ (Smith 1991).

For Lebanon, this meant promoting of a civic myth that told the story of its people as direct descendants of the inhabitants of its territory. As Joseph notes, its story of origin was founded upon principles of shared bloodlines and ancestry (2000). Lebanon’s civic myth was founded upon principles of kinship that told the story of a nation composed of multiple, ‘natural’ groupings based on biological relatedness and bloodlines, descended through male genealogies that pre-date the creation of the modern state (Joseph 2000). It has been told as the story of a nation composed of several natural communities organised according to religio-sectarian categories and kinship relations (Joseph 2000: 108). The hegemony of the civic myth of sectarian pluralism in Lebanon is most salient in that it explains history, state structure, politics, social organisation, and citizenship laws (Joseph 2000; Suleiman 1967; Hudson 1968). This myth of kinship, which posits that all the Lebanese are historically connected to (modern territorial) Lebanon, has also served to justify strategies of naturalisation, what can be done, and what cannot be done. The civic myth it is central to understanding the naturalisation process and making sense of who was naturalised, and why. It is in accordance with this myth that some Palestinians were excluded while others were selectively admitted to the body politic.

When the question of naturalisation of Palestinians (Christians and wealthy Muslims) emerged in the 1940s and 1950s, it was necessary that their naturalisation fit within, and did not weaken, this context of imagined homogeneity, shared bloodlines, and kinship.
Tawtin in Lebanon is often referred to as fazaa (scarecrow). This term is commonly used in Lebanese media to emphasise the magnitude of the problem of tawtin. It has since been translated into English as the ‘scarecrow of tawtin’ (Chaaban et al. 2010: 7). This scarecrow stemmed from the prevalent fear of disrupting the sensitive sectarian balance through the unsupervised entry of ‘foreigners’ (ghuaraba) into a ‘homogenous’ Lebanese state. The term ghareeb (singular of ghuarba n.) is often used by Palestinians to refer to their position in Lebanon. This feeling sometime overrides citizenship status, as discussed below. Lebanon’s myth of shared blood and lineage complicated the prospect of Palestinians’ naturalisation.

While the naturalisation of Christians and wealthy Muslims was in the sectarian and economic interests of the Lebanese state, their naturalisation was complicated by the need to refer to kinship and shared bloodlines (on jus sanguinis and jus soli, see Brubaker 1992). Thus, a solution was proposed that would resolve this conundrum. The (unofficial) policy of ‘re-Lebanisation’, translated from the Arabic i’adat al-labnana (literally, ‘the return of Lebanese status’) (I am thankful to Dr Suheil Al-Natour for this term), offered an ideal solution upon which Palestinians could be granted citizenship. Re-Lebanisation meant that in order to become Lebanese (through naturalisation), an individual must prove their lineage to Lebanon and/or must have (paternal) Lebanese blood.

While the details of the process lack legislative clarity, as the policy was not made official in Lebanese citizenship statute, it was reported by participants in this research and confirmed by Dr Al-Natour, an established lawyer and scholar on the topic (personal communication, 11/10/13). Palestinian families resorted to seeking citizenship through fabricating Lebanese descent. Palestinians wishing to naturalise resorted to falsely proclaiming their ancestral belonging by maintaining that their families had originated from villages and cities located in present-day territorial Lebanon, but had been living in mandatory Palestine in 1948. Rather ironically, this meant that their arrival to Lebanon in 1948 was in fact, a ‘return’. Furthermore, as the findings of this study contend, and as will be discussed in later chapters, Palestinians who shared family names with Lebanese families were more easily granted citizenship. Sharing the same family name with Lebanese families strengthened their case for naturalisation. This was, in part, how families of many participants were naturalised. The civic myth is integral to understanding the naturalisation process of the 1940s and 1950s.
Conclusion

There are various facets that make up Lebanese tawtin. Too often, its political implications are highlighted. While the possibility of tawtin in the future for Palestinians remains unlikely (it is after all rejected equally by Lebanese and Palestinian nationalists), tawtin nevertheless holds a significant place in the history of Palestinians in Lebanon. While scholarly works pointing to the Palestinian rejection of tawtin are abundant, a failure to go beyond the supposed erasure of Palestinianness, and its role in schemes to further separate Palestinians from their homeland is limiting. This chapter illustrated the intricacies through which tawtin is woven into the national Lebanese myth, and how the Palestinian case for naturalisation fell into this narrative. Posited as a return to origin – as a reunification – tawtin offered a narrative of naturalisation that is radically different from those of migrant or refugees seeking to join and become naturalised in other countries. Through conformity to the Lebanese civic myth and the policy of re-Lebanisation, the concept of tawtin grounded itself in national roots, whereby nationalism did not have to be compromised in the face of naturalisation. On the contrary, it ostensibly maintained the needed references to blood and kinship (even if these were actually fabricated). The next chapter expands on the relation between citizen and refugee as it draws upon primary data to present how the naturalised articulate belonging.
Chapter 4: ‘My heritage is Palestinian but I am not’

While tawtin is much talked about (and feared), it remains little understood. This chapter aims to decouple the dominant discourse of tawtin from the actual lived experience of the naturalised. This chapter focuses on narratives of tawtin as told by the naturalised themselves. Too often, the story of tawtin is told in a linear fashion whereby the majority of Palestinians rejected tawtin and a few slipped between the cracks and were naturalised, only to eventually become Lebanese. This chapter aims to allow the naturalised to tell their own story. Narratives of tawtin are not uniform; they are individual and personal. They reflect each family’s story of naturalisation and convey the different experiences of tawtin.

The first part of this chapter investigates whether the first wave of naturalisation (1949–1958) can even be regarded as a case of tawtin. A discussion of the meaning of tawtin for the naturalised follows in a second section, while a final section discusses the distinction between refugee and citizen as seen by the naturalised and emphasises the fluidity between these categorisations.

Lebanon as watan badil (alternative homeland)

As illustrated in the previous chapter, tawtin was guided by international actors adamant at eliminating the possibility of a mass Palestinian return. To remain in host countries of Jordan, Syria and Lebanon was proposed as the optimal and most peaceful resolution in the conflict (Al-Husseini 2007; Talhami 2003). Given the laws of the land, the only way to acquire rights was to acquire citizenship, and thus naturalisation plans were strongly supported by the United States. Further, naturalisation would ensure that Palestinians would remain in their existing states.

Acutely aware of the international agenda behind resettlement and wishing to return to their homes, the majority of Palestinian refugees have opposed tawtin since 1949, when it was first proposed at Lausanne (Talhami 2003; Knudsen 2009). While many Christians, and some Muslim families, were naturalised, opinion polls and studies have shown that the majority would still reject Lebanese citizenship if it was offered (Chaaban et al. 2012; Knudsen 2009). The majority of my refugee informants also expressed negative feelings against tawtin.
The majority of Palestinians in Lebanon today are refugee status holders, and most of these live in one of the UNRWA-run refugee camps. Palestinians in Lebanon are denied even the most elemental rights such as the ability to be employed or own property (Al-Natour 1997, Al-Natour and Yassine 2007). Comparatively, Jordan granted citizenship to the majority of its Palestinian refugees, and Syria offered equal treatment to its Palestinians. Until the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Palestinian refugees enjoyed the same rights as Syrian citizens, except for the right to vote. In Lebanon, Palestinians became increasingly aware of their precarious situation in Lebanon, which from the onset was characterised by legal ambiguity (Al-Natour 1997). Meier (2010) suggests that tawtin was the only means through which they could secure rights in Lebanon.

Meier proposes an alternative paradigm in which he situates tawtin within a broader discourse of rights: ‘Tawteen [sic], by comparison is a situation that people endure as if they were obliged to settle down. And in fact, this is precisely the case for Palestinian refugees who have nowhere to go’ (Meier 2010: 147). Whether or not one agrees with Meier’s definition of tawtin as a condition ‘to be endured’, the relevance of his argument is that it opens up the concept of tawtin for exploration. It is important to pay attention to the different ways in which tawtin can be analysed. Many participants explained that they, or their parents or grandparents, had no other choice but to naturalise. Citizenship presented these select families with the option of acquiring the right to work, access to higher education, and stability. As refugees, they had been denied basic rights that were granted through access to citizenship. It was upon this rationalisation that many participants justified the decisions to naturalise. Accepting tawtin, in the Palestinian lexicon, denotes the acceptance of another homeland. For example, Jordan’s decision to naturalise its refugee population was regarded by Palestinians elsewhere as the proposal of a watan badil (‘alternative homeland’) (Meier 2010; Al-Husseini and Bocco 2009; Massad 2001). Watan badeel used this way and in the Jordan context has contributed to the opposition by many Palestinian refugees against tawtin in Lebanon (Andoni 2011; Tobin 2012). In this sense, as one commentator concluded, ‘Tawtin means being forced to accept another watan, another homeland, and this is unacceptable for Palestinians’ (Salih 2013: 83).

For the most part, analyses of tawtin were limited to an understanding of tawtin as a top-down solution put into place by donor states looking to unburden themselves of financial (and perhaps moral) responsibility towards the Palestinians. This position sees tawtin as
undermining the right of return and impeding the preservation of Palestinian identity (by demanding conformity, for example, to national myths and re-Lebanisation). There are various reasons as to why this perception of tawtin emerged, not least of which is an international resettlement agenda that actively discourages the pursuit of the right of return. In this context, in a country where tawtin was and continues to be outlawed, so much so that it is often referred ironically to as the only position upon which Lebanese politicians can agree, one wonders: was the naturalisation of over 20,000 Palestinians in the 1940s and 1950s a case of watan badil and loss of Palestinianness?

‘Tawtin never happened’

Despite the relatively significant number of Palestinians who were granted citizenship in the first wave, there are those who argue that tawtin has never taken place in Lebanon. According to this perspective, the first and second waves of naturalisation were cases of tajnis, not tawtin. One of the supporters of this argument is prominent lawyer and self-proclaimed anti-tawtin activist Fadi Barakat, with whom I met during my second fieldwork trip to Lebanon. Barakat referred to himself as an ‘activist against tawtin’ (munadil dhid al tawtin).

On 3 March 2008, Barakat co-organised a conference titled ‘Resisting tawtin and normalisation’ in Beirut, where he invited prominent scholars to speak against tawtin and the many threats it posed to Lebanon and the Palestinians. Among the attendees and participants was president of the Arab League Amr Mousa, and then Executive Director of UNRWA Richard Cook. Barakat invited journalist Nadia Shrayyem Al-Hajj to attend our meeting. Nadia referred to herself as a ‘writer and activist against tawtin’. She recently published a book titled ‘Tawtin: facts and figures’ (2013). During our meeting, both Barakat and Shrayyem insisted that tawtin had not taken place in Lebanon yet, and if it were to occur, there would be dire repercussions. As Barakat explained:

Those who were naturalised [mujanaseen] in the 1950s were a very small number. The Muslims were barely 2,500–3,000 in total. They were all granted citizenship on a case-by-case basis by marsoom jumhoori [presidential decree], the marsoom was signed by the president for every single family; each case was studied and granted citizenship accordingly. This is not tawtin, these were individual and personal cases of tajnis where each family made its case for citizenship, some hired lawyers, some used personal connections – but the point is they were a small number. Tawtin would be inclusive of a large number of Palestinians and be politically motivated. These cases [of the first wave] were not; if anything, they
were economically motivated. [Naturalised] Palestinians were educated and could contribute to building Lebanon, so it was also in our [i.e. in the Lebanese] interest to grant them citizenship at that time. They had little choice, so many of them saw that citizenship would be a good opportunity for them, they knew that there was no going back.

According to this perspective, tawtin necessitates political, not only economic, motivations. Barakat makes his argument with reference to the ‘small number’ of Palestinians granted citizenship in the 1940s and 1950s Barakat and others who share this view regard the first wave of tawtin as a case of tajnis because it was only inclusive of a select group of Palestinians from whom Lebanon could benefit financially and socially. The Christians contributed to increasing the Christian demographic presence, which as discussed in Chapter 2, was deemed favourable to ensuring stability and cohesion in Lebanon (Maktabi 1999, 2000). The wealthy Muslims on the other hand, were regarded to be positive contributors to the Lebanese economy.

Eman, a naturalised Palestinian in her mid-fifties shared a similar perspective by positing that naturalisation in the 1950s cannot be considered tawtin: ‘The numbers were very low, it was a small number of [Muslim] families who were granted citizenship and each case was dealt with on its own. Tawtin would include all Palestinians, but this has not occurred yet.’ Barakat and Eman distinguish here between the broader framework of tawtin, advocated and supported – both financially and politically – by international actors, and the naturalisation of select families on the basis of religion and wealth. Due this selection, they rendered the process as tajnis and not tawtin as it targeted individual families and not the broader Palestinian population. The intention behind this process, in their opinions, was to benefit these individual families and positively contribute to Lebanese economy and society.

It is the lack of legal framework for tawtin, and the absence of a legal distinction between tajnis and tawtin, that leaves the concepts open to interpretation. Emerging within a broader framework of permanent resettlement, tawtin is often proposed as a solution that would naturalise all Palestinians (in Lebanon and other host stated; see Talhami 2006). This has not yet taken place. Most importantly, the decision to naturalise in the first place was taken autonomously; it was not due to external pressure, which is why Barakat, Shrayyem and others attributed the label of tajnis to the process instead.

This approach is well founded. The first wave of naturalisation occurred on a case-by-case basis, and the number of those involved was minimal when compared to the total
refugee population (Chatty and Hundt, 2005). However, naturalisation in the 1950s required that the naturalised integrate and assimilate. It would be inaccurate to frame the first wave as a mere case of tajnis, as it would have taken place in other countries as well. The requisites for naturalisation, as mentioned earlier, necessitated that Palestinians proclaim an (often fabricated) ancestral linkage to Lebanon. This meant that Palestinians had to assert their Lebanese ‘origins’ in order to ‘re-gain’ Lebanese citizenship (istirdad al-jinsiyya). Needless to say, this affected the ways in which individuals make sense of their citizenship status, and many conformed to these myths.

It is however, necessary to situate the experiences of the naturalised in Lebanon within a framework that accounts not only for the requisites for naturalisation but also for the broader historical context within which naturalisation took place, such as the denial of rights to refugees. It would be myopic to examine expressions of the naturalised today without an acknowledgement of a pervasive rhetoric. Although some, like Barakat, categorised naturalisation in the 1950s to have been a ‘a case of tajnis, and not tawtin’, the integrative requisites put into place by the Lebanese state problematise this rather simplistic categorisation. Framing the naturalisation of Palestinians in the 1950s to have been a mere case of citizenship acquisition, i.e. tajnis, remains problematic. Furthermore, through assimilatory nature of the requisites for tawtin, the process was meant to deliberately transform Palestinians into Lebanese. Due to this, the process is referred to as tawtin throughout this thesis.

Tawtin in this context is laden with political and social implications. Lebanese national discourse routinely associates tawtin with political and social instability, economic havoc and ethnic strife (Chaaban et al. 2010; Knudsen 2009; Peteet 2005). For Palestinian political factions, and many refugees, tawtin posits a mechanism to further their dispossession, not only by eliminating the prospect of their return, but by putting into place institutionalised systems of assimilation and integration.

It is of particular importance to refer and acknowledge the existence of this dominant national discourse of tawtin because it is by reference to this rhetoric that individuals express their own interpretations. In the following section, I draw upon interviews with naturalised Palestinians to examine meaning and expressions of citizenship and tawtin. I emphasise two experiences. The first presents narratives from individuals for whom citizenship and notions of identity and belonging appear to be somewhat in harmony, where expressions of Palestiniananness are not posed in contention with Lebanese
citizenship. The second represents participants for whom citizenship is in contention with notions of belonging, home and assimilation.

**Heritage is not identity**

I had known Rami for a few months when I asked to interview him. We met through a mutual friend, and he quickly made it known that he came from Tripoli in North Lebanon, and was a rather proud ‘Tripolian’ (colloquial reference for a person from Tripoli). His accent was distinctly Northern, and the words he used were words only individuals from Northern Lebanon, often of the older generation, used. I knew this because my mother is from Tripoli and I have spent much of my childhood visiting family there during summer holidays. It was one time over a cup of coffee while I was asking our mutual friend about possible recruits for my project that Rami decided to add that his ‘heritage [turath] was Palestinian’. I did not quite understand what this meant, as heritage was a term that was seldom referred to in this way. Realising my confusion, he explained that his father was ‘born in Palestine’ and had to come to Lebanon in 1948.

During our interview, which he later confided to have been initially reluctant to participate in, Rami referenced the word ‘heritage’ numerous times to assert that it was only his heritage, and not he who was Palestinian. Very few people knew this about him, and I was surprised to learn Rami’s story. It was clearly an issue that Rami had struggled with, and one he chose to kept quiet about: ‘I don’t find the need to share this with people, because it is part of my heritage, it is not how I identify. We [my family and I] don’t find the need to tell others, because it doesn’t represent who we are … There’s also the stigma that is attached to being Palestinian; people discriminate against Palestinians, even more so in insular cities like Tripoli.’

He went on to explain that it was extremely difficult for his father to become naturalised: ‘My father had to use all the wasa [connections] he could. I appreciate what he went through in order to make sure that we had a good life. I carry the passport of this country, and this is where I’m from … I don’t understand what Palestinian refugees are waiting for, nothing will come out of this waiting.’ Rami’s father had registered the family in the Tripoli nufoos (registry), which meant that they were registered voters in the Northern district. Nufoos are of particular relevance because according to a system introduced by the French, which remains in practice today, individuals can only vote for parliamentary representatives of the district in which their families are registered,
regardless of their own place of residence. The majority of naturalised Palestinians with whom I met were registered in Beirut, and the district of Mazraa in particular. Rami was an exception in that he was registered in Tripoli. It was perhaps because of his father’s connections that this was made possible. Connections were crucial.

Rami went on to explain: ‘Our last name is Mardi, and there is a prominent family in Tripoli with the same last name, so it just made sense to register us here – it’s where the family settled, though I don’t quite know why.’ It was in conforming to the myth of re-Lebanisation that Rami’s family proclaimed to be from Tripoli, and were accorded citizenship. When asked if he regarded himself as Palestinian in any way, Rami appeared troubled with the Palestinian symbolism with which he was unable to identify: ‘I don’t know much about the [Palestinian] culture.’ He stated: ‘Symbols, like the olive branch and the olive tree don’t mean much to me. I don’t know anything about them.’ The olive branch to which Rami refers is a cultural reference to the history of farming in historical Palestine, which have become symbols of rootedness, attachment to territory and an ancestral connection to the land. He then added: ‘I also don’t know anything about farming and I doubt any Palestinians in Lebanon do either.’

I recall an evening with some friends, several weeks after my interview with Rami. He had joined us after watching a film, and appeared to be smitten by a woman who had sat in front of him in the theatre. He described the encounter in the following words: ‘A woman sat in front of me while watching the film. She could have most certainly been my dream girl! She had the most beautiful tattoo on the back on her neck. I think I stared at it more than I actually watched the film! I couldn’t wait for the film to end so that I could speak to her.’ Intrigued, a friend asked what was so special about the tattoo, to which Rami responded: ‘It just said Palestine.’

On the surface, Rami’s narrative suggested congruence between his Lebanese citizenship and identity. Rami’s Lebanese identity was imbued with a sense of locality, which is a core element the policy of re-Lebanisation. The assertion of an attachment to a specific locality (Tripoli) was prominent in Rami’s self-identification. He is known among his friends and peers as ‘the Traboulsi’ (a nickname in Arabic which means ‘the one from Tripoli’). However, despite referring to his passport as a means of asserting his Lebanese identity, and despite positing Palestine as only his heritage, Rami’s expressions were underpinned with a negotiation of Palestinianness that he himself appeared to be struggling with.
His reference to the discrimination that targets Palestinians as a reason he was reluctant to identify as a Palestinian suggests that a categorisation as ‘Lebanese and not Palestinian’ may be oversimplifying. The specific context of negotiating identity as a naturalised Palestinian in Lebanon takes place within a hostile environment that is unwelcoming to those who do not ‘belong’, especially the Palestinian ‘other’. Discrimination targeting Palestinians in Lebanon was referred to by Rami and others, many of whom also expressed reluctance to state their origins due to fear of negative repercussions. Rami’s caution in informing others of his Palestinian origins may have not been unfounded. The political alignments and militarisation of the PLO during the Lebanese civil war have contributed to augmenting already existent animosity towards Palestinians. All this resulted in many of the naturalised further attempting to conceal their origins.

Rami’s inability to identify with popular symbols of ‘Palestinian culture’ was shared by other participants. It was an impediment to ‘feeling Palestinian’. In a similar sentiment, Selma, a third-generation naturalised Palestinian expressed how her lack of cultural knowledge and poor Arabic language left her feeling ‘insecure about being Palestinian’. She had attended private schools, had never formally learned Arabic, and as she explained, her parents always spoke to her in English. Selma, however, despite a lack of Palestinian cultural awareness still identified as a ‘Palestinian’. She spent several months working with children in Wavel, a lesser known refugee camp in the Bekaa Valley. She described the camp as a very welcoming and open environment in which she felt ‘safe and welcome’ and referred to the children and adolescents with whom she worked as her ‘close friends’. Similar to Rami, she also struggled to identify with popular cultural symbols of Palestinianess:

They [children in the camp] would poke fun at my broken Arabic but I got used to it after a while. People are always surprised that I can’t speak Arabic properly, though I’ve lived in Lebanon for so long. The kids were surprised that I didn’t know anything about Palestinian folklore, like the songs for example. They would jokingly say, ‘Are you sure you’re Palestinian?’ Though they didn’t mean anything by it, it does make me feel less Palestinian. When someone who is 17 years old knows an entire book of Palestinian poems by heart, and you don’t – and you would have if you were raised in the same way. Yes, I guess it does make me feel insecure about being Palestinian.

The question of what determines Palestinian culture and identity was raised Selma and Rami. Their inability to identify with popular culture symbols, or what Hanafi (2008)
would argue to be a particular camp narrative of Palestinian identity, rendered them insecure about their own Palestinianess. This poses the question: *What does it mean to be Palestinian?*

Selma identified environment as the key reason behind her lack of knowledge of these cultural symbols, and suggests that if she too had been raised in the camp, she would have shared the same knowledge and sentiment as camp refwelcomesidents. The absence of a community among the naturalised (and urban refugees) has contributed to furthering this feeling of disconnection and lack of knowledge as Selma described it.

Similar to Rami, Tala, a 30-year-old naturalised Palestinian also struggled to carve a space for her Palestinianness while asserting her Lebanese identity:

> It’s true that I’m originally Palestinian, but I don’t connect to that part of my identity … the only times when I feel it are when I watch the news and I see the awful things happening to the Palestinians [in the occupied territories]. It makes me so very angry and I think it’s because I’m from there … it’s more than just a humanitarian issue to me, its deeply personal.

The interplay and negotiation of identity was apparent in Tala’s statement. Her Palestinianness surfaced as a result of exposure to the reality of life in present-day Israel/Palestine on television. She described her connection as deeper than a case of humanitarian empathy. It was because of her origin and identity that she felt this strongly about the issue. While she did not readily identify as a Palestinian, the subtle ways in which this surfaced spoke to the depth and complexity of her connection. The ongoing traumatic experiences to which Palestinians are exposed in Israel/Palestine and in the diaspora (through experiences of discrimination) reinforced her connection to parts of her identity with which she did not readily identify. It would be an oversimplification to state that Tala identifies as Lebanese and not Palestinian. The layers of her identity/ies are circumstantial. While for some, unwillingness or inability to belong to Lebanon surfaced as a result of discrimination towards Palestinians, for Tala her Palestinianness was also circumstantial. It surfaced upon exposure to the experiences of trauma endured by other Palestinians, with whom she identified. She identified with a greater imagined community of Palestinians when she was exposed and learned about the traumatic experiences they endured in present-day Israel/Palestine. The boundaries of the self/other were redrawn upon realising and becoming aware of the negative experiences of others with whom she identified.
Both naturalised and refugees conveyed difficulty in expressing belonging to Lebanon due to the discrimination that targets Palestinians. This raises questions about the ‘group’ with which individuals identify the strongest, and highlighted the constant shifting of these categories of belonging. Further, it also highlighted the adaptability and flexibility of this identification. This works to emphasise that identification is flexible on the first level. Most importantly, however, is the indication of the flexibility of the concept of citizenship (and tawtin), once thought to be static and fixed. To the contrary, being a citizen and all that it entails was demonstrated to be a construct that is open to continuous and ongoing interpretation and negotiation. While individuals such as Tala and many others identified strongly with their citizenship status, this nevertheless remained open to interpretation and was contingent upon external as well as internal factors.

Tala’s statement also complicates the notion of belonging. What determines the ‘group’ is shifting and changing. For Tala, the negotiation of group identification and belonging was complicated by regarding her two ‘identities’ as unitary and exclusive from one another.

While she connected to her Palestinianess as a result of exposure to the traumatic experiences of Palestinians inside Palestine/Israel, she did not readily identity as being Palestinian herself. However, this may be an oversimplification. She conveyed a deep connection and empathy towards her Palestinian counterparts and recognised her personal connection to the cause. She struggled to rationalise the depth of her empathy and concluded that it was perhaps because of origin and being ‘from there’. There is a territorial dimension at play. Her connection to the place from which her grandparents originated was evident in her statement. While this did not manifest itself into expressions of identification with the homeland or even a claim to it, it did however explain the depth of her connection and empathy with the Palestinian people. She distinguished between the humanitarian dimensions of the cause as one to which any individual may relate, and her own connections as a person who is ‘from there’.

Similar sentiment was expressed by others whose narratives shifted when speaking of the territorial connection to the homeland. There was a distinction made by participants between their own self-identification and the connection they had to historical Palestine. Tala explained that is was both ‘painful and difficult’ to think about the village of her grandparents, which no longer exists. Soraya expressed a deep affinity towards her
grandmother’s birthplace and dreamed of one day visiting: ‘All my grandmother’s memories are. It is as though time has stood still and she is able to remember every small detail about it.’

Soraya does not regard herself as Palestinian. She stated several times during our interview that it was only her mother who was naturalised and that her father was ‘Lebanese’, to emphasise his authentic origins (this relates to Lebanese citizenship law, which is determined by paternal and not maternal lineage). Despite this, Soraya expressed a strong affinity to her grandmother’s place of birth. Similar to Tala, she identified her grandmother’s village as a place she was ‘from’.

My uncles and father have very vivid memories of their home and neighbourhoods in Acre. Through their stories, although seldom shared, I found myself experiencing these places through their eyes. With time, I developed an affinity towards them as though I myself had visited. The connection formed with place through narrative was poignant among many participants. This is particularly relevant to narratives of exile, which refer to the places to which an individual can no longer return. However, as Soraya and Tala conveyed, this connection does not necessarily manifest itself to a form of identity or identification. In some cases such as theirs, it is distinguishable from who they are as Lebanese citizens. They regard this connection as part of their history, of their family’s stories of exile to which they strongly relate.

Jad, a naturalised Palestinian in his early forties, continuously asked me during our interview about why I was conducting this research. According to him, ‘All the naturalised have become Lebanese.’ As a second-generation naturalised Palestinian, Jad’s parents were granted citizenship in the 1950s by virtue of their Christian faith. As for Rami, Palestine was part of a past Jad seldom referred to, as he explained in the following words: ‘I’ve been married for nine years, and my wife’s family just learned that I was Palestinian a few years ago.’ Jad went on to explain:

She comes from a conservative Maronite family, so we decided not to tell them that I was Palestinian, just to avoid problems – you know how people are here. They found out through my cousin Randa when she was over during the holidays. Randa made a reference in passing about my grandfather’s house in Jaffa. She said that it was by accident because she knew that my in-laws didn’t know, but to be honest, I think she did it on purpose [he laughs while recalling the incident]. She had always thought it was ridiculous that we were afraid of my wife’s parents and would often tell me ‘Why are you ashamed of your ‘asli?’ [Origin] ‘aib alaik’ [shame on you]. But Randa is wrong, I’m not ashamed. Why would I be ashamed? … But this [Lebanon] is where I’m from; I’m a citizen of this country. I care very
deeply about the Palestinian struggle, and I read much about it … but am I Palestinian? No I’m not.

For Jad, Rami and others with whom I met, there was congruence between expressions of identity and citizenship. For them, expressions of identity were embedded in, and were inseparable from, citizenship status. The importance of the passport was made clear by Rami, and Jad also referred to the relevance of his Lebanese citizenship, which made him ‘a citizen of this country’. He expressed a strong sense of belonging. However, beneath this assertion of Lebanese identity, expressions of Palestinian-ness surfaced in subtle ways. While it appeared that Palestine was a part of Jad’s past, and not his present, when asked if he would ever tell his children about their origins, he responded:

They are too young to understand now. But I will one day tell them where their jiddo [grandfather] is from and the story of how we came here … I have a cousin who was born and raised in the US, and she had no idea that was she was Palestinian until she was in her twenties. It came as a shock when she found out and she had an identity crisis, I wouldn’t want that to happen to my children. I’d want them to know where they came from, what they chose to do with it is entirely up to them. Interestingly, that cousin went on to become a political activist and conducted research on Palestinian refugees and later earned her doctorate in the topic

Jad’s family, like many other Christian Palestinian families, were granted citizenship because their naturalisation was a positive contribution to augmenting the country’s Christian demographic presence. In justifying favouritism towards Christians, Lebanon framed itself as a welcoming safe haven for Christians (Maktabi 1999; Maktabi 2000; Makdisi 1996). This rhetoric justified granting citizenship to Palestinian Christians in the mid-twentieth century, and Armenians, Chaldeans, Assyrians earlier on and especially during the First World War (Maktabi 1999). Comparatively, Muslim Kurds were not granted citizenship despite their protracted presence in Lebanon.

This was particularly significant for Maronite Christians, because their naturalisation was premised upon framing Lebanon, in particular the region of Mount Lebanon, as the territorial core from which all the region’s Maronites had originated. Sarah, a devout follower of the Maronite faith, and second-generation Palestinian in her early forties, explained:
We [i.e. Maronites] belong to this region [*jabal lubnan*]. It was about 300 years ago, under the Ottomans, that some Maronite families moved to places in Palestine and some regions of Syria, and my family was one of them. We moved from here [Lebanon] to Al-Nasra [Nazareth] in Palestine, and when 1948 happened we came back – no we first went to Jordan, and then came here … We became Lebanese right away because this is where we are originally from … I feel a very strong connection to my village; I absolutely love it and truly feel at home there. Our case [of naturalisation] was actually a case of ‘return of citizenship’ [*istirdad jinsiyya*] and not *tajnis*.

Sarah posits her family’s naturalisation to be a ‘return of citizenship’, which emphasises her ancestral connection to Lebanon. This frames her connection to Palestine as a place in which her ancestors resided, but not a place from which they originated. It is important to note that this context was not specific to Christian Palestinians, and that similar claims were made by two Muslim participants as well. However, the narrative of Mount Lebanon as the epicentre of the region’s Christians, and its Maronites in particular, has undoubtedly worked to support this rhetoric

*‘Jinsiyya is a wasila (tool), nothing more, nothing less’*

I was fortunate to have met George, a naturalised Palestinian in his early eighties. He was one of the few individuals with whom I met who recalled the process of their naturalisation vividly – and was old enough at the time to remember it. The majority of participants in this study were naturalised through their parents or grandparents. Among those of the first generation, few had actually participated in the process of naturalisation and were too young when it took place. George recalled:

At the time [circa 1954] it wasn’t as difficult to get the passport as it is now. My family made a decision that it was necessary for us to get it [citizenship]. We were asked to sign a legal affidavit stating that we were in fact from a Christian village in the north of Lebanon, and that our origins were in fact Lebanese and not Palestinian. We signed, I think we had hired a lawyer at the time, I don’t remember. It didn’t really mean anything, we were – we are – Palestinian. We just did what we had to do to get the citizenship. If they wanted us to sign this paper in order to get it [citizenship], then so be it. We knew we were Palestinian; this paper would never change that … At the time we used to joke about the price of Lebanese citizenship in the same way we’d talk about fruit and vegetable prices. My friends would come and tell me, ‘It’s gone up today’ or ‘Today the price has dropped’. They used to sell it back then, I remember when it used to be 10,000 [liras] … Two of my uncles who were born before 1920 changed their place of birth on their Palestinian identification card [*hawiyya*] to
say that they were born in Beirut. They were in fact both born in Haifa, but in order to get the citizenship they were told that if they changed their place of birth, it would be easier for them to do so, and it was.

Prolonged Ottoman rule of Palestine officially ended with British takeover in 1918. George here suggests that his two uncles were able to tamper with documentation that was issued under the Ottoman government. His father, who was born under British rule, was not able to alter his place of birth because his birth certificate was issued by the British administration.

In the early years of Palestinian arrival, the future did not look promising and the prospect of repatriation was receding all the time (Hanafi 2012). Thus, many families like George’s resorted to fabricating their origins in order to acquire Lebanese citizenship, a decision that George and others deemed to be necessary for their own future. George was an urbanite from a prominent Christian family, and thus the process of his naturalisation was not as problematic as it was for others. He expressed an acute awareness and recognition of the artificiality of his proclaimed Lebanese origins, which were falsely attributed to a small Christian village in Lebanon. This re-Lebanisation was aimed at establishing a sense of belonging to (territorial) Lebanon and thus undermining Palestinian origins. George’s perception of citizenship put forth an alternative narrative to those discussed above (by Sara for example), who attributed her sense of ‘feeling at home’ in her village to an ancestral link with Mount Lebanon. For George, conforming to the policy of re-Lebanisation was a means to an end; it was a way of facilitating the naturalisation process, it was not internalised nor imbued with sentiment of belonging and identification.

George’s experience illustrates that citizenship is a negotiated construct, one that is in a constant state of flux. For George, citizenship was constructed and negotiated within a context that accounted for his own Palestinian origins and the artificiality of the naturalisation process. Thus, ‘citizenship’ as expressed by George distinguished between place of origin, identity and membership or citizenship status. He distinguished between Palestinian origins, the experience of being Palestinian, and citizenship status, because for him they were not one and the same. While the policy of re-Lebanisation aimed at conflating the two – citizenship with identity/territory – his narrative, and that expressed by many others, iterated a clear distinction between both these concepts.
George’s conceptualisation of his own citizenship status challenged the national narratives of *tawtin* that posit a link to territory. George’s emphasis that citizenship would not undo his origins and Palestinian identity suggest that citizenship for George does not necessarily denote notions of belonging or identification. More importantly, George separates citizenship from identity, whereby he asserts that ‘we are Palestinian’ regardless of what his citizenship status may state.

Discussed in the next chapter are narratives of individuals who, like George, make a clear distinction between citizenship and identity, only for them the reason for this is political. Their aim is to support the Palestinian cause through an assertion of Palestinian identity and origin. For George, however, he identified on historical, physical and emotional levels. He was connected to his birthplace, and the vividness with which he recalled the process of his own *tawtin* is not one that can be easily erased or ignored.

Najat was granted citizenship by means of marriage. Now in her early seventies, she became naturalised some years after she married her husband, Imad, a naturalised Palestinian himself. She has three children, who were raised with a ‘strong consciousness of being Palestinian first’, and three grandchildren, who she hopes ‘will never forget their ‘*asl* [origin]’. She does not recall the exact year she became naturalised; the pragmatism with which she regarded and recalled the process of her naturalisation is apparent:

> I can’t remember when I took the paper – my husband insisted that I do it, but I didn’t really find a reason. It didn’t make any difference to me whatsoever; my children would get it from their father. It is very important for my children. Without citizenship, what would our children do? How would they earn money? Palestinians can’t work here. They are unable to earn a living or make a decent life for themselves … as a parent, if you had the opportunity to give your children a better life, you do it. Now my daughter is a teacher at a school, and both of my sons joined the army back when it was mandatory [army service had been mandatory for all Lebanese males above the age of 21, but conscription officially ended on 10 February 2007]. They all make a decent living. Their lives would have been very difficult had we not had the passport. You know what was the first thing I did when I got the passport? I went to Jordan to see my sister who lives there. That’s all I wanted to do; I hadn’t seen her in many years. That is all it has been useful to me for. And I guess they treat you better if you’re Lebanese … At the end of the day, it’s a [pauses], how do I explain it? It’s a *wasila* [tool], nothing more nothing less. It’s just a piece of paper, it doesn’t change who we are. To be honest, sometimes I forget I even have it [laughs].
This expression is significant, and reproduces one of Salih’s (2013) informants (an elderly refugee from Bourj al-Barajneh), who stated: ‘Jinsiyya hiya wasila [citizenship is a tool] – nationality is just a means to an end. Nothing more than that’ (2013: 82).

Citizenship, as expressed by Najat and George, shifts from a marker of national belonging to a matter of practical consideration. In juxtaposition of one another, the latter approach emphasises the necessity of citizenship, its practicality for work, employment and ensuring a decent livelihood. For Najat and George, citizenship is constructed though a lens that accounts for rights, and a more secure and stable future. It is regarded as an enabler, a ‘wasila’ that enables a better and more certain future. Najat questioned what her family’s life would be like had it not naturalised, she wondered what her children would do if they could not work. Palestinian refugees, without citizenship, are without the right to have rights (Shafie 2006; Al-Natour 1997).

There were those who made the choice not to naturalise, regardless of the repercussions this would have on the future of their families as well as their own. I met with urban refugees who had rejected the prospect of citizenship and would continue to do so if it were offered to them today. However, expressions of individuals such as Najat and others who portrayed similar sentiment towards citizenship necessitate and emphasise the importance of conceptually rethinking the meaning of citizenship and its significance.

In a similar sentiment, Reem, a 32-year-old third-generation naturalised Palestinian, highlighted the importance of citizenship for Palestinians when she explained why her grandfather sought citizenship and the impact this has had on her life. She comes from a Palestinian urban family. They fled to Lebanon from Jaffa. Her family arrived by boat in 1947, when her grandfather fled as a young man with his family. The family was naturalised some years later, a process which she described in the following words:

> It says that I’m from Saida on my ID card. It’s where our family settled when they first arrived, though I don’t quite know why. There is a Lebanese family who share our last name – the Shaar. People always ask if we are related, but we are not. There was a girl in my sister’s class whose last name was the same as ours, but she was actually Lebanese and we’re not … I don’t know when my grandparents were naturalised; I think it was in the early fifties. To be honest, we [Palestinians] did not have any other choice, but to become naturalised. I guess some chose not to do so for other specific reasons, that is their prerogative, but if it were up to me, I would have done the same thing my grandfather did … after all what is a jinsiyya? It is basically a set of rights, and without them, life is so limited
and difficult … A passport doesn’t define who you are – it just makes life much easier.

Reem defines her citizenship status primarily as access to rights. By juxtaposing her own access with the denial of access that characterises the refugee experience, Reem demonstrates a heightened awareness of the importance of citizenship. By questioning what citizenship is, she undermines the Lebanese national rhetoric of citizenship and tawtin.

The narratives of Reem, Najat and George thus work to challenge the national discourse of citizenship/tawtin and propose alternative paradigms through which the concept can be defined. Interesting is the generational discrepancy between these individuals who share similar sentiment and regard for citizenship. These three participants, as well as others with whom I met, alluded that it is they who give meaning to their citizenship status, and not vice versa.

The need to challenge existing discourses that bind citizenship to identity, belonging, affiliation and identification necessitates an engagement that goes beyond the existing rhetoric that posits tawtin to be an all-encompassing ‘solution’ to be feared if ‘Palestinian identity’ is to survive.

Positing ‘Palestinian identity’ as an entity to be protected in the face of naturalisation is problematic. Assuming a singularity of identity does not account for the variegated and multiple experiences of Palestinians in the diaspora, in host states, and even inside Palestine/Israel. These multiple experiences have contributed to the construction of a complex and diverse system of identification that is influenced by geographic location, socioeconomic class, legal status, and subjection to a number of repressive regimes (see Sayigh 2010). Despite these disparate experiences in the diaspora and host states, there are important parallels to be drawn between the case of naturalisation in Lebanon and how the naturalised frame, imagine and construct their citizenship status with cases of naturalisation elsewhere.

In a study on Palestinian refugees in Greece, Mavroudi (2007) brought to light unique narratives of naturalisation and emphasised the specific ways in which individuals give meaning to citizenship status. These narratives are underpinned by a recognition, first and foremost of the rights granted through citizenship, thus suggesting that expressions of naturalisation and citizenship of the naturalised in Greece are best understood as entitlements that granted individuals with a set of civil, political, and social rights.
Mavroudi coins the term ‘pragmatic citizenship’, which is regarded as a strategic form of citizenship, a strategy that arises out of need (2008: 307). Pragmatic citizenship refers to the practicality with which individuals, such as stateless refugees, regard the processes of naturalisation and citizenship.

According to Mavroudi, pragmatic citizenship is most relevant to those who are stateless, whose expressions of citizenship are decoupled from the national narrative of their respective host countries, and who regard citizenship as access to rights that they would have otherwise been denied (2008: 310). While there are important differences between Palestinians in Greece and the naturalised in Lebanon to consider, there are also important parallels. Those in Greece did not undergo a process of tawtin, and their naturalisation was not politicised in the way tawtin was for those in Lebanon. Furthermore, the cultural, linguistic and religious differences work to preserve and insulate Palestinianness from the European/Greek ‘other’ from which they remain distinct. According to Shiblak et al (2000), Palestinian communities in Europe are characterised by tightly knit networks founded on kinship and strong social ties. Thus, threats to Palestinianness are reduced when compared to naturalisation in Lebanon.

In drawing upon experiences of the naturalised, Mavroudi argues that citizenship is conceptually framed as a pragmatic tool by many of the naturalised in Greece, as well as those Palestinian refugees still seeking to acquire Greek citizenship. Mavroudi emphasises the need to de-couple citizenship and identity:

There may be a de-coupling of citizenship and national identity whereby they obtain citizenship in the host country but continue to feel attached to their homeland … a passport through pragmatic citizenship proves official belonging to those who are stateless but it increasingly does not have to necessitate strong or exclusive feelings of national belonging to the country whose citizenship has been obtained but may encourage or allow for hyphenated identities, multiple or dual attachments/feelings of belonging. This does not necessarily mean that pragmatic citizenship is an inferior form of citizenship but that it is strategic and allows for a variety of outcomes in terms of feelings of home, belonging, attachment and territorialisation, while helping to deal with complex legal status and feelings of discrimination and injustice (2008: 308, 313)

Prior to Mavroudi, Lindholm Schulz also argued that what appears to be most significant to Palestinians living in Western states is the security provided by the ‘passport’. The protection afforded by their legal and political systems is especially sought (Lindholm
Schulz 2003: 188; Shiblak et al. 2000; Doraï 2010). A similar argument has not been made for the pragmatism of citizenship in Arab countries in which Palestinians have been naturalised.

In bringing to light the similarities (and bearing in mind the many differences) between cases of naturalisation in Lebanon and Greece, parallels emerged between both narratives that emphasised the element of rights as a primary incentive for acquiring citizenship on the first level, and as a lens upon which citizenship was conceptualised on the second. This pragmatic framing of citizenship is seldom applied to cases of naturalisation in Arab states, but readily accorded to naturalisation of Palestinians in European states (Shiblak et al. 2000; Doraï 2008; Lindholm Schulz 2003; Mavroudi 2008, 2007), and (even though to a lesser extent) in the United States as well (see Abu El-Hajj 2007).

‘Being a refugee is a state of mind’

Citizenship is defined by those it excludes and those it includes (Brubaker 2001). The definition of a citizen necessitates a type of membership, whereby a citizen is not a refugee, and not a stateless person. The question of who is a Palestinian refugee is central to this study as there is no consensus. References to the ‘refugee’ versus ‘naturalised’ in public discourse are mere legal categorisations and do not assume that individuals engage in self-categorisation or that they contest these categorisations.

These categorisations, however, are not mutually exclusive, and the naturalised can indeed be defined as ‘refugees’. Rigidity around these categories confirms a tawtin discourse that posits citizenship in contention with Palestinian identity. A more detailed understanding of what defines a Palestinian, or a refugee, would provide an important reconceptualisation. This reframing would affect everyday conversations as well as scholarship and policies that currently overlook possible overlaps. This is especially significant when discussing right of return. The naturalised are almost entirely excluded from this crucial topic in the scholarly literature pertaining to it, or in activist contexts.

Myriam, for example, a naturalised Palestinian in her mid-twenties, was not readily willing to refer to herself as a refugee. She nevertheless regarded herself as one:

I don’t refer to myself as a refugee because I don’t feel right saying that. I didn’t go through what they went through and I have rights that refugees don’t have. So it wouldn’t be fair to call myself a refugee simply because I don’t go through what they go through … but at the same time I don’t have the right to my homeland and
my family was exiled … which by definition makes me a refugee. Perhaps if they came up with a term – naturalised refugee – then I would definitely refer to myself as that.

The refugee experience to which Myriam (and others) referred is characterised by dependence, liminality, legal ambiguity and an absence of rights (see Malkki 1995; Hyndman 1999). Myriam expressed reluctance to referring to herself as a refugee because she had not experienced hardship similar to that the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and elsewhere are subjected. Myriam’s reference points to the socialisation of the term itself and not its legal definition. The distinction made between the socialisation of the label ‘refugee’ and its legal definitions informs the conceptualisation of both these terms. In conveying the importance accorded to the social usage of the term ‘refugee’ Myriam’s refusal to use the term to refer to herself points to a level of empathy with the refugee experience and not her inability or unwillingness to regard herself as a refugee.

According to legal definitions, citizenship does not determine or affect refugee status. In practice, however, individuals were reluctant to self-label themselves as refugees due to the social usage of the term. This directly relates to expressions of camp residents in the next chapter, in which their own experience were regarded as more authentic than their naturalised counterparts due to the hardships and daily struggles they face.

Myriam simultaneously situated herself within both categories, unable to fully belong to either. She candidly conveyed an internal struggle. At the same time, her definition of citizenship was imbued with a consciousness of being a refugee without a homeland to which she could return. The need to distinguish between the social and legal implications and usage of the term ‘refugee’ were made evident by Myriam’s statement. She, and others who conveyed similar sentiment, alluded their reluctance to refer to themselves in way as it would be removing from the (camp) refugees’ hardships and experiences.

Hashim, a naturalised man in his late thirties expressed a similar sentiment: ‘I feel like a refugee … I am a refugee on the inside – if that makes any sense. But I don’t think it’s fair to call myself a refugee because my life has been easy in comparison.’ Heba expressed a similar sentiment: ‘By definition, yes of course I am a refugee, but by experience I am not. Having citizenship doesn’t mean that I’m no longer a refugee.’

For these individuals, being a Palestinian refugee did not necessitate an absence of citizenship. There is a distinction that is made here between being a refugee, as separate
from citizenship status whereby both are in negotiation, but not in opposition to each other. *Tawtin* aimed at abolishing refugee status and solving the Palestinian predicament through the acquisition of citizenship. Its success is questionable. It is important to bear in mind that the majority of participants were not first generation *muwataneen*; they were born with Lebanese citizenship, and their sense of ‘refugee-ness’ was inherited through parents or grandparents.

Hyndman argues that refugees are part of a culture that is viewed as dependent, in need of help and assistance, and unable to fully care for itself. She extends this argument to suggest that the camps may play a significant role in perpetuating this behavior by establishing cultures of dependence (Hyndman 2000: 139). The socialisation of the term ‘refugee’ has rendered the naturalised (and some refugees) reluctant to self-label themselves as such. Their experiences did not reflect those of their refugee counterparts. Thus, despite recognising their legal rights as refugees (such as the right of return discussed in Chapter 6), the naturalised did not readily accord the label to themselves. At the core of this is a distinction between the legal dimension and socialisation of the term that was reflected in refugee narratives.

Not all did share a sense of being a refugee. There were those who positioned themselves solely in the category of citizen and refused to refer to themselves as refugees. Of these was Jad, now in his early thirties. He could not relate, and said: ‘My grandfather was a refugee when he first arrived, but when he took the citizenship, he was no longer a refugee. You can’t continue to call yourself a refugee once you have citizenship.’

Jad’s definition of a refugee is premised on the absence of citizenship, he was unable to refer to himself as a refugee because of his citizenship status. However, the majority of my informants, while they did not readily identify as refugees, revealed a complex negotiation and a contested feeling of belonging to both categories. This sense of being a refugee emerged from a shared history of dispossession and injustice, which was not erased as a consequence of *tawtin*. The nexus of refugee and citizen remained controversial: they felt they belong to both categories, and simultaneously that they did not belong to either.
Conclusion

The way individuals make sense of tawtin is not uniform. Individual narratives reflect specific experiences. While for some citizenship is a 'piece of paper', for others it reflects who they are and is an integral component of their identity. The lack of uniformity in expressions of tawtin demonstrates that there are various factors shaping the construction of tawtin among the naturalised.

Notions of citizenship and refugee often blur. The extent to which individuals negotiate this nexus, despite preconceived notions about the mutual exclusivity of these categories, suggests the need to rethink these labels (see also Feldman 2012). As importantly, the disparity between expressions of tawtin indicates the urgency of rethinking of the concept and exploring how it is lived. The next chapter builds upon this discussion to present and engage with refugees’ perceptions of naturalisation and the naturalised.
Chapter 5: ‘I would accept citizenship elsewhere, but not here’

This chapter draws upon perceptions of camp and urban refugees towards naturalisation and the naturalised. The camp refugees selected for this study live and dwell in the Ain el-Helwe refugee camp in South Lebanon. The selected urban refugee participants were all residents of Beirut. This chapter engages with refugee narratives in order to illustrate how naturalisation is seen by those who have refused or could not accede to it.

During the interviews, naturalised participants made many references to the refugee experience to justify their, or their families’, decisions to naturalise. In shedding light on refugee perspectives, this chapter offers a more complete picture of the narratives of tawtin as expressed by Palestinians in Lebanon. This chapter offers an alternative Palestinian perspective of tawtin processes. As tawtin is fluid and negotiated, so is its rejection.

There are important discrepancies between camp and urban refugees that may have influenced responses. These include but are not limited to socioeconomic conditions. These discrepancies – place of residence in particular – bring to light the implications camp life has on narratives of naturalisation. Long and Hanafi argue (2010) that a particular camp identity emerges from the protracted refugee experience in Lebanon. This experience is understood as ‘authentic’ by camp refugees, a move that automatically undermines the Palestinianness of the naturalised, as well as that of urban refugees. This chapter begins by discussing refugee perspectives of naturalisation.

Urban refugees and camp dwellers

Since the 1970s, refugee studies have distinguished between a range of categorisations to describe settlement among refugee communities and distinguished between ‘urban’ refugees and ‘camp dwellers’ (Fábos and Kibraeb 2007; Doraï 2010). Ain el-Helwe is often represented in the media and scholarly works as a place of lawlessness and violence (Rougier 2007). The camp residents, many of whom work to counter stereotypes, often contest these representations. The camp is the largest and most densely populated of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, and following the fall of Yarmouk in Syria it currently hosts the largest concentration of Palestinians anywhere in the world. Estimates range upwards of 110,000 Palestinians; approximately 20,000 have
arrived from Syria since 2011. This has placed an added strain on its already crowded resources.

Representations of the camp as a violent place of exception are plentiful in scholarly discourse (El Sogge 2014). Beyond these representations, this chapter aims to shed a different light on the camp. What do the residents think of tawtin?

The camps

My visitations to Ain el-Helwe began in 2011. While I did not visit the camp during the course of my fieldwork, I had already established a broad network of contacts, including friends and acquaintances, whom I met and interviewed in Beirut. My reflections on the camp draw upon the extensive length of time I spent in the camp in 2011 and 2012.

Mahmoud and I had met through a mutual friend, and he was involved in working with other camp residents to improve camp life. When he invited me to attend their meetings, I accepted. I was initially reluctant due to the negative media coverage the camp received in Lebanese news outlets. The group met regularly to address issues pertaining to camp security, safety, maintenance of streets and communal spaces, water and sewage issues, as well as a broad range of socially related matters.

A camp native, Mahmoud acted as my guide during my visits to Ain el-Helwe. Despite the camp’s relatively small size, the narrow and winding alleyways were difficult to negotiate. Located 45 kilometres south of Beirut, Ain el-Helwe is often depicted by the media as a dangerous ‘war zone’ (Rougier 2007). The distance between Beirut and the camp was not significant, especially for those who had access to personal cars or public transportation services. Yet, as Malkki notes, distance between the camp and town is exaggerated in mutual perceptions due to the social distance existing between them. The notion of distance, argues Malkki, was an expression of the ‘social construction of difference between the camp and the town’ (1995: 198). Despite the relatively close proximity between the camp and the town – and in my case, Ain el-Helwe and Beirut – the distance between both extended beyond geographic spaces. Perceived difference was primarily social, and to a lesser extent determined by legal status. Legal status refers to the legal distinction between refugees and naturalised Palestinians.

Urban refugees with whom I met regarded themselves as distinguishable from camp refugees, and claimed to have more in common with naturalised Palestinians. Some were even reluctant to self-label as refugees, since they had not experienced the
harshness of camp life. This reluctance was determined by the stigmatisation Palestinians receive in Lebanon. This finding challenged the prevalent distinction in political discourse that posits legal status as the primary determinant of difference between the naturalised and refugees. The findings of this chapter reveal that residence (camp versus Beirut) and economic conditions were the primary factors according to which individuals differentiated themselves from their refugee counterparts.

The economic disparities between camp residents and urban refugee participants were very clear. However, more prevalent in their narratives was the awareness of social differences. The majority of those on the ‘outside’ had very limited contact with the camp and its residents. They described camp conditions as difficult and painful to see. Few had relatives or friends who resided in the camp, and only three had ever visited a camp. This is despite the camps’ proximity to neighbourhoods, as some camps are almost indistinguishable from the areas that surround them. The first time I visited Mar Elias camp in Beirut in 2011, I had not been aware of the demarcation between the ‘outside’ and the ‘inside’. Entry was seamless, and with the exception of a large mural of Yasser Arafat visible from the highway, there were no other indications that the space housed a predominantly Palestinian refugee population. Yet, in the minds of residents and non-residents, the camp represents clearly demarcated zones. The borders, both symbolic and real, determine the inside from the outside. Despite the relative seamlessness with which one can walk inside and outside the camp, there is a strong feeling of entry and exit. There is a sense of a world within a world, where upon crossing thorough the narrow alleyway, life is transformed and shifted. I felt this in my closer interaction with people inside the camp, where the sense of community and closeness was perceptible in every encounter and interaction I had. Despite the political instability in some camps, there is a strong sense of community and communal living. It is, however, important to note that camps in Lebanon are very different from one another with regard to surface area, population size, and political culture.

The majority of urban and naturalised Palestinians I met had been urbanites in historical Palestine, while those within the camps identified as rural people and farmers. These differences manifested themselves in social interactions and perceptions of the ‘other’. Urban dwellers and, to a greater part, the naturalised, were regarded as more privileged by camp residents. The latter self-identified with a stronger sense of authenticity of Palestinian identity. The circumstances of the camp itself, and the negative attention it
received played an integral role in this self-labelling and identification of its residents. Framing their experience as a more authentic Palestinian experience rendered those on the outside as less ‘Palestinian’ than themselves. The conflation between the camp and identity was evident in the narratives of many residents. To be Palestinian also meant to live the camp life and experience the struggles of its residents.

Ain el-Helwe was different when compared to other camps in Lebanon due to its size, population density, and the negative media attention it received. However, the stigmatisation of camp residents and camp life was not particular to Ain el-Helwe. A few general observations were made between camp residents and non-camp Palestinians. First, there is limited interaction between both groups. Few non-camp residents had ever visited the camp. It is important to reiterate that the urban refugees interviewed were residents of Beirut and identified as being financially more stable as many had brought over some assets or in some cases owned property or land in Lebanon. Second, the camp was perceived by all as a place of belonging and identification. Urban refugees and naturalised Palestinians spoke of a camp identity with which they could not identify. This was echoed in the narratives of refugees, who readily identified with the camp as their home and place of belonging. For those on the outside, camp residents were referred to as ‘ahl al mukhayyam’ [people/family of the camp]. This label worked to distinguish themselves from the ‘other’. Third, camp residents identified with the label of ‘refugee’. This was less evident among urban and naturalised Palestinians who did not always readily self-label as refugees. This label, however, was not fixed or static; it was negotiated and fluid. The unwillingness to readily self-identity as a ‘refugee’ by naturalised and urban refugees was linked to the normative usage of the label. The label refugee is associated with dependence, social isolation and liminality. Those whose experiences did not reflect these notions were reluctant to self-label, as they did not think they were living the true refugee experience.

Camp residents were acutely aware of negative stereotypes, and challenged them. During my first visits to the camp in 2011–2012 I felt both welcome and safe. I later learned that I had been easily identified as an outsider by my accent, clothing and overall demeanor. I had not been aware of this until friends and acquaintances pointed it out, explaining that they could always differentiate between a ghareeba (foreigner/stranger) and ahl almukhayyam (people/family of the camp). This struck me as particularly interesting because camp residents did not all know each other. Unlike other smaller
camps in Beirut, Ain el-Helwe was significantly larger and more densely populated. Yet, they could always identify those who did not belong.

In addition to being visibly under-serviced, there is a social demarcation that struck me when entering the camp, compared with Shatila, which was significantly smaller, Ain el-Helwe felt like a small city in itself. Its market street was very busy with people buying goods and produce, and many individuals I met did not feel the need to leave the camp very often. This contributed to its isolation, both social and political.

The camp’s limits are demarcated by four army posts, which regulate entry and exit into the camps. This is not a typical camp scenario, as only two camps in Lebanon (Nahr el-Bared being the other) are subjected to this level of security and separation. Hanafi (2006) categorises some refugee camps in Lebanon as ‘closed’ spaces, in contrast with the camps in Jordan and (before the civil war) in Syria. As he explains, ‘open’ camp spaces are areas defined by minimal demarcation between the inside and the outside; they are both urban and social, and are regulated to resemble low-income neighbourhoods as opposed to refugee camps. ‘Open’ camps mimic shanty towns, and are easily accessible to non-campus residents, as movement is not restricted. On the contrary, ‘closed’ camps are confined and visibly demarcated, separate from their surrounding society.

‘I would accept citizenship elsewhere, but not here’

Mahmoud’s knowledge of the camp was not solely spatial; he showed me how to navigate all areas of the camp, places to avoid and areas that may be dangerous. His friend Bayan, who had been working for a friend of mine in Beirut, had introduced us. Bayan was born in the camp, but in 1990 when she was five years old her family moved to the nearby town of Saida to escape escalating violence. Mahmoud was a second-generation refugee. His parents were both born in the historical village of Saffouriyeh in the Galilee region. His parents were with the earliest people to arrive to Ain el-Helwe when it was first established. His father repeatedly stated that he would never leave it. True to his word, he remained in the camp until his death. Mahmoud now lives with his mother, wife and three children. This was a typical living situation for many individuals in the camp, as many could not afford their own homes and continued to live with their parents. As refugees from a small rural village in historical Palestine, Mahmoud’s
parents were not offered Lebanese citizenship. They married in Lebanon in the mid-sixties, and spent all their life in the camp.

Mahmoud describes himself as a ‘political activist’; he belongs to one of the camp’s Islamic factions. He once describes himself as a Palestinian first, and a member of his faction second. My relationship with Mahmoud grew steadily over a period of several years. Upon returning to conduct the fieldwork component of this research, I reconnected with Mahmoud and we met in Beirut on various occasions. During one of our meetings, he spoke strongly against tawtin, which he regarded as a strategy of elimination and erasure:

Even if they had been offered the jinsiyya, my father would have never agreed to it. This place was forced upon us, it wasn’t a choice … tawtin is a ploy to dissolve us and our cause, they [i.e. ‘international powers’] offered to pay Lebanon millions to resettle us just to make sure that our cause was erased. Hariri was offered a handsome amount of money, I once heard it was around 15 million dollars in order to naturalise us all but he refused. We would have refused anyway! The intention of tawtin is to erase our Palestinian identity completely. Once you take the jinsiyya, you will forget Palestine.

Mahmoud’s statement situated tawtin on a par with the erasure of identity. Palestinianeness would disappear as a consequence of tawtin. When asked if he thought the naturalised were no longer Palestinian, however, I sensed his caution. Perhaps knowing that I am a naturalised Palestinian influenced his answer. He did not want to offend:

I don’t know what is in the hearts or minds of people. But I do think that that you have to give up being Palestinian in order to become Lebanese … It would be naïve of to think that becoming Lebanese would not affect one’s Palestinianess.

He regarded tawtin as a process of becoming, of transformation from one ‘being’ to another. Mahmoud’s regard for tawtin as the systematic elimination of Palestinian national identity was shared by other participants in the camp, who also referred to the financial incentives offered by the international community. The significance of equating tawtin with erasure of identity echoes the sentiment of the Lebanese national discourse of tawtin.

Samih is in his mid-forties and a resident of Ain el-Helwe. He had been unemployed for several years and suffered from a serious heart condition that left him unable to work. Like many Palestinians denied work, he had resorted to menial low-paying jobs to get
by. He was recovering from surgery when we met during one of his visits to Beirut. As he puffed on his cigarette, Samih explained that his mother was Shiite Lebanese, and his father a Palestinian refugee. As he claimed, his family could have acquired Lebanese citizenship through his maternal family’s connections to the Shiite political parties in government. He went on to state, however, that he, like his father before him, would refuse Lebanese citizenship as a matter of principle:

The issue of tawtin in this country is purely political. All the policies that put it into place were orchestrated by international powers – the US, Israel, and Europe. They wanted to give us citizenship so they could ensure we wouldn’t return [to Palestine] and that this problem would be solved. In this country things are complicated, you can’t be both Palestinian and Lebanese, you have to give up who you are if you want to become naturalised … citizenship is not the problem, I would accept any other more neutral citizenship, Pakistani, Danish, any African country, Swedish, European – but not Lebanese, there is too much to lose with tawtin. Tawtin isn’t a matter of naturalising an individual or two, it is a plural mass form of naturalisation that is political and targets the cause – not the individual – so for that reason we are completely against it here.

It is important to remember that citizenship was not offered to the majority of participants with whom I met, and although the scenarios discussed are hypothetical (for most) they reflect deep-seated animosity. My informants rejected the process of tawtin and its particular politicisation in the Lebanese context. For Samih, and similarly for Mahmoud and others, it is the issue of tawtin in Lebanon that is problematic, and thus, tawtin elsewhere is not opposed with the same vehemence. While Samih rejected the prospect of tawtin in Lebanon due to the political orchestration that he claims to be behind the process, he would welcome citizenship elsewhere.

**Silenced perspectives on tawtin**

While Samih and Mahmoud rejected citizenship as an opposition to the policy of tawtin – they were both against tawtin – there were others who did not share this sentiment. I recall an incident when I was visiting a family in the camp during Ramadan for the evening meal. Abu Ahmad’s house was one I frequented during my time in the camp. The family was extremely hospitable and introduced me to many camp dwellers. Although they were a family of only four – Abu Ahmad, his wife Amina and two sons (Rami, 18 and Ahmad, 25) – their house was always open to family members and friends. After the meal that evening, we gathered for a discussion over tea, which revolved about the topic of tawtin. The conversation revolved around the negative
effects of *tawtin*, and its detrimental consequences to the survival of the Palestinian cause if it were ever to take place. During our conversation, two family members had remained silent the entire time. Sometime later, I met with Omar and Khalid – the two young men who had been quiet during our conversation. I got to know the young men relatively well and interviewed them some time later in Beirut. We spoke about the day at their uncle’s house, both young men (18 and 19) explained that they had been reluctant to engage in the conversation on that particular day. Khalid explained:

I don’t really understand what the problem behind *tawtin* is. I do not know *falasteen*, even my grandfather was born here. I’m from this place, and this is all I’ve known. So what if I take the citizenship? All the older folks in the camp keep talking about return and reject *tawtin* because they want to return but if it were up to me I would not have a problem at all to become a Lebanese citizen. I already feel as though I’m from here.

Omar, Khalid’s brother, echoed a similar sentiment and stated that he too would accept *tawtin* if it was ever to be offered to him. While the young men had appeared unwilling to disclose their views with others, they explained that there were many of the younger generation who thought just as they did, but were also shy or unwilling to make these statements to others. Omar added:

We know that people would judge us for our views – especially my uncle. So we’d rather not share how we really think with everyone. In reality, a lot of people from our generation think the same way as us; the older folks are stuck in the past. We need to move on with our lives, and securing citizenship and rights is the way to do it. A lot of our friends migrated to Denmark or Sweden. If I had the opportunity I would do the same. Life is very, very difficult for us here.

The generational discrepancy discussed by Omar did not emerge in the findings of this research, where many of those of the younger generation also opposed *tawtin* as matter of principle. It did, however, convey a seldom revealed account of naturalisation. Omar and Khalid had cousins in Denmark. Their cousins were born in Ain el-Hilwe and migrated with their families to live in Europe. They connected frequently on social media, primarily through Facebook. The read each other’s posts regularly, and during our conversation, Khalid pulled out his smart phone to share some of his cousins’ photos with me. He showed me a photo of a recent trip his cousins had taken with their friends. He said very little about this, but his point was clear. He wanted to show me the disparities between his life in the camp and that accorded to others, people who were ‘lucky’ enough to be citizens of somewhere.
Khalid and Omar’s perceptions of citizenship were not emotionally charged. They were pragmatic and practical. They regarded citizenship as a means to a better and more dignified life. Unlike the majority of camp residents with whom I met, the young men readily expressed their wishes to become citizens, and did not posit refugee status to be an affirmation of their Palestinian identity. Camp life is all they had ever known. With their exposure to the world through lenses of social media, they became increasingly aware of the opportunities members of their family had elsewhere, and aspired to one day have the same.

The youths in the camp were extremely active on social media. They used it to communicate with one another, share news about the camp, and even as a tool to navigate the camp during clashes. The most popular platform was Facebook. Most are unable to travel due to financial as well as visa restrictions that make movement outside Lebanon very difficult for Palestinians with travel documents (these documents are commonly known as laissez passer). Thus, social media and the broad usage of the internet.

In her research on the refugees of Shatila, Allan (2013) found that many young residents had minimal knowledge or interest in historical Palestine. Their parents often complained that they were more interested in videogames than they were in learning their history. Allan also found that even among the older generation, the question of Palestine and Palestinian identity was complicated by ‘layers’ of belonging to Lebanon.

When speaking about her perceptions of citizenship, Serene, a 20-year-old resident of the camp stated: ‘We Palestinians of Lebanon have been here for generations. I know our history and I know my family’s history … if I could become a Lebanese citizen I would not reject it.’ Serene challenged the mutual exclusivity embedded within the narrative of those who oppose tawtin as a means to safeguard and preserve the Palestinian cause. She presented her knowledge of her history and ancestry as a reason behind her willingness to acquire host state citizenship. This knowledge of her Palestinian origins was presented as a safeguard that would protect her against assimilation. As a young adult, she also wanted to reiterate her knowledge, because many young camp residents are often told by the older generation that they know very little and that they should learn more about their histories.
Despite the emergence of different perspectives pertaining to the question of *tawtin*, an issue that undercut much of the discussion pertaining to matters of citizenship and identity was belonging and identification with the camp, as the next section will explore.

**The camp as a place of identity**

According to Sayigh (2011), while the idea of a common national identity among refugees still poses a unifying force, it no longer mobilises as it used to. For her, the very terms ‘identity’ or ‘refugee identity’ are problematic. She argues for the emergence of regional identities linked to particular geographic locations instead. Sayigh has conducted extensive research on camp refugees in Lebanon, and argues that the protracted refugee condition and prolonged camp residence, coupled with the locality of camp life, resulted in new particular identities (1994, 2011).

The camp featured prominently in the narratives of many residents when asked to share their thoughts about *tawtin*. Despite its large size compared to other camps in the country (Ain el-Helwe is the largest by space and population), and despite the constant friction and frequent outbreaks of violence, there is a strong sense of community in Ain el-Helwe. The closed nature of the camp has granted it a strong sense of community and a sense of isolation from its surroundings, and has also contributed to a strong sense of a distinct camp identity (Sayigh 1994; Sayigh 2011; Hanafi 2011). There is a familiarity that is particular to communities who have shared a small geographical space for decades, in which families know one another, have intermarried, and where children roam freely from one house to the next. The camp is organised in a way that reproduces the life of the villages from which its residents fled. Mahmoud and I were once walking through its alleys when he pointed to the neighbourhood of Hayy Hatten. The area was adjacent to another neighbourhood called Hayy al-Saffouriyeh. He explained these areas derived their names from villages in historical Palestine from which many camp residents fled.

The findings of Hanafi and Long (2010) echoed strongly with the findings of my study. Many individuals identified with the camp as a place of belonging and identification. I employ Arjun Appadurai’s concept of *re-territorialisation* (2003) to describe the transformation of the camps from temporary spaces of impermanent residence to places of identity. Through the process of re-territorialisation, the camps symbolically represent a particular locality through which experiences of exile are located within camp spaces.
This particular locality is not only characterised by camp Palestininess, as discussed above, but also mediated through a sense of belonging to the camp itself as a place of identity.

The camp settings resemble areas in historical Palestine; even street names are named after areas from which the refugees originated (Peteet 1995). Residents have always adamantly rejected improvements to the camps, as they are regarded as impediments to the prospects of return. However, as the prospect of return became increasingly remote following the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian presence in the camps has become more permanent. As protracted residents of places that resemble and represent the ‘homeland’, the camps today express a strong sense of place. In the absence of a bounded nation-state, the camps emerged as entities the residents identify with in much the same way that others would identify with cities or even countries of origin. With little exception, the first question asked in the majority of the interviews is: ‘Where are you from’? For non-camp residents, both refugees and citizens, the responses varied and were dependent on various factors, such as the identity of the enquirer. For camp dwellers responses inevitably conveyed an assertion of the camp as a place of identity.

Ahmad’s response was not exceptional, when asked where he was from: ‘I am a Palestinian from Ain al-Helwe, and I’m very proud of it.’ A 24-year-old resident of the camp, Ahmad is a proud Palestinian from Ain el-Helwe. Identification with the camp informed the Palestininess expressed by its residents. His response was relayed by others of his generation. This notion in being from the camp should not be regarded in isolation from stereotypes associated with camp residents, and Ain el-Hilwe in particular. Ahmad went on to explain that he was not ashamed of his camp. His expressions of pride cannot be disassociated from the sociopolitical and economic conditions of the camp. Negative stereotypes of Ain el-Helwe portray its residents as militiamen engaged in violence or as Islamic radicals, which has contributed to feelings of isolation and discrimination among residents.

This notion of identification with the camp varied across generations. I recall meeting with Abu Rami, a camp elder to whom I was referred by many participants. He wished to speak about the Nakba and his house in the historical village of Saffouriye. He did not wish to discuss tawtin, or life in Lebanon for that matter. I felt as though he wanted to share his memories with me, trusting that they would be documented somewhere. He was a very well-known camp personality due to his sharp memory despite his old age.
People often referred to him as the ‘mukhtar’ [the one who knew all the families and their origins]. He was nearing 90 years of age and his memory was extremely sharp and vivid. He did not mention the camp during our interview except once. When speaking about his grandchildren, he stated:

The problem nowadays with these young kids is that they do not know where are from. If you ask me, I will tell you details of my father’s bayyara [orchard] in Saffouriyeh. If you ask my grandson, who is 15. He will tell that he is from Saffouriyeh. But the problem is that the Saffouriyeh he is referring to is this – the camp.

Abu Rami was extremely disappointed by the younger generation. He was saddened by their lack of knowledge of historical Palestine. He expressed a deep sense of worry for their future without a profound knowledge of their ‘asl’ [origin] as he went on to explain. The conflation between (Palestinian) identity and the camp was only observed among those of the younger generation.

In his research based in the Deheisha refugee camp in the West Bank, George Bisharat observed that when testifying in the refugee court individuals are required to state their names and home towns before testifying. For example, ‘Rani, son of Amir, Ramle [town of origin in historical Palestine], resident of Deheisha’ (a refugee camp just South of Bethlehem) (1994: 173). In contrast, the residents of Ain el-Helwe, identify with the camp first. When Mahmoud introduced me to a youth group member, I was informed of his name and that he originated from the Hayy al-Saffouriya neighbourhood in Ain el-Helwe. Reference to the place of origin in Palestine was absent from the introduction.

This is not to say that camp residents did not identify with the territorial villages and towns from which their families fled, but that a stronger association with the camp as a place of identity informed their responses. Why did residents of Ain el-Helwe identify so strongly with the camp as a place of identity, and what did this identification mean for non-residents? There are two driving factors behind this identification with the camp. First, as people ‘out of place’, refugees experience a perpetual state of ‘homelessness’ (Said 2000). This is compensated through the construction of the camp as an alternative ‘home’. Second, the Ain el-Helwe refugee camp receives its fair share of negative media coverage as a place of lawlessness, disorder and armed conflict. It is arguably the desire of camp residents to counter these stereotypes that drives individuals to assert their identification.
Refugees are a ‘categorical anomaly’ to the modern nation-state system (Malkki 1990: 33). We do not live in abstract visualisations of spatial relationships – ‘we live in a world of meaning’ (Cresswell 1996: 13). Places are meaningful, we exist and act in places, in turn, we are constantly engaged in a process of place-making and interpretation. This has led some scholars to talk about places as a text (Cresswell 1996). As such, a ‘place’ is created by its authors. The camps are experienced by residents as repositories of memory and collective history, as places where Palestine is alive. However, they are not always ‘read’ or experienced as such by non-residents. At best, non-residents are visitors.

Amani was in her mid-twenties and worked as a private tutor in the camp. She had spent her childhood between the Yarmouk camp in Damascus, where she lived with her aunt, and Ain el-Helwe, where she resided with her parents and siblings:

There are so many of us in my family, I have seven siblings – with me we are eight. So my aunt invited me to stay with her for a while when I was 15 years old to ease the burden on my parents, and that little while turned into three years. I had my political awakening in Yarmouk … now Yarmouk is destroyed, and all we have left is Ain el-Helwe, we are the largest concentration of Palestinians in the world, and they are working to destroy it … If this camp goes, our Palestine is gone.

During my field work in 2013–2014 references to the Syrian conflict were inevitable. It was during this time that the fall of Yarmouk occurred. Many refugees described the slow destruction of Yarmouk as tantamount to the end of the Palestinian struggle. Many believed that their camp would be next, as part of a greater Lebanese plan to dissolve the pockets of poverty strewn across the country; an effective scheme that was resulting in a shrinking camp population. For refugees, the camp was both the incubator and the materialisation of the Palestinian struggle. This view was expressed by many of the camp residents, for whom the camp was the khazzan (container) of all that is Palestinian. In this sense, the camp is understood as a place for Palestinianness, for which the refugees were the guardians. As Amani explained, ‘The camp is where our revolution is stored [khazzan al-thawra], its loss would hurt us all [Palestinians] greatly.’

Amani’s emphasis on the importance of the camp extends beyond the camp as a place of residence and a site where aid can be obtained. The significance of the camp for Amani was political and symbolic. Amani’s rendering of tawtin as a betrayal of sorts framed
**Tawtin** to be the end of Palestinian identity on the first level, the betrayal of the political and cultural struggle on the second.

Entry into the camp is marked by a blue sign, which reads: ‘*Ahlan Bikum fi Ain el-Helwe – Assimat al shatat al falsteeni*’ (‘Welcome to the capital of the Palestinian diaspora’). While *shatat* is often translated to mean diaspora in the social sciences literature (Hilal 2007), it is a far more loaded term than its English translation suggests. *Shatat* embodies dispossession, scattering, and a process of ‘breaking apart’. A common expression used when a person is facing difficulty in processing thoughts is to state that the mind is experiencing ‘a state of *shatat*’. I had noticed the sign during my early visits to the camp in 2011, as it is quite difficult to miss, but I did not think much of it. As the weeks passed and my visits became more frequent, the many meanings of the sign began to slowly unravel. Amani’s statement above echoes the sentiment embedded in the sign, which greets residents and visitors to the camp, in which Ain el-Helwe is posited to have political significance akin to the survival of the Palestinian cause and struggle. *Tawtin* is posited to be a catalyst in furthering the *shatat* of the Palestinian people.

Mahmoud emphasised the political significance of the camp for the continuity and survival of the Palestinian cause. For Mahmoud, the idea of return was inextricably bounded with the camp:

> The road to Jerusalem would begin from Ain el-Helwe … It’s our duty to protect the camp; they are trying very hard to destroy it. They wage media campaigns depicting us as violent, which leave people thinking that Palestinians are all violent. If they destroy the camp, they would have succeeded in destroying our cause. Look at what is happening to al-Yarmouk, we have to protect ourselves or else it’s going to happen to us next. They did in Iraq, now where are the Palestinians? They are all scattered all over the world, citizens of all sorts of different countries.

Mahmoud and Amani both regard the survival of the refugee camp as akin to the survival of the Palestinian cause and struggle. Equating the *shatat* with citizenship, as illustrated by Mahmoud in his statement above, reinforces this notion that citizenship furthers dispossession. The camp represented a stronghold in the face of dispossession. It signified both a symbolic and physical fort against integration into the host state and, as importantly, its residents’ ideological position on *tawtin* was a symbolic safeguard against citizenship. Ironic that for some, citizenship remedied their dispossession (as
subsequent chapters will illustrate), while for camp residents, it was opposed as a factor that would further it.

There is an authenticity accorded to camp life and the experience, which in turn marginalises the experience and Palestinianness of non-camp residents, (see Hanafî 2011). As Amani stated: ‘We bear the burden of the cause. Others have sold it and forgotten while we continue to hold on. Our life here is not easy, look around you – but we will never sell our cause.’

By positing that camp residents are carriers of the cause and struggle, Amani imbues the camp experience with a sense of legitimacy that delegitimises other experiences of Palestinianness. There is a conflation here between the cause and the camp. In turn, this undermines the national credentials and political culture and consciousness of non-camp residents (i.e. urban refugees) and naturalised Palestinians.

Interestingly, many naturalised participants echoed a similar sentiment. As the next chapter will reveal, there were those who felt that they were less Palestinian because they did not experience life in the camp and had grown up in ‘privileged’ environments. This juxtaposition conveys the extent to which the notion of the camp as the authentic Palestinian experience has permeated the narratives of the naturalised as well as those of refugees.

Sayigh (2005) cautions against this perception, and argues that the Palestinian experience in the diaspora and host states has been influenced by various factors, such as economic, cultural, political, and geographic. For her, privileging a particular Palestinian experience and identity would be an inaccurate representation of the Palestinian diversity. The camp residents I met, however, emphasised their irreducible authenticity.

There is a strong political culture within Ain el-Helwe and in the other camps (Rougier 2007). Scholars have written extensively about the factionalism, militarisation and Islamicisation of Ain el-Helwe (Farah 2003; Rougier 2007). And while these processes are undeniable, and individuals do continue to identify strongly with their factions, there are many shifts taking place among those of the younger generation. The identification with the camp for many override belonging or identifying with any particular faction or political group. Amani explained:

All my family belong to the PFLP, and I strongly believe in the secularity of their [PFLP’s] message. But here at the camp our interests are all the same [she then
points to others sitting across the table at the café we were at]. Sarah is PLO, Nader belongs to the Islamic groups, Jumana is also PLO. But we don’t care about factional ideology. We all want to work for the benefit of the camp, so it really doesn’t matter who you belong to … This camp is our future.

Amani and the others belonged to a youth group called the *Al-Liqaa al Shababi fi mukhayyam fi Ain el-Helwe, henceforth al-Liqaa* (the youth meet-up in Ain el-Helwe). Al-Liqaa was designed to bring the youth together, from different political factions to work towards benefitting the camp. The group met every Sunday for three hours and had 60 registered members. Spaces in the camp were sometimes too small to accommodate, so meetings were often held at cafes or restaurants. I had the privilege of attending several of their meetings. The topics and agendas varied, but their message was clear: to improve life in the camp. This model of activity was first tested in Ain el-Helwe, but had spread to other camps. The group had painted camp walls, cleaned the main shopping street, collected food and clothing for those in need, and assisted Syrian refugees.

This sense of community is unparalleled among urban refugees or naturalised Palestinians. It is this feeling that grants the camp’s residents a strong sense of connection with one another and fosters a strong collective sentiment which translates, as Hanafi (2008) argues, to an identity that is particular to the camp and its residents. A sense of collective community was also manifested in the shared experience of discrimination, to which many residents of the camps were subjected.

The absence of a Palestinian community was a recurring theme in the narratives of both the naturalised and urban refugees. Compared with camp refugees to whom this is readily available, the former expressed a broader notion of community. This lends itself to expressions of identity. While the refugees did not regard the naturalised as part of their community of Palestinians, naturalised informants were more readily able to do so. The latter regarded themselves as part of a wider diasporic Palestinian experience, in which many were like themselves (citizens of somewhere) and others carried Palestinian refugee status. This became apparent when speaking to the experience of discrimination (discussed in the next chapter) to which refugees were subjected. The naturalised expressed difficulty in belonging to Lebanon due to the discrimination inflicted upon refugees, who were regarded as members of the broader community of Palestinians to which many were subscribed.
Discrimination and honour

Discrimination is an issue that fundamentally defines the differences between the refugee and the naturalised experience. There are two types of discrimination targeting Palestinians in Lebanon: social (i.e. in social everyday encounters), and institutional political discrimination (i.e. policy and laws). Both types of discrimination are well documented (Knudsen 2011; Shafie 2006; El-Natour 1997, 2007; Peteet 2005). The role of the PLO in the Lebanese civil war played an important role in constructing the trope of the ‘violent’ Palestinian, and later as an unwanted burden (Haddad 2004; Sayigh 2001; Salam 1994). Today, the issue of discrimination faced by the Palestinians runs deeper than the country’s policies. Participants discussed their experiences of social discrimination more prominently.

When asked if he would ever consider naturalisation if the opportunity arose, Faisal recalled an incident that took place some months before:

I was once walking in Saida when I saw a good friend of mine walking with some of his friends who I didn’t know. I got very excited to see him, so I waved at him, but he looked the other way. My friend is not from the camp, he’s from Saida – he was embarrassed to say hello to a ‘camp boy’ in front of his friends, so he didn’t even wave back. That really hurt me, what an awful thing to do – we don’t talk anymore … when we speak about matters of belonging or ever becoming a citizen in this country, such incidences are not easy to get over, they are not things one can simply forget. They don’t accept us for who we are.

Kynda held a secretarial job at a school in Khalde, a suburb of Beirut. Although Palestinians did not have the right to work, many managed to find entry-level positions through connections. We were introduced through a family member with whom she used to work. Although she worked in Beirut, she continued to reside in the camp with her family due to their difficult financial situation. She was almost 40 years old, and like many other women with whom I met, Kynda’s husband was living in one of the Gulf countries while she raised her children alone. Unable to work in Lebanon due to employment restrictions of Palestinians, her husband sought employment elsewhere. When an opportunity came up in the United Arab Emirates, he decided to relocate. His wife and children could not accompany him due to financial reasons, and so they stayed behind and continued to reside in Ain el-Helwe. Kynda had spent the majority of her life in Ain el-Helwe. She expressed her desire to leave, especially now that her son had turned 14, and she worried about him dropping out of school. School drop-out rates are
very high in the camps. Unable to work after graduation, students are not motivated to pursue higher education and see little value in completing secondary education. She had been trying to leave the camp when we met, and I recently learned that she moved to a small rented apartment outside the camp with her two children. The concern for many residents of the camp was for the future of their children. Kynda described the camp as an ‘unhealthy’ environment for her son and daughter. She had grown up in the camp and, when she got married at 19 moved to a nearby suburb with her new husband, whose family lived in Sidon. It was only some years ago when they faced serious financial struggles that she returned to the camp with her children.

One afternoon, Kynda and I met near the school where she worked. I asked if she would ever become a Lebanese citizen if able. Her response was adamant:

Of course not. It would be an insult to myself as a Palestinian. It would be the biggest shame! I would never take on Lebanese citizenship. We [Palestinian refugees] are treated like sub-humans in Lebanon; when you tell them you’re Palestinian they look at you as though you came from the moon! … The discrimination in the system makes life so difficult for us … My sister did it – she took the citizenship through her husband, she was granted citizenship through marriage. I tried to talk her out of it, but she kept saying it’s not for me – it’s for the kids. The kids were citizens anyway through their father! It didn’t make much sense for her to also become a citizen … I was very upset with her when she decided to go ahead with it … sometime afterwards I asked her how she felt during the process and she responded: it was as though my clothes were being taken off of me. It was as though I was standing there naked in front of the officials.

Citizenship for Kynda and her sister are tied to matters of self-identity, honour and dignity. For her, acquiring Lebanese citizenship is dishonourable because of the way Palestinians have been treated in Lebanon and the discrimination they face. Further, her UNRWA-issued refugee status, to which she referred to as a ‘jinsiyaa’, represented her connection to her Palestinian identity.

Faisal relates matters of discrimination to feelings of belonging and acceptance. Unaccepted and discriminated against as a Palestinian, he struggles to foresee how he could be a member of a country that discriminates against him because of his national identity. While Kynda had undoubtedly experienced discrimination in Lebanon, as a Palestinian and especially as a resident of Ain el-Helwe, her rejection of citizenship was
primarily linked to notions of identity, and the implications she claimed citizenship would have on her Palestinian identity.

Amani’s complexion is very dark. Part of a small minority who came to historical Palestine from Africa, her features resemble those of her ancestors. Her experiences of discrimination were somewhat different from other camp residents. They were twofold. On the one hand, she was questioned about her looks and skin colour, and on the other she experienced marginalisation as a refugee and camp residents:

I am constantly asked about my identity. People often think I’m Ethiopian and I find myself having to explain to them I’m a Palestinian! And that yes, black Palestinians do exist; people in Lebanon have no idea. Even some Palestinians are surprised to learn this. It is very frustrating having to constantly explain and justify your identity to others. On top of that, then you are discriminated against because you are a refugee from Ain el-Hilwe … these experiences made me stronger … this cause is much bigger than me.

Her experiences of discrimination, for being black and Palestinian, were posited to be part of a broader narrative of *sumoud* [steadfastness] and resilience. Facing discrimination, and surviving it, was part of being what she defined as the Palestinian struggle. Described as an experience which granted her with strength, incentive and drive to continue, discrimination was also framed as an inevitable consequence of being a Palestinian refugee. Equating such experiences with the fabric of Palestinian identity served to accord refugees, and in particular camp refugees, with a more authentic experience. It legitimised and made sense of their circumstance, and it served as a strategy for coping and making sense of the status quo. In much the same way as citizenship and naturalisation are conceptualised, the notion of *sumoud* (steadfastness) was individually defined.

**Urban refugees: encounters with discrimination**

The issue of discrimination extends beyond the camp experience. It was discussed by urban refugees as well as naturalised Palestinians. These groups, and I use this categorisation merely to indicate residency, have very different experiences of life in Lebanon. While camp refugees expressed that they were identifiable by their place of residence, accents and often socioeconomic status, urban refugees were undistinguishable from the rest of the population. The life experiences of urban refugees I met were very different from those of camp residents. For starters, they lived in Beirut, and most belonged to the middle or upper-middle classes. All were university educated
and many owned their homes. Their socioeconomic status and experiences were similar to those of naturalised Palestinians. In comparison, as the next chapter will illustrate, many of the naturalised felt reluctant and/or unable to ‘belong’ in Lebanon because of discrimination that targets their refugee counterparts. There is a direct link between a feeling of belonging (for the naturalised) and the willingness to accept citizenship (for refugees).

Naturally, notions of belonging and the prospect of *tawtin* were framed differently by urban refugees and camp residents. The camp residents had created their own ‘home’ within the camps, with a shared sense of community, belonging and national identity; the urban refugees had not. The latter were scattered all across the city and country, and did not establish any form of community in the same way that camp residents had.

In her study of Hutu refugees in Tanzania, Liisa Malkki (1995) studied two residential communities of refugees. The first one resided in carefully organised and physically isolated camps; the other one lived in less regulated urban settings. She found that conditions of residency shaped the ways in which refugees identified themselves and the ways they perceived each other:

Comparison of the urban and township settings revealed radical differences in the meanings that people ascribed to national identity and history, to notions of home and homeland, and to exile as a collectively experienced condition … identifying themselves as a people in exile, the camp refugees responded to their own displacement from the national order by creating another nation. The town refugees’ response to displacement was radically different and in the end perhaps more subversive: they dissolve national categories in the course of everyday life and produced a more cosmopolitan form of identity instead (Malkki 1995: 2).

Liisa found that camp residents were continually engaged in the construction and reconstruction of their history as a ‘people’, while urbanites became increasingly integrated and associated with surrounding environments from which their refugee counterparts were isolated. As Agier states (2002: 323), the camp refugee exists within a particular state of ‘liminality’, awaiting and at the same time becoming ‘disengaged’ from the local host population. Camp refugees are also engaged in a community of individuals similar to themselves. The importance of Malkki’s findings is that her work informs the ways in which the camps as closely knit collective places become places of identity. Collectively structured camp settings cultivate a sense of ‘authenticity’ that is revered by their residents, one that, I argue, emerges as a result of the closed
environment within which people live. It is not necessarily more ‘real’, but it is different.

Hanafi argues (2007) that the closed camps have created and nurtured a particular type of ‘camp Palestinianess’, an identity that has emerged from isolation. In contrasting how residence shapes the ways by which individuals imagine Palestine, my argument is threefold. First, closed camp environments such as that of Ain el-Helwe, foster an imagined Palestine that is inherited and refers to a pre-exilic place. The ‘Palestine’ that is expressed by non-camp residents is, on the contrary, a place that amalgamates personal experiences and cultural narratives. Second, the closed spaces of the camp are imagined by their residents as incubators of Palestinianess, but this ‘Palestine’ would be lost if the camps were to be dismantled. Third, non-camp dwellers find it difficult to identify with camp Palestinianess. They regard it as a form of Palestinianess that is particular to the camp experience. They feel excluded.

Rita obtained her degree in engineering from the American University of Beirut (AUB). She spoke in a thick Lebanese accent and explained that she didn’t know much about Palestine or Palestinian culture. She was apologetic. Rita described herself as a ‘Beiruti’, and for her Lebanon was ‘home’. Originally from Jaffa, her grandfather had refused Lebanese citizenship when it was offered to him in the 1950s. He said he wished to return to his house and land in Jaffa. Both Rita’s parents were Christian Palestinians. Growing up she had not been aware of any discrimination other Palestinians had to endure. Many of her friends and acquaintances did not know that she was in fact Palestinian:

A lot of people didn’t know I was Palestinian. It was not a secret. I just didn’t see the point in sharing this information with them because it is not part of who I was … Engineering at AUB is difficult. I was on top of the world the year I graduated at the top of my class with an engineering degree. So when it came to looking for a job I thought it would be very easy for me. And in some ways it was. I received a call back and was called in for an interview to every job I applied for. I’d get through the preliminary stages and when it came to the final interview stage, I wouldn’t get the job because I’m Palestinian. They would simply say, ‘Sorry we’re not able to hire Palestinians’ … it’s as though I had been blind to the discrimination we face in this country when I was younger, or perhaps my parents did a good job at hiding it from us … my family is Christian and we live in an affluent Christian part of the city. When we were looking to buy our apartment, some residents objected that a Palestinian family was going to be in the building, they even had a committee meeting to discuss the matter! Eventually. They
became very friendly with us once we moved in as though nothing had ever happened.

Although Rita felt and identified as Lebanese (despite her Palestinian refugee status), the experiences of discrimination left her increasingly reluctant to embrace this identity. Now her in late twenties, she has faced several other instances of discrimination where she was made to feel like an unwanted outsider. This was especially troubling because for a long time she identified as an insider. She went on to explain, ‘I would accept Lebanese citizenship if given the chance. It would certainly make my life a lot easier and I wouldn’t have to deal with such unpleasant encounters.’ For Rita, becoming a citizen was equated with an end to the encounters of discrimination she experienced when looking for a job, opening a bank account, or moving in to her new apartment. She framed Lebanese citizenship as an end to discrimination, not an end of her Palestinian origins.

Ahmad was an urban refugee who had also been educated at AUB. He worked as an information technology specialist at a local company. At 32, Ahmad had struggled to find work after graduation. Eventually he had settled on an entry-level position for which he was overqualified. Due to the many vocational restrictions placed on Palestinians, many have to settle for low-paying positions, and most consider themselves lucky to have found work in the first place. Ahmad explained that he tried to mask his Palestinian accent at work, as he wished to avoid questions, especially when speaking with clients: ‘At times if I need to call a client, I’ll ask my colleague to make the call instead of me. It’s harder to get an appointment when they hear my Palestinian accent.’

The incident that had the most significant impact on Ahmad occurred some years ago when he proposed to his longtime girlfriend, Naila:

Naila is Lebanese, and when I went to ask for her hand, her father refused. He said that he cannot give his daughter to a Palestinian because of the uncertainly of the future. I was absolutely crushed … As they got to know me and my family more, they eventually warmed up to the idea but it took a lot of time. My parents could afford to buy me a house, which definitely helped convince them that our future would be secure.

Ahmad and Naila have been married for a little less than a year, and while it took much convincing, her parents eventually agreed to let her marry a Palestinian. I have known many women whose families did not. Like Rita’s, Ahmad’s grandfather had been
offered Lebanese citizenship but refused in hope of one day returning to his house in Acre. When asked if he wished to become naturalised, Ahmad responded:

There were times in my life when I had and resented my grandfather for making a decision which I thought to be selfish … but now if you ask me, no, I don’t want to become a citizen. I know my wife would think that it’s much easier for our future children, but I really have no intention of acquiring a Lebanese passport. As Palestinians we put up with so much here, I can’t just wake up one day and become Lebanese. What difference would it make? It’s not like there are any benefits involved, and when we were planning our honeymoon to Germany, I got my visa with my Palestinian documents before she did with her Lebanese passport!

Ahmad points to the insignificance of Lebanese citizenship to his life to rationalise and explain his decision to oppose naturalisation. He also references the treatment of other Palestinians in Lebanon as a factor in his decision to reject the prospect if were ever to be made possible to him. Of course, the majority of Palestinians do not have the choice to acquire Lebanese citizenship, and my participants’ comments are hypothetical. But Rita’s naturalisation is still possible and even if her Christian status would facilitate the process she continues to reject the possibility. The question of citizenship for refugee status holders is inextricably bounded with their marginalisation. Belonging and membership are bounded to feelings of acceptance and inclusion, and they are shifting and changing.

Compared with camp residents, urban refugees often experienced more subtle and subdued forms of discrimination. However, it appears to have very similar effects on both groups. Entry and exit into Ain el-Helwe is closely monitored, and upon entry people are asked for their identification card and car registration. This means that if a person wants to leave the camp for any reason, they face these questions when returning home. I was told by residents that it was not uncommon to wait for longer periods during times of instability or clashes in the camp. I recall hearing a story of when a resident waited for so long in line to enter the camp that the raw beef and chicken they had with them went bad in the summer heat.

Urban refugees seldom encountered experiences of discrimination with law enforcement. Their accounts of discrimination took place during subtle daily interactions. Many spoke to the shift in attitude when people learned that they were Palestinians. Despite their varied accounts, the effects discrimination had on their
narratives of belonging were very similar. Both urban and camp refugees problematised belonging to Lebanon, and hypothetically becoming a citizen, based on their own experiences of discrimination.

This notion of discrimination, and its effects on notions of belonging, extended beyond the camp and urban refugee narratives. Regarding themselves as part of the broader Palestinian collective meant that the naturalised were also affected by discrimination that targeted their refugee counterparts. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the naturalised expressed reluctance upon learning and seeing the discrimination faced by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

The narratives of Rita and Ahmad echoed those told by my naturalised informants. The latter were unaware of discrimination when they were younger; it was only in their mid-twenties that they began to realise the extent of discrimination. The prospect of naturalisation for Ahmad and Rita, as it was for camp refugees, was tainted by discrimination and marginalisation. The possibility of tawtin is negotiated and constructed with a heightened awareness of these experiences.

Dalya is a naturalised woman in her late thirties. She had acquired Lebanese citizenship one year prior to our meeting through her husband Samer, to whom she had been married for six years. Dalya’s mother is Lebanese Shiite and her father a Palestinian refugee. She grew up in Beirut and attended private schools and university. Although she did not fit into the category of naturalised Palestinians I was searching for (i.e. those naturalised shortly after 1948), her case is an example of a scenario of ‘before-and-after’ naturalisation, and so I decided to interview her anyway.

She grew up in Beirut and as she explained, her parents were financially comfortable and money had never been an issue in their lives. She explains her decision to naturalise with the following:

> It was a very easy decision to make, and it didn’t take much thought. I grew up in a Lebanese family who happened to have Palestinian papers. I was born in Beirut and we had no connection to anything Palestinian – so naturally, when the opportunity arose of course I took it.

Ironically, the ‘papers’ to which Dalya referred related to their refugee status; juxtaposed with others for whom citizenship resembled a mere piece of paper. The reference to both women’s legal status as a piece of ‘paper’ works to disassociate these documents from their (national and political) meaning. Dalya did identify with the
political and national symbolism of refugee status in the way camp refugees did. For her, identity was not derived from documentation or status. It was felt and experienced, and as far as she was concerned she had always been Lebanese and the acquisition of citizenship was an affirmation of what already was.

Many parallels can be drawn between the narratives of Najat and Dalya, the first of which is the separation of self (identity) from legal status. Both women, along with many other participants, made this distinction. They accord meaning to their own legal statuses, which, destabilises and challenges the *tawtin* narrative on both ends of the spectrum. On the one hand, Dalya as an individual, who identifies as Lebanese, did so despite her (previous) refugee status. On the other hand, Najat and others did not regard their (Lebanese) citizenship as a source of identity or belonging. For them, citizenship was framed as a pragmatic enabler of rights and (relative) security.

Dalya identified with being Lebanese, and carrying a refugee card had meant little to her. Dalya went on to state that she did not have many Palestinian friends, and while she sympathised and felt strongly about the injustice of their plight, she did not identify as a Palestinian. She then added: ‘I didn’t feel as though I was giving anything up when I became Lebanese. What did we have before as Palestinians? Rejection and awful treatment from government officials.’

Dalya equated the experience of being Palestinian (in Lebanon) with discrimination and harsh treatment. Citizenship was posited as an end to these negative experiences, and a fulfilment of her already existing Lebanese identity. This is compared with the experiences of camp refugees (in Chapter 4) for whom discrimination was posited as a phenomenon to be endured, and one that they rationalised as part of the broader struggle of being Palestinian. While she did not speak much about experiences of discrimination when asked, she did refer to the difficulties she faced in securing work after graduation.

**Perspectives on *tawtin***

The naturalised of Lebanon are invisible in the sense that they have not established a community in the way that ethnic or racial minorities often do in the countries to which they become naturalised. Furthermore, they are not easily identifiable. Thus, some participants were surprised to learn the actual numbers of naturalised Palestinians; the number was higher than many had anticipated. My role as a researcher who is also a naturalised Palestinian is an important factor to consider here, because participants may
have been reluctant to share their perspectives in fear of offending me. Prior to the interviews, participants were encouraged to ask any questions they had about me and the project. All knew that I was a naturalised citizen. On several occasions, I felt reluctance to share what they wished to say; this was especially sensed among camp refugees who expressed the most negative opinions towards the naturalisation process.

As strong opponents to naturalisation, the majority of camp residents expressed very negative perspectives towards the process. Almost all participants opposed the prospect. This translates into a negative and unfavourable perspective towards naturalised individuals. When asked if she considered the naturalised to also be Palestinian, Amani stated: ‘At the end of the day it’s up to them. But our cause is not for sale.’ For Amani, tawtin was on par with the abandonment of the cause. For her, and for those who shared her perspective, those who became naturalised had let go of the Palestinian struggle.

In a similar sentiment, Mahmoud stated:

You speak about the naturalised – but where are they? What have they done for us or for the cause? Every once in a while someone may donate some money to help a sick child. And then we never hear from them again. We are the ones bearing the brunt; we [the refugees] are the only ones who are still holding on. Others have accepted Lebanon as their home; we will never do such a thing.

According to Mahmoud the lack of political consciousness among the naturalised attests to their disengagement. Camp residents juxtaposed their own experiences of liminality, restriction, poverty, and political factionalism with the experiences of the naturalised. Mahmoud and others regarded themselves as those who have shouldered the cause, and framed the naturalised as those who have sold out. They regard the naturalised as individuals who have taken the easier route, while they continue to suffer for the cause.

Basma, a 50-year-old woman who had been born in the camp, explained: ‘Those who took the citizenship have forgotten; they are now Lebanese. This is what happens, naturally. But we never will forget who we are.’ For camp residents, the continuity and survival of the cause and struggle rests on the survival and preservation of the camp. It is for this reason that members of the youth group I encountered (see above) work towards improving the camp space. They intend to ensure its endurance and preservation, as it is synonymous with their own survival as Palestinians.

Equating the camp with Palestinianness was challenged by many of the naturalised and urban refugees (see also Hanafi 2008). For them, this was problematic because it
reduced the camp Palestinianess to a tangible construct. Tamara, a naturalised Palestinian stated: ‘The camps add nothing to the cause. The people there are suffering for no reason, there is no going back but they continue to wait for generations. I think camp refugees would be better off outside the camps or as citizens; at least they will then have the opportunity to change and improve their lives.’ When asked if she felt less Palestinian because she had not endured hardships in the way the refugees have, she responded: ‘No. Since when does being a Palestinian mean having to suffer?’

As the lives and experiences of urban refugees were very similar to those of the naturalised, their perspectives on naturalisation were far less negative than camp residents. As Samar, an urban refugee in her early forties stated, ‘I mean let’s be honest. If given the choice most of us would actually accept citizenship. It makes your live so much easier. They [the naturalised] saw an opportunity and took it – there is nothing wrong in doing that.’ Tanya, a 33-year-old urban refugee and mother of three argued:

My kids have the citizenship from their father who is Lebanese. I don’t understand what all the fuss against tawtin is, where are the Palestinians to go? They will remain here; opposing tawtin today just makes the lives of refugees more difficult. There are only about 200,000 of us left, just naturalise us and get it over with!

Tima, a 19-year-old urban refugee, offered her perspective on the matter: ‘Citizenship is what you make of it. There are refugees who are more Lebanese than the Lebanese! And there are naturalised citizens who are extremely Palestinian!’

Tima distinguished between identity and citizenship. By recognising that varying perspectives exist among members of both categories of Palestinians, she regarded [Palestinian] identity as something individually practised and experienced. Distinguishing between [national/ethnic] identity and citizenship meant that citizenship was accorded meaning by individuals. Tima’s statement echoes the findings discussed above, which revealed varied perspectives among individuals. Her statement renders the effects of citizenship on identity to be personal and subjective, determined by a set of individual criteria.

**Conclusion**

Residence plays a significant role in framing narratives of naturalisation. Camp residents are able to construct particular collective identities that are centred on the camp experience and on shared struggle and political consciousness. The isolation of the camp
has fostered ‘camp Palestinianness’. As the camp experience was not shared by the naturalised, camp residents challenged the authenticity of the naturalised.

Framing citizenship as abandonment, views of the naturalised were largely negative in the camp. Discrimination played an important role in embedding this sense of authenticity. This approach featured more prominently among the camp residents, as there is a dimension of that particularly targets camp dwellers as ‘violent’. Perceptions of the naturalised varied, and were related to perceptions of tawtin. Those who regarded tawtin very negatively regarded the naturalised in the same light. This was particular to camp refugees who stated that those who chose to naturalise had sold cause for a better standard of living and in some senses had abandoned their refugee counterparts as well. The next chapter explores and expands these themes and sheds light on how the naturalised negotiate and give meaning to ‘home’ and ‘belonging’.
Chapter 6: Home and Belonging

There is no word for ‘home’ in Arabic. Speaking of ‘home’, according to Sayigh denotes speaking of place, family, security and self (2005). For many Palestinians in the diaspora, especially those of the Nakba generation, home continued to be in the homeland regardless of how long they had lived elsewhere. In light of the increased movement of people and goods around the world, the concept of national home – once believed to be relatively static by comparison – now eludes many who have grown up and only know a world of movement and exile. There is a saying among Palestinians denoting that home is always elsewhere, as long as one is away from their homeland.

These themes are most often associated with the refugee experience, and in particular the experience of camp residents. This, however, poses an important question for the Palestinian citizens of Lebanon (and elsewhere for that matter). How do they make sense of ‘home’ and how they articulate it within a context of belonging and community? This chapter explores the ways the naturalised articulate home.

Meanings of place

Place, territory, country, homeland and home are prominent ways that allow individuals to identify and express themselves. Being from, or belonging to a place, longing for a place or homeland, and feeling at home in a place are all ways in which notions of self and its relation with place are bound. A place or home is practised, experienced and accorded meaning. Place-making gains a measure of permanence when it is inscribed and commemorated into the physical landscape. Monuments, place names, art, commemorative sites and burial sites give meaning to place (for the ways in which place is memorialised in refugee camps, see Malkki 1995; Khalili 2007; Massey 1995).

According to Cresswell (1996), a sense of place is the lens through which the world and the self are perceived, whereas place is ‘a point of departure from which we orient ourselves and take possession of the world’ (Norberg-Shulz 1971: 19). In his investigation of cross-cultural notions of place, Fu Tuan distinguishes between two ways in which place is experienced: ‘rootedness’ and ‘sense of place’. Rootedness is principally the experience of being naturally at home; it disregards the flow of time. Rootedness is a sense of home that is taken for granted. In contrast, Fu Tuan describes making a sense of a place as a process that entails a heightened sense of the outside world and the awareness of the flow of time. The ways by which individuals make sense
of place is both socially constructed and existentially experienced (Fu Tuan 1976; see also Feld and Basso 1994; Massey 1995).

All over the world, ‘people are engaged in place-making activities’ (Cresswell 1994: 5). One’s ability to establish a sense of place does not solely rest on their desire or willingness to do so, but necessitates recognition by others. The relevance of this recognition features throughout this chapter. My informants emphasised their inability to feel at home because of the ways in which others challenged their belonging and questioned their origins.

Activities and practices of making a sense of home, belonging or place-making stem from the human need to be in place (Cresswell 2008; Malkki 1995). As Massey notes, we actively engage in practices of place-making because places ‘are products of the society in which we live’ (1995: 50). The ways by which places are experienced and given meaning varies and, according to Weil, stem from the human desire to have roots (1987). Inhabitants of the same neighbourhood, house, city or refugee camp experience these places very differently. Desire, or need, to be grounded and find one’s place in the world determines the ways by which places are experienced, as Weil explained:

To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul. It is one of the hardest to define. A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active, and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future (Weil 1987: 41).

Place-making necessitates engagement over time. Massey equates place with community, whereby it is from an engagement with a community in place that place derives its meanings (1994). Extending this further, the relation between place and identity is comparable to that that between the body and the self, whereby physical and personal identity are impossible to define separately (Casey 2010). In much the same light, the relationship between self and place is essential to the making of the self. Casey argues:

The relationship between self and place is not just one of reciprocal influence (that much any ecologically sensitive account would maintain) but also, more radically, of constitutive co-ingredience: each essential to the being of the other. In effect, there is no place without self and no self without place (2010: 694).

The extent to which the individual is rooted in representations, meanings and practices of place necessitates, within this context, an analysis that extends beyond territorial
conscriptions of place. Heidegger influenced crucially the theorisation of place in the social sciences, especially the works of humanist geographers and the development of place as a subject of study in the 1970s (see Cresswell 2008). His ontological approach to place inspired a philosophical shift in the very way place was theorised. For Heidegger, to be was to be ‘somewhere’; he described ‘dasein’ or ‘being there’. This is not meant in an abstract sense of being in a vacuum, but as being in place. Heidegger’s notion of dwelling is a way of being in the world by building and constructing a world. Dwelling does not simply mean the act of inhabiting a house, but to dwell in and construct a whole world to which one is attached (Cresswell 2008). In this sense, individuals not only create dwellings; they create places and worlds that inform not only how they relate to places, but also how they relate to each other. Understanding ‘human “being” and understanding place are one and the same’ (Malpas 1999: 37). Constructed through one another, notions of self and place ‘grasp the particular place we are in as the particular person who we are’ (Casey 2000: 684). They act as tools to understand our own being and how it functions, interacts, experiences and perceives the world. ‘The new focus on place, therefore, attends to how we, as humans, are in-the-world – how we relate to our environment and make it into place’ (Cresswell 2008: 4).

The notion of being in place and feeling at home are especially complex for those denied access to their ancestral homes and homelands. In a letter, Edward Said described his feelings of exile as an incurable and permanent condition of ‘homelessness’, where he can only see ‘the entire world as a foreign land’ (1994: 366). Such representations of being ‘out of place’ in the world suggest that the feelings of homelessness would impede the ability or willingness for an individual to construct a sense of home or belonging to anywhere. Said describes his experience of being out of place in the world; the feeling stems not from being transient or foreign, but from the initial experience of exile, which he, as a Palestinian like many others, was never able to undo.

The protracted refugee situation in Lebanon has warranted various studies (Alln 2014; Peteet 2005, 1995; Hanafi and Knudsen. 2010). Allen (2013) and Sayigh (2010) investigated the complexity and paradoxes that exist within the conceptualisations of home among those to whom the homeland is denied, where feeling at home in Lebanon brings about an array of complications, and where rejection by the local Lebanese population is mirrored by Palestinian rejection as an attempt to preserve Palestinian identity.
As Sayigh argues, many Palestinian refugees define themselves as *duyuf* (guests) to describe their condition in Lebanon. The notion of *dayf* was a recurring theme in much of the conversations I had with camp residents. Those of the older generations would often reiterate their status as guests – and not permanent residents – of Lebanon.

Comparatively, it would be logical to take for granted that the naturalised (in accordance with policies of re-Lebanisation) feel at home and *in place* in Lebanon. It is not that simple. In what follows, I draw upon participants’ observations, expressions and narratives of home, place and belonging to unearth their conceptualisations of these concepts and to emphasise the emergence of alternative narratives.

**Notes on cultural translation (*beit/dar*)**

While I use words such as home, place and belonging interchangeably in this chapter and throughout this thesis, is important to note that the word for home or place as it is used in English does not exist in Arabic. As the majority of interviews were conducted in Arabic, this poses an important consideration concerning matters of translation. In English there is a distinction between ‘house’ and ‘home’ that does not exist in Arabic. In English, home is derived from *heim*, a word that means a group of dwellings, neighbourhood, or village (see Sayigh 2005). As Sayigh notes, home and house are collapsed into one term in Arabic, and translated to mean *beit*. In Arabic, however, *beit* (house) is very different from home, in that it does not convey the same intimate meaning it has in English. It is also important to note that the term *dar*, an alternative to *beit*, is only used by Palestinians in the region.

Both *dar* and *beit* refer to one’s (physical) house as well as one’s family name (Sayigh 2005). A common question for example is: ‘*Min beit meen*?’ It literally translates to ‘whose house are you from?’ It is actually a question regarding one’s family name, and could be translated as: ‘What is your family name?’ I was frequently asked this question by participants who, curious about my background, wanted to learn of my origins by learning my last name.

The extension of *dar/beit* to also mean family name illustrates the role of the house as a place of gathering and a stronghold for the family. As Sayigh (2005) notes, Arabic has *manzel*, a term equivalent to ‘house’, but that is not used in daily-life speech. There is little difference between *beit* and *dar*, except that the latter often indicates social importance, and is used a polite expression. Palestinians tend to use *dar* both for the
single household and the larger, more important, family unit, whereas the Lebanese tend to use beit. This extension of beit/dar to also mean family implies a connotation of permanence, security and continuity. Sayigh (2005) draws out the differences between beit/dar and the English ‘home’ to suggest that the former does not have connotations of enclosure or privacy and instead evokes a sense of sharing common spaces. Beit does not connote a sense of ‘origin’, whereas home for example can be stretched to mean ‘homeland’ (Sayigh 2005: 19). In Arabic, ‘homeland’ stems from another word ‘watan’.

Bearing this in mind, it is important also to note that usage of the word ‘hayat’ (life) by many of my informants resonates with the ways in which ‘home’ is used in English. In stating that they have established a hayat for themselves in Lebanon, as Firas explained, for example, reflected practices through which individuals establish a sense of home in a place over time. ‘Hayatna hone’ (our life is here) – was uttered by many participants when describing their relation with Lebanon. It implied an element of time and continuity, whereby life was ongoing and experienced in a particular place over a lengthy period of time. However, there is a distinction to be made between describing one’s life in a place, and belonging to a place. Belonging, or intima in Arabic, necessitates a deep relation and identification with a particular place, in this case with Lebanon as a country, or regions or villages therein. Whereas one’s hayat (life) can be in a particular place for a prolonged period of time, they may not feel intima to that place.

It is also worthy of note that the majority of participants referred to their house/home/family as ‘beit’, but one in particular did not. During the interview, Firas, a first-generation naturalised man in his mid-eighties, disclosed that he was able to visit his family’s home in Akka in 1994, during the brief period following the Oslo Accords when borders were accessible. In describing the visit, Firas spoke about his family’s house which he visited with his wife and daughter. He referred to the house as ‘darna fi filastin [our dar in Palestine]’. Later, in the same conversation, he referred to his ‘beit’ in Beirut. Firas did not appear to be aware that he was making this distinction, as it was made in passing while describing the experience of ‘return’. However, appropriating the distinctly Palestinian term ‘dar’ to refer to the house in Palestine only implies a sense of attachment that extends beyond the physicality of the house itself, and conveys a deeper connection.
Village/town/city in Lebanon as a determinants of identity

The question: ‘Where are you from?’ as is used by the Lebanese is distinguishable from ‘Where do you live?’ or ‘Where were you born?’ This question, which is asked frequently in social encounters, refers to the place from which one’s family originates.

Another commonly used variation enquires about one’s asl (origin or root), and is often asked when the answer one has provided is insufficient or unconvincing. While many residents of Beirut were born in the city, and often times their parents were also born there, when asked where they are from, most would refer to the village or city from which their families originated.

Under the French mandate, a law was put into place that prevented alterations in place of registry for Lebanese citizens. As we have seen, the population registry in Lebanon is called nufoos, and under this law no changes to family or individual’s nufoos were permitted. While such laws were abolished in France, they remain in operation in Lebanon today. This law means that, even though an individual is born and has lived elsewhere in the country for a generation or more, their nufoos remain tied to the place from which their family originated. This is often regarded as a strategy to prevent people from certain religious sects from voting in the city’s districts.

Institutionally, this policy was a strategy to keep voters confined. On a social level, it worked to maintain connections with places of origin and preserve social ties and networks. The centrality of the village as a determinant of identity peaked during the civil war, when many moved permanently to their respective villages in order to seek shelter from war-torn areas. Also, militia groups protected their villages from outside forces, which further gave them prominence during the civil war. Every Lebanese appears to have a physical place from which her or his families have originated. Being a true ‘Lebanese’ always necessitates that one’s ancestry be rooted in a specific place.

For these reasons, region, city or village of origin are integral to self-identification in Lebanon. While many move to the capital, and have been there for several generations, rituals such as weddings, funerals and other significant life events continue to take place in villages or towns from which the families originated.

According to Joseph (2000), the prominent role of the village and city in Lebanese rhetoric is rooted in the state’s policy to bind individuals to specific locations. As a newly established nation-state, Lebanese political elites aimed at fostering national
consciousness and sense of belonging among their citizenry; at the core of this was the establishment of a connection to the territory, which materialised through myths of kinship and primordial connections to locations within modern-day Lebanon (Joseph 2000). This rhetoric extended to naturalisation policies, as discussed in the previous chapter, whereas Palestinians wishing to acquire Lebanese citizenship were required to conform to policies aimed at linking their ancestry to locations in Lebanon.

Thus, the potency of the village or city of origin as a determinant of Lebanese identity posed a ‘problem’ for naturalised Palestinians. The policies of tawtin aimed to rectify this issue by proclaiming their ancestry to villages and towns through the strategy of re-Lebanisation. Naturalised Palestinians were able to successfully fabricate their Lebanese ‘origins’ in order to attain citizenship. While this was successful on an institutional level (i.e. they acquired citizenship), various issues arose socially. This was made evident by Reina, for example, when she described the inability ‘to map’ herself in Lebanon:

People in Lebanon are very particular when they ask where you’re from. They are not satisfied when you respond with saying that you’re from Beirut. Although I was born here and my dad was born here, they still keep prying, but where is your family from? Where do your grandparents live? They often want to know which religious sect you belong to. People here know the exact village and street they’re from. Each family is from a particular place, and people – especially the older generation – know exactly where that is just by hearing your last name. There are Qassems [Reina’s last name] who are from Sidon by the way, but we’re not related to them. I’m not from Sidon, I’ve only been there a few times in my life so I definitely can’t say that I’m from there … Before I used to stick to my story and say Beirut, much to their dissatisfaction. But now I just say that I’m originally Palestinian just to save myself the headache.

Now in her late thirties, Reina most often resorts to telling others of her Palestinian origins as she anticipates the scrutiny she will face if she chooses not to do so. It was this questioning by others that prompted Reina to state that she was of Palestinian ‘origin’. This has made her ‘more aware’ of the importance of her origins. As a third-generation naturalised, Reina went on to explain that she did not identify with being Palestinian. Born and raised in Beirut, she described herself as a ‘Beirut girl with Palestinian origins’. However, it was when ‘others’ questioned and challenged her belonging to Beirut as a place of belonging that this became a challenge. Cresswell (2009) emphasises the importance of recognition of belonging by others. As he argues, the ability for one to feel ‘in place’ rests largely on recognition by others.
Originally from Jaffa, Reina’s grandparents arrived to Lebanon in 1948 and bought their home in the city’s western suburbs. She described Jaffa as a place she knew very little about, and one she did not wish to visit. ‘My home is here and there is nothing for me there.’ Sometime later, during our conversation, Reina described herself as very ‘hot tempered’ [Arabic: hot-blooded], and when asked why, she stated, ‘My cousins often say that I’m so feisty and strong because of my Palestinian blood. Palestinian women are known for being very strong [smiles].’

As a child, Reina spent a lot of time with her grandmother. Born in Jaffa, her grandmother would sometimes bring up stories from her own childhood and tell her grandchildren of life in the blad (the country). Reina recalls a time when her grandmother summoned all the grandchildren to watch a program on television showing historical images of Jaffa. Her grandmother cried as she watched the screen. As Reina explained:

Watching her reaction was tough to handle. We were all silent and just sat her watching the television. What a beautiful place. I guess you can’t help but feel something when you see such images of a place that could have been yours had things turned out differently.

According to Hirsch, post-memory describes the relationship of the second generation to traumatic experiences that often preceded their birth (1999). Her work focuses on the remembrance of the holocaust by those who did not experience it themselves. Hirsch’s (1999) study of second-generation descendants of holocaust survivors found that, although they did not experience the actual event, their post-memory was constructed as an experience in its own right. As her research revealed, traumatic events were lived and relived through post-memories that, although not experienced by the second generation, were as harrowing as they were for those who lived them. Reina expressed difficulty in seeing her grandmother’s reaction, as a result of which she felt a deeper connection to her grandmother’s birthplace.

Association with a village of origin constitutes a focal point upon which Lebanese identity is established. Subtle references to places of origin act as social determinants of individual characteristics. These include region-specific dialect, accent and demeanor. Those from the Bekaa Valley, for example, are sometime mocked for their rough accent and tough attitude. In many ways, the village or place of origin is a nodal point, and is used to categorise and label. While Reina did not refer to herself as a Palestinian, she
nevertheless linked her characteristics with her Palestinian origins, which worked to deepen her ancestral connection to a historical place. This was not a place she identified with, nor was it a place she referred to as ‘home’. It defined her nonetheless.

Geographic association with specific locations in Lebanon provides avenues for identification. For example, learning that an individual is from South Lebanon often means that they are of the Shiite sect; they are often presumed to owe political allegiance to one of the two religio-political parties dominant in the south, Amal or Hizbullah. For the naturalised, the absence of roots in Lebanon means they cannot be easily categorised. Very importantly in Lebanon, it also means that their religion remains unknowable.

The absence of roots in Lebanon also left some feeling excluded from social practices and traditions that revolve predominantly around place. These include cultural practices such as village visits on weekends, religious or cultural celebrations or familial networks that were established with reference to place of origin. As a naturalised Palestinian in his mid-twenties, Sam explained how the absence of a place of origin in Lebanon resulted in him feeling ‘different’ to his peers while growing up:

I must’ve been eight or nine when I realised that I was different. I went to primary school in Beirut, and every Monday all of my classmates would come back with stories of their Sundays spent in the village. Most people who live in Beirut are not actually from Beirut, they come from towns and villages outside of it. So, on Sundays, they would go and visit their family in the village, and the kids in my class would come back with stories of playing outside with their cousins, climbing hills, and all sorts of adventures they had … being Palestinian, I had no village in Lebanon to return to, and on weekends, I had no grandparents to go visit and I had no stories to tell … at the end of the day, I’m not Lebanese no matter how long I live here. I’m always going to be from somewhere else.

Conceiving difference between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ is central to the construction of political and cultural identity (Hall 2001; Benhabib 1996; Gilroy 1997; Weeks 1990; Anthias 1998; Seidman 1997). This perceived notion of difference cast naturalised individuals outside of the collective Lebanese ‘we’ and made them increasingly aware of their ‘otherness’ and of their Palestinianess. Sam became increasingly aware of his ‘otherness’ through observing the difference between himself and his Lebanese counterparts. At the centre of these experiences was the absence of belonging and attachment to a specific location in Lebanon, which in turn made Sam acutely aware that his ‘place’ was always going to be ‘somewhere else’.

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The experience of Sam, Reina, and others who shared similar stories, illustrates how the absence of a sense of place in Lebanon led to feelings of ‘difference’, and contrasted expressions of belonging.

Randa, a second-generation naturalised woman in her late thirties, expressed a similar sentiment:

When I was younger I didn’t tell people that I was Palestinian. Not because I was ashamed or secretive, but because I didn’t really identify with Palestinian culture. I was born here, as were my parents. As far as I was concerned, we were Lebanese and I was from Lebanon; Beirut was the only home I had ever known, and there was no need to say otherwise. I remember feeling at home here. As I was getting older, I became more aware of society … They were unsatisfied when I said that I was from Beirut – the Beiruti families are well known and I was not one of them. My last name is Ehdayat, which is clearly not Lebanese. So their questions would not stop, they would go on and on with their questions until I’d tell them where I was really from. Only then would they be satisfied. You can’t belong to a place when everyone else is reminding you and telling you that you don’t belong. Now I say that I’m Palestinian right away.

Like Reina, Randa also attributed her struggle to feel at home in Lebanon to the constant scrutiny to which her Lebanese identity was exposed. She expressed a reluctance to express her identification with Lebanon as her home, because others did not always recognise it as such. Randa, in fact, wished to feel a sense of belonging and attachment to Lebanon. Yet, constant questioning about her origins made this very difficult, and eventually led to a shift in her understanding and her willingness to identify as Lebanese. With time, she asserted her Palestinian identity more and more. Despite being a citizen and being born in Lebanon, her Lebanese identity was a topic that necessitates further investigation by others. Having to repeatedly disclose her origins led Randa and many others who had similar encounters, to become aware of their ‘other’, their Palestinian identity. A sense of belonging to a place necessitates that others also recognise this belonging. It is when others do not recognise one’s right to belong that the question of belonging becomes problematic.

In a country established upon myths of kinship and shared bloodlines, family names and geographical origin are central themes upon which Lebanese society is structured (Joseph 2000). The question of one’s origins penetrates daily encounters in Lebanon, whereby a process of family mapping and routing will often take place during first-time encounters. Upon informing others of one’s last name, it is not uncommon to be asked if
the person is related to an individual, often a prominent political figure or a socialite who shares the same name. At other times, this process of mapping occurs with questions about the region one is from: ‘are you the Haji family of Sidon or Tripoli?’ Lebanese family names are associated with specific regions of the country, and in many cases the names denote religious or sectarian affiliation. The naturalised do not readily ‘fit in’. Randa speaks about her own experience; instances when her Lebanese identity was questioned work to ‘remind you that are not really from here’.

Marriage stories

The absence of a Lebanese village of origin as an impediment to feeling a sense of place or belonging in Lebanon was referred to by most participants, especially the women. Most importantly, their belonging was challenged by constant scrutiny. This was made apparent in particular when references were made to life events. The issue of marriage, for example, was one theme that featured the question of origins and family history. The women with whom I met were most conscious of the importance of the link between origins and roots and marriage.

Alia and I were both unmarried at the time of our meeting. Both 27-year-olds at the time, we had faced similar experiences with regard to the issue of marriage. The majority of women in Beirut, and in particular educated women of the middle class make their own decision regarding who and when to marry. Yet, as is the case in many Arab countries, it is not uncommon for family members and friends to try to connect women and men of marriageable age with potential suitors. Alia described her experience:

When it comes to getting married, when people want to introduce you to a possible suitor, they match you with someone who shares a similar background and preferably comes from the same region in the country, because each area here has its own traditions and customs. For example, in the North, the bride covers the wedding expenses while in the south it’s the opposite … even among Palestinians [i.e. refugees] here they all know each other and marriage is easier for them, they have a network and matches are made through this network. But we [i.e. the naturalised] don’t belong to this community, and we don’t have a community of our own. When it comes to us, I feel as though people here don’t know how and where to place us … we’re not quite Lebanese and we’re not part of the Palestinian network … My sister and I are both single and many people often joke that it’s going to be impossible to find us a husband who is just like us.
Alia’s statement conveys an account of when she – as a naturalised Palestinian woman – experiences a dilemma when others do not regard her as belonging to either category with which she identified. She was not deemed Lebanese enough to be suited with a Lebanese man or Palestinian enough to be matched with a Palestinian. Lack of recognition impeded her ability to feel in place. For some of my informants, it was being cast as the ‘other’ that allow them to become more aware of themselves as Palestinians. In many ways, their inability to feel at home emerged from their inability to ‘belong’ to the communities associated with their places. For Massey (1995) community and place go hand in hand; this correspondence is at the core of the relation individuals establish with ‘place’. Alia’s ability to belong was challenged; she was made aware of her ‘otherness’ through this exclusion.

Alia’s self-awareness as a Palestinian reflected perceptions of others. She was told where she was from by those who did not see her as belonging in the ways they did. This left her feeling excluded and challenged her claims to belonging. It also meant that belonging was not merely a matter of citizenship. It extended beyond that to include social acceptance and recognition.

My accent is a result of travels and living abroad for most my life, shuffled between Kuwait and the United States. My accent is distinctly neither Lebanese nor Palestinian, and is often confused for being Syrian. I do not mind this myself. I’m actually quite proud that I’ve somehow managed to amalgamate both my identities in the way I speak. Among Palestinians I’m thought to be Lebanese and among the Lebanese I’m labelled as the one with an odd accent. It has been a recurring issue in my life in Lebanon where people place much emphasis on one’s accent. The reasons for this are sociopolitical. Social class and sect can often be determined by accents in Lebanon, where Sunnis of Beirut have a distinct accent compared to Druze and Shiites. This is easily determined. Despite the country’s small size, accents are quite distinct. This confused accent is shared by members of family who are also are constantly asked where they are from. I’m often told that my accent is ‘ghareebbeh’ [foreign], which de facto makes me a ‘ghareeba’ [foreigner] as well.

I met with sisters Nadia and Nora in their house in Beirut after we were introduced through a mutual friend. Third-generation naturalised Palestinians aged 28 and 35, the sisters were born and raised in Beirut and had spent the majority of their lives there. Nadia described her life in Beirut as ‘very unstable because of the political situation’.
Instability had led Nadia to search for jobs elsewhere, and when we met she was in the process of applying to move to the US permanently. Nora did not have plans to leave, and was planning on staying in Lebanon indefinitely. As three unmarried women at the time, we shared similar experiences of being unwed in a society that places emphasis on marriage. Nadia was interested in speaking about marriage, and in explaining why she was unmarried, she stated:

It’s hard to find someone here who shares my values. I want to raise my kids with a strong Palestinian identity, though I wasn’t raised like that myself. My mother is Syrian, so if anything, we were brought up more Syrian than Palestinian. But I want them [i.e. my future children] to know and be proud that their mother is from what was Palestine and this [Lebanon] isn’t her watran … it’s hard to find a Lebanese man that would be supportive of this and would share my views … I’m not one to shy away from my identity, and I need a man who gets it and haven’t found one till now. My aunt used to always tell me when I was about to meet an arees [suitor], ‘keep your political views to yourself! Don’t scare him away!’ I never listened [laughs].

Nadia stated that the above was only one of the issues she had faced in finding a possible suitor. Yet, in positing her Palestinian identity as an important factor in this respect illustrated Nadia’s current identification as a Palestinian and the importance she ascribed to her origin in shaping her future. Despite being born and raised in Lebanon, Nadia’s self-awareness was rooted in her Palestinian identity and the assertion that her roots and watran were elsewhere.

There are also naturalised individuals who wish to avoid confrontation. Jad (see above) decided not to disclose his origins to his wife’s family when asking for her hand in marriage, as he anticipated that his wife’s politically conservative Maronite family could have regarded his Palestinian origins negatively. Unlike Nadia, Jad did not identify with being Palestinian; his home was in Lebanon, and so the question of disclosing his origins was not negotiated vis-à-vis his national consciousness.

**Situating ‘home’ in a political context**

The question of home, and the place to which one belongs and identifies, have become increasingly complex with increased transience (Basch et al. 2001). For people growing up in different counties or cities, with families dispersed in the diaspora, or for those fleeing persecution, the concept of home is inevitably fraught. For Palestinians, and for the naturalised in particular, unearthing the process involved in constructing notions of
home necessitates taking into account the exilic Palestinian experiences and the real political implications that being at home in, or belonging to Lebanon would have. For the Palestinians in particular, notions of home and belonging are political. Would it be possible for a Palestinian to ever be fully at home anywhere in the diaspora?

A first-generation naturalised Palestinian in his late sixties, Nabil, described his home in the following words: ‘My whole life is in Lebanon. It comes with its difficulties, but I can’t think of living elsewhere … but even after all this life that has passed, I still sometimes feel like a ghareeb [foreigner] here.’

‘Ghareeb’ is rooted in the Arabic work ghurba, which refers to the feeling an individual has when away from their home. It can refer to the experience of entering a new family, where a new daughter-in-law may be made to feel like a ghareeba, as opposed to being part of the family, or being in a new or foreign place to which the person does not belong. Nabil felt like a ghareeb. Born in 1948, he arrived to Lebanon as a newborn, carried on his mother’s back. His inability, or perhaps unwillingness, to fully belong and feel at home became a permanent condition. The birthplace on his passport served as a constant reminder of his eternal ghurba. Born in the Galilee, he was always reminded that Lebanon was not his homeland, although it was all he had ever known in his life. Nabil’s ghurba was not expressed as a struggle to fit in. His ‘foreignness’ was not reflected in a different accent or distinguishable features. It was a feeling he carried with him, a constant reminder of his otherness and that the homeland is always elsewhere.

When asked where or when he felt most at home, Zeyad, a naturalised Palestinian in his late twenties, smiled and said that he was ‘worried this question would come up’. He struggled to respond:

I do not feel at home anywhere in the world, maybe as a Palestinian we [sic] can never feel at home anywhere. It’s a tough question for me. I don’t know how to explain it … I do not belong to this place because Lebanon does not need me. There is a place called Lebanon that everyone in the world knows, it’s on a map … but Palestine needs me to continue to say that I’m Palestinian … maybe if one day there ever is a Palestine, then I will stop saying that I’m Palestinian.

Zeyad’s narrative of belonging is underpinned by the notion of ‘need’. As a recognised state with sovereign borders, Lebanon does not need him in the way that ‘Palestine’ does. Zeyad makes a distinction between home and belonging, whereby although he does not feel at home anywhere in the world, he is nevertheless able to belong. His narrative of belonging, however, is framed within a political context that accounts for
the current political struggle. It reflects current conditions in Israel/Palestine, where Palestinians are yet to receive statehood, and it speaks to the continuity of Palestinian identity despite *tawtin*. As a third-generation naturalised Palestinian, Zeyad’s expressions were reflective of current political (and cultural) conditions. It was because of the current political situation that Zeyad expressed the need to belong and assert his belonging to Palestine. Determined and negotiated vis-à-vis current political conditions, Zeyad regarded his own identity as a component in the greater Palestinian struggle. The assertion of his Palestinian-ness was not only determined by current political conditions, but also framed as a contribution to the broader political struggle.

For Palestinians today, especially those born in the diaspora and perhaps even more so for naturalised citizens, attachment, loyalty and belonging are complex and multi-dimensional. These expressions have real political and cultural implications. Zeyad’s words were not merely emotive; they were rooted in political consciousness and in his desire to contribute to the continuity of the Palestinian struggle. Countering the consequences of naturalisation through the preservation and continuity of Palestinian-ness became paramount.

When asked about her feelings of *intima* (belonging), Fadwa, a 49-year-old second-generation naturalised woman stated: ‘For my generation who lived during the civil war, the question of *intima* wasn’t one to be taken lightly. During the war you needed to be very clear about which side you were on. And my side has always been very clear.’ In the recent history of Lebanon, the importance of belonging and the ‘group’ to which one belonged and identified was perhaps most prominent during the lengthy civil war that spanned over a period of 15 years (1975–1990). While, for most in Lebanon, the ‘group’ referred to the religious sect to which one belonged, for the Palestinians this ‘group’ was of political and not religious nature. Both Christian and Muslim Palestinians took up arms for common goals.

Fadwa’s father was born in Akka and arrived in Lebanon in late 1947. As the oldest of five siblings, he began working at 17. The family was naturalised shortly after, as they had been wealthy merchants in Akka, ‘which eased the processes’, as Fadwa explained. She was the only one of her four siblings who ‘was politically conscious from a young age’. Fadwa was a second-year university student in Beirut when the war broke out:

I would always listen in on my uncles’ conversations about politics, and would ask my aunts endless questions about our house in Akka. They didn’t speak much, and
I remember once my aunt politely asked me to stop asking her. I knew it was too painful for her … When clashes began in 1975, we thought it would be over in a matter of days. But as it went on, things started to get serious, and they began targeting the Palestinians more and more. We never hid the fact that we were Palestinian, but our IDs were Lebanese; we had the passport, so we were never under any direct threat. As far as anyone was concerned, we were Lebanese … But when the war finally broke out, I found myself joining a Palestinian national hizb [faction]. It was immediate and very natural, I just found myself joining. I didn’t join the Lebanese ahzab [factions]. There was no choice to be made, I didn’t have to sit down and contemplate what to do, should I join this party or that party? Do I go to a Lebanese or a Palestinian group? Not at all. My cousin Ghaida, who was also very politically oriented, was able to overcome the family issues and join the movements, she did all for the sake of the struggle. She was my ultimate idol, so when she came to educate me about what was happening it was something very normal for me to join. As much as I feel Lebanese, and my roots are strong with my mother’s family and tariq al jdeedeh [the neighbourhood she grew up in] the decision to join the Palestinian forces was the easiest one I ever took – no it wasn’t a decision, Kan juz’ min ma kutib ’ala jasadi (it was part of what has been written on my body)’ [she pauses] Maybe [it is] because the Lebanese have a state and the Palestinians don’t?

Belonging was more than a question of identity for Fadwa. While belonging (intima) is often associated with identifying with a community (see Massey 1995), for Fadwa it extended beyond narrow bounds, and reached the whole of the Palestinian struggle. When her identity and intima were put into question during the civil war, her decision was to align herself with the struggle. Fadwa and Zeyad’s narrative make it apparent that belonging extends beyond relations with place. Politics invariably shape its negotiation.

In a similar sentiment, when explaining how her parents met, Tamara, a third-generation naturalised Palestinian in early thirties, stated: ‘They were both very politically active. During the war they both joined one of the Palestinian factions. They met at one of the faction’s meetings, I believe.’ Tamara’s mother was Christian, her father Muslim, and both her parents were second-generation naturalised Palestinians. ‘I think my father took up arms during the war, but it’s not something we like to talk about much in our family.’ Tamara did not wish to speak much about her parents’ role in the war. Perhaps it conjured negative memories, or perhaps she did not have more information to share about what happened. When asked what she thought of their decision to join the Palestinian armed factions, she responded: ‘Who else were they going to align themselves with? Christian parties who were killing Palestinians?’
Tamara was a self-proclaimed activist. She had worked with Palestinian refugees as a tutor for many years and documented the lives of Palestinians in the camps in a collection of essays she was looking to publish. We had met during our time as tutors in the camp many years ago. She introduced herself as a Palestinian to those she met. Tamara’s intima was political. She identified and empathised strongly with Palestinian refugees and Palestinians in Israel/Palestine. The question of her belonging to Lebanon, like Zeyad’s, was framed within a political context and constructed in relation to the experience of her parents: ‘My grandparents and parents were willing to put their lives on the line for the [Palestinian] cause. It’s only a matter of luck that my father is still alive … I carry this so deep within me.’

Her parents’ experiences shape and contribute to her narrative of belonging and identification. She respects their political positions and identifies strongly with the cause though their experiences as well as her own. In her words, she described her home as ‘politically conscious’ and growing up in such an environment greatly contributed to shaping her own perceptions and narratives of belonging.

The question of intima is bonded to expressions of identity. For many, the notion of belonging crystallised vis-à-vis a political context in which it was to the Palestinian struggle that they expressed their belonging, and not to a community or particular place. In this sense, these individuals imagined themselves as a part of a Palestinian collective and community. Belonging to an imagined community can reflect a sense of national belonging that is common to people struggling for a nation state (Abu El-Hajj 2007). The ‘community’ is only ‘imagined’ because members of even the smallest ‘nation’, be it territorial or de-territorialised such as the Palestinian case, will never know one another, meet, or even hear of their fellow members. This idea of an imagined community references the ways that nations are constructed and reimagined through discourse and political practice (Anderson 1983, Anderson 1991). As Anderson concluded, and as my informants confirmed, only in ‘the minds of each lives the image of their communion’ (Anderson 1999: 49).

**Discrimination: an imagined community**

The question that community participants identified with was not one that was clearly demarcated among the naturalised, especially those of the younger generations (i.e. individuals born and raised in Lebanon). When asked questions pertaining to which
‘group’ (i.e. Palestinian or Lebanese) they belonged to, many of my informants struggled to answer. The most common response was ‘neither’. Notions of belonging and expressions of home are shifting and changing. They are constructed vis-à-vis encounters, experiences, feelings, and within political and social contexts. Notions of identification are as bounded to the physicality of place as they are to identification and association with the communities associated with those places (see Massey 1994). The peripheries of these places and the perceived belonging to communities within them are not fixed. Instead, what determines the inside (in-group) from the outside (out-group) is in a constant state of flux, negotiation and renegotiation. A sense of a common belonging and identity is always particular; it rests primarily on a ‘we’ that dangerously depends on marking the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Gilroy 1997).

For many of the naturalised, the ‘us’ and ‘them’ were fluid and flexible. Most importantly, they were not contingent solely on legal status. Bilal explained that while he once felt ‘at home’ in Lebanon, this had changed significantly in the past few years. Now in his early twenties, Bilal spoke about his recent ‘political awareness’:

Growing up here, I knew that we were Palestinian but that didn’t matter much. This was home to me, and I think as a child you don’t really think much about big issues. You just live your day to day [sic]. Things are different now. I don’t feel the sense of home in the way I once did. As a Palestinian it’s hard for us to call this place home when you see how we are treated here … I’m part of the Palestinian society club at university, which is something I never thought would happen.

Bilal spent several weeks volunteering at a refugee camp in Beirut, and hoped to continue to work with refugees. ‘I feel that it’s my duty as a Palestinian to help’, he explained. In his early twenties, like other younger participants, Bilal was undergoing a process of discovering and learning about his own identity, and making sense of what it meant to him to be a naturalised Palestinian. He was impacted by the institutional discrimination that targeted Palestinian (refugees) in Lebanon, which for him posed an impediment to his ability to belong: ‘how can I belong to a place that won’t even let Palestinians work?’

The shifting and unstable nature of the notion of home was made most evident for many through instances of discrimination that targeted Palestinian refugees, or targeted them as naturalised Palestinians. For Bilal, it was in seeing firsthand the dire conditions in which Palestinian refugees reside and the daily discrimination they face that
problematised his willingness and ability to belong to Lebanon. Dania, a 29-year-old second-generation naturalised Palestinian, experienced an episode of discrimination several years ago. It had a long lasting impact:

I was once buying a sandwich from a small shop in Mar Mikhael [a historically Armenian area of Beirut]. The man asked me where I was from, I think it was because of my accent; I have a bit of a Palestinian accent. I said that I was Palestinian … he became immediately uncomfortable … he rushed my order and said, ‘You should be thankful every day that there is a place like Lebanon for you to live.’ I was so upset; I walked out crying I didn’t even get to eat my sandwich [laughs]. Thankfully, I had my friend Dena with me who calmed me down. I had never experienced such an encounter before, and I haven’t since this incident. I mean, sometimes people will give a look of disapproval when I say that I’m Palestinian, especially when they know that I’m a Lebanese citizen, but that’s about it … these experiences change you, they change how you see this country … That area is predominantly Armenian, and I think that there were clashes there during the civil war between them and the PLO; I’m certain that had something to do with that man’s response … When I say that I’m Palestinian, some people ask if I have Lebanese or other citizenship, perhaps it’s because I speak fluent English or that I dress like a Westerner. Maybe it is because I do not fit into their image of what a Palestinian is.

While the episode Dania experienced had not been repeated, it influenced and shaped her perception of Lebanon, which she later described as a ‘hostile environment for Palestinians’. However, in describing herself as a Palestinian and referring to the treatment of Palestinian refugees, the boundaries between how she defined herself vis-à-vis the ‘other’, be it Palestinian or Lebanese, became unclear. It was unclear who the ‘the Palestinians’ she was referring to were, while she accorded the term to Lebanon’s refugee population, she also referred to herself as a Palestinian, and referred to ‘our Palestinian experience in Lebanon’ on several occasions. Her definition of ‘us’ was fluid; she was at the nexus of both categories, and at the same time did not belong fully to either. Dania, along with many others, did not readily refer to herself as a refugee: ‘Although I am a refugee, I don’t ever say that I am a refugee. I do not live the life of refugees so I can’t call myself one. What I live is fekr lujoo [a state of refugeehood] and that is very different.’

For Dania, the notion of being a refugee is an internal emotional state of being. It signifies a loss of a homeland, and place of origin to which she can no longer return. It is embodied in a diasporic liminal identity, of which the only characteristic shared by all is the inability to fit in. *Fekr lujoo*, as she described it was a state of being of which one
could not escape. While for some refugee status can be altered upon naturalisation, Dania spoke of a state of being that is permanent and cannot be alternated while away from one’s original homeland. *Fekr lujoo* is a permanent state of being that even the acquisition of citizenship is unable to alter. It is a lived experience in which one is constantly reminded of their loss, their ‘otherness’; and the homeland is always elsewhere. This was common to many Palestinians with whom I met. Feeling that home was always somewhere else was described by Dania as ‘the universal Palestinian experience’. Central to the refugee experience is the feeling of loss, which as Dania described was one of which she was constantly reminded.

Many of the naturalised did not focus on the boundaries separating the different groups and communities (i.e. Lebanese, Palestinian, refugee, naturalised), and negotiated themselves at the nexus or interplay between them. This absence of clearly demarcated boundaries has contributed to the symbolic redrawing of these categories, and ongoing processes of redefinition (Abu El-Hajj 2007). However, for many, the assertion of Palestinianness, and the inability to belong to Lebanon came about from a heightened awareness of the treatment of Palestinian refugees and the institutional discrimination they face. As Dania went on to explain: ‘Seeing the way we are treated here, it becomes very difficult to call this place home.’

Identifying with the Palestinians as the ‘in-group’, Dania regarded discrimination against Palestinian refugees as a form of discrimination of which she was the target. She did not face the legal and social discrimination to which refugees are subjected by virtue of her Lebanese citizenship and social class, yet that did not seem to matter. She framed herself as belonging to the Palestinian ‘other’ which meant that all that targeted Palestinian refugees as a group also targeted her. This speaks prominently to the notion of belonging and group membership. While these categories are negotiated and changing, they were primarily negotiated following experiences of discrimination.

In asserting her Palestinian identity to others, Dania challenged these existing categories of refugee versus citizen. As a result of her experiences, she regarded herself as part of a broader imagined Palestinian community, which was an integral component of her self-identification.

In her study of a Palestinian–American community in the post-9/11 era, Abu El-Hajj conducted extensive research on students in a school over a period of three years (2007). Many of the youth had been born and raised in the United States, but in light of the 9/11
aftermath many Muslim/Arab peoples became racialised as the enemy ‘other’ and cast outside of the imagined community of ‘Americans’. This was acutely experienced by youths at Americans schools. While it is important to note that there are significant differences between the case of naturalised Palestinians in America and those in Lebanon, especially with regard to the blurry boundaries between (naturalised) Palestinians and the ‘Lebanese’, there are also important parallels to be drawn. Abu El-Hajj found that notions of home and belonging shifted and were transformed by discrimination that targeted her informants as Arab/Muslim/Palestinians. As a consequence, many affirmed these identities and associations more strongly. Her informants also expressed an inability to belong and feel at home in the United States. Her informants aligned themselves with an imagined Palestinian community that included peers, family and individuals they knew, and with a national political struggle with which they had become strongly identified. Abu El-Hajj concluded:

For this Palestinian transnational community, border-crossing has not diminished a sense of national belonging or the longing for a nation-state; they maintain a strong connection to the imagined community of their ‘homeland’ … Thus, modern citizenship entails a contradiction: While the technologically enabled flow of goods, information, and people across borders weakens the salience of nation-states, the idea of belonging to a national community maintains a strong hold on the imagination (2007: 296).

Individuals who are racially or ethnically marginalised or oppressed in modern nation-states are often posited as less than ideal citizens, or as a perpetual ghareeb (Abu El-Hajj 2007; Hall 2002; Ladson-Billings 2004; Olsen 1997; Ong 1996). The symbolic construction of an imagined community is closely linked to the ability of individuals to exercise a full range of rights, and access to the social, political, cultural and economic spheres of nation-state (see Castles and Davidson 2000; Yuval-Davis et al. 2005). In imagining themselves as part of the wider imagined community of Palestinians, the legal and social marginalisation that targets Palestinian refugees become an impediment to belonging for the naturalised. My informants’ narratives suggested a shift in identification and expressions of belonging from ‘Lebanese’ to ‘Palestinian’ following encounters of discrimination that targeted them individually or their broader imagined ‘community’.

The manoeuvrability that participants expressed to move between both these categories suggests that belonging, once thought to be fixed, is contingent upon external and
internal factors. Discrimination has been identified as a primary factor upon which participants expressed reluctance and unwillingness to belong to a community that discriminated against Palestinians. While the Palestinianness of some was not pronounced when they were younger, their identification became more apparent upon exposure to discrimination they themselves faced (as Palestinians) or that which targeted other Palestinians. This shift between these communities emphasises their unfixed character on the first level, and on the second level indicates the implications experiences of discrimination have on identity negotiation.

**Conclusion**

*Tawtin* aimed at binding the naturalised to specific locations, even though they were artificially constructed. This chapter explored the extent to which this policy was successful at establishing a sentiment of belonging and a sense of place among the naturalised. This chapter demonstrates how these concepts are flexible and adaptable. It questioned the extent to which the naturalised feel ‘at home’ in Lebanon.

The chapter emphasises that, while an individual can feel at home or belong to a place, external recognition of belonging remains paramount. Many of the naturalised I spoke with had at some point felt a sense of home in Lebanon, but many questioned this belonging, were repeatedly asked about their origins, and had become increasingly aware of their ‘otherness’ as Palestinians. Many of the naturalised expressed an inability to fully belong. The village or city of origin is an important determinant of identity in Lebanon, the foundation upon which the Lebanese myth of origin was established. The absence of a place of belonging in modern territorial Lebanese posed an impediment to my informants’ ability to belong.

As was made evident by the narratives of many, concepts of belonging, place and home were not negotiated within a political vacuum. ‘Belonging’ to Lebanon was measured against its significance to the wider current political context, and many negotiated these categories vis-à-vis the wider Palestinian political discourse. ‘Home’, for many of the naturalised, was more than a feeling of security and peace; it was part and parcel of a wider political debate.

The question of belonging to Lebanon had political significance for Palestinians because it was perceived by many to undermine their Palestinianness – at the core of which is a connection to a historical homeland. The foundation of this relation rests on the
symbolic (i.e. cultural/social) dimensions of Palestinianess and on the need to return to the homeland. The next chapter investigates the ways in which the naturalised construe the right to return.
Chapter 7: The Right of Return: Generation, Symbolism and Justice

This chapter investigates how naturalised individuals conceptualise the notion of ‘homeland’. As noted, ‘home’ and ‘homeland’ are often used interchangeably. Yet, for people exiled from their native land, the notion of homeland becomes further complicated as they are unable to return to it. For a people that are prevented from returning or visiting their ancestral homelands, expressions of homeland are necessarily framed within a context of return. My interviews demonstrated that it is impossible to talk of the homeland without speaking of the Palestinian right of return. For most participants they are one and the same.

Current expressions of the right to return can be traced to Resolution 194 (see Chapter 1). The right of return fundamentally defines the Palestinian question. It is regarded as possibly the most significant hurdle preventing the resolution of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. Recent studies noted the emergence of various articulations of return that do not necessarily conform to the repatriation of all Palestinians (Bianchi 2014; Salih 2013; Richter-Devroe 2013; Sayigh 2010; Hanafi 2002). However, all of these studies have focused on refugee narratives. The narratives of the naturalised are understudied.

This neglect depends on conformity with the national rhetoric of tawtin that posits naturalisation and return as mutually exclusive. On this issue, nationalist Lebanese and Palestinians agree. It is for this reason that Lebanese political elites, and Palestinian political factions, oppose the prospect of naturalisation.

This chapter digresses from the legal definition (see Chapter 2) of return and sheds light on the individuality of return. The aim is twofold: first, to contribute to an understanding of the multiple ways in which return can be expressed, and second to highlight how experiences of exile shape these expressions.

An important consideration emerged from my interviews: generation. Expressions of the right of return depend crucially on the memory of exile. My analysis distinguishes participants into two broad generational categories: those who were born in historical Palestine and were adult in 1948, and those born in Lebanon. I refer to them as jeel filsatin [generation of Palestine] and jeel lubnan [generation of Lebanon] respectively.
The chapter begins by briefly presenting the dominant rhetoric that posits tawtin as the antithesis of return. The generational categorisation applied within this chapter is then discussed. The narratives of jeel filastin follow. For the majority of this generation, with little exception, return was articulated as a real and physical return to a homeland that they once knew and inhabited. This is juxtaposed with the narratives of jeel lubnan, in the next section. For the latter, return is imagined in different ways: visits, symbolic returns, restitution, and an undoing of collective injustice. More than half of the participants categorised here as jeel lubnan were not ‘young’, some were in their late forties and fifties, even sixties, they are sometimes referred to ‘as the younger generation’ as a way to differentiate between them and jeel filastin.

**Tawtin or return**

The events of 1948 were recognised by the international community as both a humanitarian and political crisis. The notion of return is routinely framed as the end of Israel as a ‘democratic Jewish state’, and all proposals that would undermine this majority are immediately rejected (Hanafi 2002; Aruri 2001; Khalidi 1992). Yet the link between physical and political dispossession helps to explain why the right of return was always the central demand of the Palestinian refugees, the Palestinian political factions, and the Arab states.

Resolution 194 (see Chapter 1) articulated an understanding of return as a process premised on consent, peace and recognition (Long 2013). Importantly, as Long points out, the resolution addressed refugees as private individuals, and not as a national collective (2013: 75). As she points out,

> While this approach offered protection to Russian refugees from an over-reaching Soviet state, a failure to acknowledge Palestinian national or political rights ignored the importance attached by the Palestinian population to their collective identity, or their belief in their right to uphold their own claim to national self-determination (2013: 73).

However, questions of sovereignty, citizenship and national claims to territory were sidestepped, as refugees were encouraged to return to a hypothetical non-political ‘home’, in which stability and peace would be maintained with their ‘neighbours’. On the contrary, as Khalidi points out, the idea of return developed over time into the idea of ‘the total liberation of Palestine’ (1992: 33), in which return was conjoined with liberation. The national slogan ‘*hatta al-awada wal tahrir*’ (‘until return and liberation’)

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exemplifies this approach. As Long argues, it was after the PLO recognised and accepted UN resolutions as a basis for the legitimate settlement of the conflict that the focus on the abstract collective *moral* right to return was separated from the actual process of return (Masalha 2010).

The Palestinian leadership thus distinguished between return as a moral (and symbolic) right to which all Palestinians are entitled, and the physical manifestation of this right. As Masalha (2010) argues, reaching a peace settlement by removing Palestinian refugees from the political equation was deemed necessary by the Israeli state in the 1950s, and it was the policy that was pursued. Maintaining a Jewish majority – Israel’s *raison d’etre* – is the premise upon which repatriation was and continues to be denied.

The notion of return within Palestinian national rhetoric is inextricably bounded with notions of sovereignty, national determination and recognition of collective exile. So much so, that to be Palestinian is to wish to return. It is for this reason that any discussion, scholarly or otherwise, that digresses from this rhetoric and suggests alternatives to the definition of return – as the complete and total repatriation of all Palestinians to an ancestral homeland – has been regarded as an attempt to undermine the Palestinian right to self-determination. Sari Nusseibah, previously the Palestinian Authority’s diplomatic representative in Jerusalem, prompted a heated debate when he declared that, in the prospective framework of a two-state solution, the existing demands for the right of refugees to return would not be feasible (see Hanafi 2002). Nusseibah’s statement backfired, even if it merely reiterated Palestinian Authority existing policies. As Hanafi argues:

> Even in the framework of a two-state solution, Nusseibeh did not adequately evaluate the centrality of the right of return. There are two dimensions to the right of return: symbolic and material … Palestinians returning to Jewish Israel, he sees mainly the material dimension. By contrast, Edward Said sees mainly the symbolic dimension with his concept of mutual pardon or forgiveness (2002: 1)

Hanafi argues for the importance of clarifying what is meant by return. Al-Husseini and Bocco (2009), conversely, highlight the role played by UNRWA. They frame UNRWA as an impediment to return, and note that its ostensibly apolitical role was counterproductive, especially when compared to the role played by the UN in other crises where it pursued repatriation. In the aftermath of exile, the apolitical role played by UNRWA contributed to undermine return as a possible solution to the refugee crisis (Al-Husseini and Bocco 2009). The agency, which was established to aid Palestinians
but not to find solutions to their exile, only acted on behalf of international donor states. The latter favoured resettlement. However, the Arab, and later the Palestinian leaders continued to publicly advocate for the return of the Palestinians as the only feasible solution to the crisis and the only possible expression of national self-determination. The exception to this was Jordan, which was the only state to grant citizenship to the majority of its Palestinian refugee population. The Lebanese state, with the exception of the naturalisation of a relatively small number of refugees in the 1950s (and later in 1994) continued to advocate for the Palestinian right of return.

In a national address, former president Emile Lahoud stated, ‘We cannot accept a settlement [tawtin] without … the sacred right of the Palestinian refugees to their land’ (cited in Haddad 2003: 471). This position has been echoed by Christian and Sunni leaders since the arrival of Palestinians to Lebanon in 1948. Former Sunni prime ministers Salim Al-Hoss and Rafic Hariri opposed tawtin, as it would eliminate the ‘sacred’ right to return (Haddad 2004; see also Salam 1994). Secretary-general of the Shiite party Hezbollah Hasan Nasrallah, a self-proclaimed supporter of Palestinian self-determination and struggle, has also expressed a similar position:

First, regarding resettlement plans [tawtin] we are with the rest of the Lebanese and with the rest of the Palestinians in rejecting the resettlement plans although the Palestinians are our dear brothers. The natural thing is for the Palestinians to return to their land in Palestine (quoted in Hajjaj 2005: 15).

Lebanon’s political elites, according to Haddad, posit their support for return as a justification for their decision not to naturalise or grant rights to Palestinian refugees (Haddad 2004, 2003: Petteet 1995). This position, however, was criticised as a veneer masking the true intention of Lebanese political elites, which is to eliminate its ‘Palestinian problem’. Denial of rights and access are understood by Palestinians as a soft strategy to push them out of Lebanon. According to Khalili, the ardent support by Lebanese political elites for the Palestinian right of return is ‘less about principle [and more] about eviction of Palestinians from Lebanon’ (2007: 2)

Furthermore, Palestinian political factions have also opposed tawtin since their establishment in the early 1960s, arguing that resettlement would eliminate the ‘sacred and inalienable’ right to return to the homeland (Petteet 2005). According to this rhetoric, haqq al-hawda is incompatible with tawtin. This position was also criticised. Whereas maintaining refugee status enables factions to maintain authority over refugees, the
‘sanctity of return’ as purported by the Palestinian factions is part of a strategy to maintain their leadership role in the camps (Richter-Devroe, 2013).

As a proposed solution to the refugee crisis, tawtin continues to be contested in Palestinian circles. A reason for this is that it is deemed favourable to Israel and international donor states looking to alleviate themselves from responsibility towards the Palestinians (Hanafi and Knudsen 2010). Tawtin is perceived by Palestinian refugees to solely be in the interest of those who promote it. As Al-Husseini and Bocco conclude: ‘Resettlement has been repeatedly presented by Israeli and Western stakeholders as the “magic solution” likely to solve quickly and permanently the Palestinian refugee problem’ (2010: 284).

Jordan’s decision to naturalise its population was regarded by many Palestinians as a proposal of a watan badil (alternative homeland) for the Palestinians (see Meier 2010; Al-Husseini and Bocco 2007). Watan badil as a negative construction contributed to making a Jordan-style approach impossible in Lebanon (Meier 2010; Andoni 2011; Tobin 2012). Accepting an alternative homeland would be unacceptable for Palestinians (Salih 2013).

The problem with this position, advocated by political elites and Palestinian political factions, is that it situates naturalisation on the one hand, and the right of return on the other. Purporting the incompatibility between return and naturalisation articulates a binary, suggesting that tawtin would ultimately jeopardise and eliminate the prospect of return. Suggesting that Palestinians will no longer wish to return, or will no longer be able to do so once citizenship is acquired, is, however, speculative. Most importantly, it disregards the agency of Palestinians themselves (both refugees and naturalised) to determine their own destiny.

More recently, scholars have challenged these persistent binaries. In a legal analysis of the mechanisms and implementation of return, Akram (2014) points out that whether individuals can return is entirely contingent upon personal choice and not affected by their own legal status (see also Akram 2002). Salih (2013) also challenges the exclusive binary opposing tawtin and return. Salih argues that ‘avoiding tawtin’ to enable ‘return’ only allows for the perpetuation of discrimination regarding citizenship, rights, social justice and pluralism in a region where the refugees’ exclusion from ‘rights and entitlements fit into an agenda of reinforcing hierarchical confessional, tribal, class, and gender division’ (2013: 1).
While the Palestinians in Lebanon and elsewhere are often divided and categorised in accordance with socioeconomic and political classifications (i.e. urban/rural, refugee/citizen), Rabinowtiz argues that right of return undermines these cleavages as it refers to shared exile and collective loss. The Palestinian view of the collective injustice to which they were subjected is intensified by the recognition that they had no control over the catastrophe that befell them and the circumstances that determined their exile since 1948. This has contributed to a collective sense of injustice common to all Palestinians.

The vision of return allows refugees and non-refugees (i.e. naturalised citizens), peasants and urbanites, the rich and the poor, the secular and the religious to rally around one cause. Return has become an ideological duty, an indispensable element of the national canon. It embodies the Palestinians as a community of suffering who share a common memory of loss. The idea of return has been central to the narrative of struggle (Khalidi, 1992).

As the findings of convey, entitlement to return undercuts class and legal divisions that distinguish between the ‘citizen’ and the ‘refugee’. The notion of return as a fulfilment of justice is self-evident for the majority of Palestinians and features four main sensibilities:

1. The right to return undercuts generation, class, legal status, age, and is recognized as an indivisible right to which all Palestinians are equally entitled.
2. Return is understood in a variety of ways that do not always conform to a physical return to an ancestral homeland.
3. Only the Palestinians themselves, as individuals and as a collective, themselves should have a say in how return would take place and if they wished to exercise this right.

The above emphasizes the unifying power of return, articulated as a rectification of injustice, displacement and exile. The right to opt out of a narrow definition of return was articulated by many participants in my study, especially those of the younger generations born in Lebanon.
Generation

Palestinians, especially refugees, often define themselves in accordance with a generational sequential order. In general, reference to generation (jeel) is more commonly used in Arabic than English. Individuals of the same age are often referred to as part of the same ‘generation’ in everyday speech. This categorisation of generation has been most significant for Palestinians, where experiences of exile are characterised by generational categories (see, for example, Richter-Devroe 2013; Allan 2013, 2005; Sayigh 2011). References to generation are a marker of identity in everyday speech.

Sayigh (2011) suggests that four main ‘generations’ have emerged since the Palestinian arrival to Lebanon. The first refers to those already adult in 1948. They have memories of historical Palestine and recall the Nakba. She refers to this generation as jeel filastin (the generation of Palestine). The following generation includes those born around 1948, be it slightly before or after. They do not recall historical Palestine or the Nakba, and are referred to as jeel al Nakba (the generation of the Nakba). The third generation includes those exposed to the resistance movements of the 1960s and the emergence of the Palestinian Fedayeen (the armed resistance movements). The rise of the PLO in Lebanon was of utmost significance, as the organisation played an active role in the Lebanese civil war, which led to their eventual exile in 1982. This generation is referred to as jeel al-thawra (the generation of the revolution) (Sayigh 2011: Peteet 1995). Most recently, those raised in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords, who were not exposed to the rise of the armed resistance, are referred to as jeel Oslo (the generation of Oslo). Despite these widely used categorisations in everyday speech, as well as in political analyses, one should be cautious of associating particular characteristics with only one generation, as many differences can in fact be cross-generational (Richter-Devroe 2013).

These generational categorisations emerged as a result of shared historical experiences, and the political context of their time. Palestinian armed resistance, for example, emerged from the refugee camps of Lebanon and Jordan, and directly shaped and influenced the lives of all camp residents. When speaking of generations among the naturalised, however, the politicisation of the camps was less relevant. The political climate that shaped the ‘generation of Oslo’ was similarly not reflected in the naturalised experience. Refugees, and camp residents in particular, make up a community of individuals who share similar experiences; the naturalised are largely excluded from them.
Therefore, applying the same generational categories to the naturalised as those applied to refugees would be inaccurate. In drawing upon the narratives discussed below, the notion of generation emerged as an important demarcation of how individuals perceived, imagined and conceptualised the right of return. A more suitable generational categorisation, upon which the narratives of return by the naturalised were constructed, is one that took into account experiences and memories of historical Palestine.

The naturalised are categorised into two broad generational categorisations within this chapter. The first is referred to as *jeel filastin* and accounts for individuals born in and who remember historical Palestine, who were adults or young adults at the time of the Nakba and recall their arrival to Lebanon. It is not enough to have been born in Palestine; it is important for individuals to also have memories of their homes and, as importantly, to remember their arrival to Lebanon. The second categorisation, referred to here as *jeel lubnan* (the generation of Lebanon), accounts for individuals born in Lebanon. While some participants, six in total, from *jeel lubnan* had managed to visit historical Palestine for short periods of time, they were born in Lebanon and had spent the majority of their lives there. They were able to visit because they had Western passports. While I apply a generational lens to my approach, I remain cautious with regard to overarching generalisations.

**Jeel filastin: a return to memory**

Joseph’s story was one that was all too familiar for Lebanon’s first generation of naturalised Palestinians. A man now in his mid-eighties, Joseph recalled the process of his family’s naturalisation in the following words:

It was not easy to get the citizenship for us. My older brother Ramsey worked very hard to make sure that we all got it. He had to pay some money and say that our family was originally from Sidon. Times were difficult; we didn’t have money and had to take care of our family. Both my brothers worked long hours at an ice-cream factory in downtown Beirut and Ramsey took on a second job and was paid to translate documents – he was only 17. I visited the factory recently and it has since been replaced with an office building. I was too young to work at the time, but as soon as I could, I too got a job. I worked at the Beirut Port, loading and unloading cargo from ships. It didn’t pay much but every little helped. We had our own olive press in Palestine, and owned acres and acres of land. My father was a well-known merchant and we had been very wealthy … we’ve made a life for ourselves here and it was very challenging in the early years. I’m thankful that now our situation is good; my children are all grown up and educated, and have
families of their own ... To return is a dream – a thought, but for me, it will just be that, our life is here now.

Like many of the generation of Palestine, Joseph’s memories of his childhood in Palestine were vivid and detailed. It is perhaps inevitable when one knows that all they will ever have of their homeland are memories. Palestine then becomes frozen in the memories (see Swedenberg 1991; Bisharat 1997). Joseph recounted his family’s weekly routine as he was growing up, his memories of his grandmother and the times he spent with his cousins when they visited from Jaffa: ‘We would all gather and sleep in the big family room, we lined up the mattresses on the floor and slept like sardines when they came to stay.’ He spoke of visits to the seaside and family gatherings with much fondness. However, for Joseph, as he made clear in his statement, that Palestine was part of his past. Despite being central to his self-identification, it was not part of his future. For him, and for many others of his generation, the Palestine of today is not the Palestine they once knew. He made a clear distinction between his life that is ‘here now’ in Beirut and the life he once had in Palestine. In this sense, the idea of returning to Haifa had to become a dream, and not an aspiration that he was working towards. For him actual Palestine is long gone.

Starkly divergent from the narratives of the younger generation, the return imagined by Joseph would be a return to the historical Palestine that he knew and remembered; not the Palestine that exists today. He rationalised the question of his possible return by weighing it against the life he had established for himself and his family in Lebanon, knowing all too well that if return was to remain in question, his life as he knew it in Lebanon would be jeopardised. For those of his generation, return was not a feasible nor practical option. Apart from political considerations, return would rupture a life that he had created in Lebanon and worked very hard to achieve. Contextualised as such, and taking into account the pre-tawtín conditions, return was even perceived as threatening.

Samah vividly remembered her ‘mother’s orchard’, the bayyara. Her mother tended to it every day. While they were from the city, they owned a large orchard in the city’s outskirts. They grew seasonal fruits and had many olive trees. Now in her mid-eighties, her memory was not as sharp as it used to be:

We lived and will die here [Lebanon], there is no return for us. We dreamt of it for so long, my husband Farid – God rest his soul – never felt that this country was his. We lived our entire lives this way, but to return – no, where would I return?
Our house, land, it’s all gone. My daughters who live in America visited our family’s house in Acre. I had an uncle who still lived there, this was many years ago in 1995, and he showed them around. They went and saw the house, there is a Polish lady who lives there now, and she converted it into four apartments. She collects rent for our house, how ironic this is. Now, to where exactly would I return? I didn’t go with them, why would I go and see this? It makes no sense.

While Samah’s attachment to Acre is apparent, her conceptualisation of return is centred predominantly upon this attachment. When she spoke about historical Palestine, she spoke about specific places – the orchard, the house – and memories, like her mother walking to the orchard every morning. It was these memories upon which her Palestine was imagined.

I recall conversations with my late aunt, Umm Nazi. I used to visit frequently when I was living in Beirut. I spent many Sundays on her balcony sipping coffee and chatting about her life in Palestine, Lebanon, and her many experiences over the years. Umm Nazih was born in Acre in 1929 and fled to Lebanon in 1948, only a few months after she was married. She lived in a rented apartment in the Mazraa suburb of Beirut, where she remained until her death in 2008. Her husband had refused Lebanese citizenship when it was offered to him. When asked why he rejected, he would say: ‘Darna mush hone, darna fi falastin’ (‘our dar is not here, our house is in Palestine’). The reference to the dar in Palestine, as discussed in the previous chapter, embodies a physical and emotional attachment to the particular homes different families had in the historical homeland. This rendered it impossible for individuals like Abu Nazih (her late husband) and Firas (discussed in the previous chapter, who is of the same generation) to establish a dar in Lebanon. It was for this reason, that despite the family’s comfortable financial conditions, he refused to own any property in Lebanon and continued to rent his home until his death in the early 2000s. Umm Nazih continued:

I tried to convince Abu Nazih [her husband] to take the passport – not for us, but for our children – but he refused. He was a principled man, and for him Lebanon was not our home; we were to return to our home in Palestine … We were newlyweds when we were forced to come here, we had just started out life there. I’ve raised five children in this country, most of my life has been here but our dar will never be here.

While Umm Nazih worked to convince her husband of the importance of the jinsiyya, she made sense of his decision to oppose citizenship as an expression of his desire to return to Palestine. For Umm Nazih and her husband, acquiring the citizenship meant
finally forgoing their dar in Palestine. An individual, or more accurately, a Palestinian can only have one dar. For Firas, for example (see above) his dar was in Palestine but his home was in Lebanon.

Umm Nazih and her husband’s dar remained in Acre, and in continuing to hold on to the right to return to it, Umm Nazih’s husband rejected the prospect of tawtin. There are many like Umm Nazih’s husband who continued to refuse the prospect of Lebanese citizenship. A refugee motto encapsulates this stance: ‘no to tawteen [sic], yes to falastin’ (quoted in Meier 2010: 150). For them, a dar can only be in place and, although most knew they would never return, it was the memory to which they held.

The context through which citizenship was acquired during the years following the Nakba is integral to understanding the conceptualisation of return by the older generation. The political climate during the 1950s and 1960s necessitated that many keep their Palestinian origins a secret, and many had fabricated their ancestral belonging in order to acquire Lebanese citizenship. During this crucial period in Palestinian history, the Palestinians were transformed, to use Sayigh’s (1979) words, from refugees and peasants to ‘revolutionaries’. The PLO called for the collective right for all Palestinians to return to a liberated homeland (see Sayigh 1997; Khalidi 1992). Importantly, as some participants recalled, there were often rumours that would spread warning of a possible revocation of citizenship for some naturalised Palestinians. This political climate led to the marginalisation of the question of return among first-generation naturalised citizens. Many feared that publicly advocating for the right of return would jeopardise their citizenship.

The process of re-Lebanisation, as previously explained, necessitated assimilation and integration into the Lebanese host state. This meant that the salience of the notion of return threatened and challenged successful integration. In many ways, Joseph’s perspective on the question of return appropriated and confirmed existing discourses that presented return and citizenship as exclusive options. As such, citizenship status necessitated that he worked towards establishing a life in Lebanon for himself, which ultimately meant subduing the prospect of return. A perspective that presents tawtin (and establishment of life in Lebanon) as a negation of return was shared by many of the generation of Palestine. This is not to suggest that the generation of Palestine have forgone the notion of return, but to convey the tension they perceived to exist between their own citizenship status and the notion of return.
‘Life as we know it’ versus return

After the signing of the Oslo Accords and as part of Oslo-generated enthusiasm, the Israeli–Lebanese border was opened for a very brief period in 1994. This meant that Lebanese citizens could attain day-passes to visit Palestine/Israel. For naturalised citizens this was most significant, because it meant that they could return to visit their homes in historical Palestine. These ‘returns’, however, were very brief. Many naturalised of the Palestine generation chose not to visit their homes, even if they were able to, as they did not wish to relive the Nakba of 1948. What about the Palestine generation who did visit Palestine/Israel? Did they regard their visit as a return? After all, as Khalidi stated, ‘There is no authoritative Palestinian definition of what constitutes the right of return’ (1992: 29), and as Allan deduced from her research on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, the meanings of return are as subjective as they are personal; for her there are ‘many returns’ (2014: 191). The return of one may not necessarily mean the return of the other. A refugee woman I once met dreamt of her return to Palestine after her death, stating that it would be unlikely to occur in her lifetime; she had dreamed that after she died her body would be transferred and buried in a small village in the outskirts of Acre where her father was born.

Ramsey imagined return as physical return. He has dreamed of it since his arrival to Lebanon in 1948. The case of Ramsey and his family, who chose to return and visit their home in 1994 during a brief visit to Acre echoed the experience of others of the Nakba generation. He was born in Acre in the early 1930s. His family was exiled to Lebanon, where they became naturalised shortly after their arrival. His connection to Palestine is deep, and his memories vivid. Describing his experience of revisiting his home, he stated:

One day I found out the border was open. So I took my wife and oldest daughter, and we drove to Akka … I reached the house my father had built. It had been divided into apartments occupied by Jewish tenants … My father had built that house … I stepped inside and walked around. I went to the garden where the large mulberry tree once stood. It was gone. We then left, and drove around Akka for the day before we returned to Beirut … Looking back, that return was one of my biggest regrets. It was not the Akka I once knew. Since that forsaken day, I can no longer remember my Akka, my beautiful memories are all gone. I wish I had never visited, I wish I had never gone back. Before we went back, I would speak about Palestine much more than I do now.
Prior to this visit, Ramsey had dreamed of his return to Acre. However, the place to which he returned was not the same he once knew. For him, and for others of his generation, a return today produced an erasure of memory. It is in relation to memory that the cleavage in generational narratives is best understood. The generation of Palestine are the bearers of memories, a memory that prominent Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish described as a curse with which they had been blessed. However, it is with reference to the salience of memory that the question of what return precisely is becomes most relevant. The naturalised with memories of the Galilee imagined return as a return to the cities and villages from which they fled and not to these same locations as they exist today. Return, in this sense, was not a return to justice or dignity, but a restoration of memories, a return to a dar they once knew. When asked if they would return to Palestine, many of this generation would often respond ‘Falastine rahat’ (‘Palestine is gone’). It was perhaps only by accepting that their Palestine was gone that they were able to establish and make a life for themselves in Lebanon. As the case of Ramsey illustrates, it was memory that guided him to return, and it was also memory that led him to regret his visit. Realising that his Palestine was gone, Ramsey came to regret his decision to return. For naturalised citizens like Ramsey, Joseph and many others, return was a matter of restoring a homeland they once knew. In many ways, their memories of Palestine were of a ‘Paradise lost’ (the title of a well-known poem by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish) that will never exist again. The return of the jeel filastin engenders a return of Palestine and not to it (Khalidi 1992: 33).

Nadia regarded the question of her return as ‘very difficult’. Life in Palestine does not look appealing when compared to the life she had established for herself and her family in Lebanon. Citizenship was granted to Nadia’s family through re-Lebanisation. The process was eased further because the family was Christian. Born in Palestine, her family first moved to Jordan and then settled in Lebanon in the 1960s, where they became citizens shortly after. She explained:

> Between you and me, I really wouldn’t return … my life, my children – all here … I dream of going to the church of nativity which is a holy site for us Christians, and my mother’s village. But I’d never want to live there, my life is here, I went to Palestine twice in the 1990s when my aunt was sick, but I can’t imagine myself living there now. … it’s quite conservative in Palestine now … it wasn’t like that before, we had the most wonderful memories. I can show you pictures of my parents on their wedding day, they were so beautifully dressed … Now, where would I return? It’s all gone.
The Palestine of Nadia, Ramsey and Joseph is gone. The Palestine they knew, and the one to which they had dreamed of returning only existed in their memories. People of their generation could not make sense of a return to the Palestine of today. The physicality of their connections to their villages, homes and cities dictated and channelled their perception of return and the ways they imagined it. Furthermore, and as importantly, the context of their naturalisation also played a significant role in the construction of their narratives of return. In juxtaposing their return with the lives they had established in Lebanon, the question of return was further complicated. As individuals who directly underwent tawtin, the generation of the filastin embraced their assimilation.

**Jeel lubnan the right to choose**

Place of birth and memory differentiated between jeel filastin and jeel lubnan. Memory is crucial because it is the memory of a physical place that shapes different narratives of return.

The Nakba of 1948 is framed within Palestinian discourse as a moment in which the Palestinians were forced to leave their lives, livelihood, places of being and belonging. The ‘catastrophe’ is articulated in the prose and poetry of exile as a moment of total loss: loss of homes, land, and dignity. Palestine is often depicted as a woman, and the ‘foreigners’ as unwelcome invaders. These representations embody sentiment of loss and exile, and bind the loss of land to a loss of dignity.

This is represented in the canonical expression among Palestinian refugees. I recall once seeing written in graffiti on a wall in a camp: ‘Karamatna fi awdatna’ (‘Our dignity is in our return’). Recently, scholars have shed light on feelings of indignity as expressed by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (Bianchi 2014; Allan 2013). This feeling is directly related to the lived experience of refugees. Narratives of return are thus framed within this context, and for many refugees return is more than a literal return to an ancestral homeland, but a restoration of dignity (Bianchi 2014). On the contrary, the naturalised did not express this notion in their narratives of return. Unlike Palestinian refugees who live and relive the Nakba on a daily basis, for the naturalised the Nakba was a past event that they, or their predecessors had experienced. Return was conceptualised instead vis-à-vis injustice and a desire to rectify it.
When asked if he would ever return to Yaffa, the town from which his family fled, Hani, a 38-year-old naturalised man and father of two, stated:

I don’t know, maybe, most probably not. But it does not matter whether I will actually return or not – that’s entirely beside the point. I have every right to choose if I want to return, whether I take up that right is entirely up to me. Right now we don’t even have the option.

In his statement, Hani draws a very important distinction between the physical return to a native homeland (about which he appears somewhat indifferent), and the choice of return (which he strongly supports). Whether or not he would actually return was secondary to his right to choose. Hani’s narrative of return was framed within a dimension that accounted for choice, justice and rights. He emphasised his inability to exercise this right, which he and many others believed was their entitlement. Maya, a 33-year-old, echoed a similar sentiment when she stated: ‘It is my choice – whether to return or not should be entirely up to me.’

Compared to jeel filastin, return for the younger jeel lubnan was not necessarily framed as the return to a physical place. Instead, the narratives of many were underpinned by an awareness of the collective injustice that was inflicted on Palestinians, which was to be restored, even if not necessarily by a physical return, at least as an acknowledgement of the agency of Palestinians (naturalised and otherwise) to make their own choices.

For many of the naturalised like Sandra, a 24-year-old naturalised citizen whose grandfather was granted Lebanese citizenship in the early 1950s, the meaning of return was uncertain. While she hoped to one day return, she remained uncertain as to where she would stay, or the cities she would visit if she were ever to return:

Of course I would – yes! I would go there in a heartbeat! I don’t know how long I’d stay, I don’t know what it’s like, but I would definitely go back. If right now they opened the border, I would go, Sunday – tomorrow – I would go. My family is from Haifa, I’d love to go and see it, but Haifa has changed a lot. There are very few Palestinians left there; Acre has more of a Palestinian character so I’d love to go there. I think I’d like to stay in the West Bank, maybe in Ramallah … I read a lot about the history. Haifa was an amazingly diverse city; most port cities appeal to me because their populations are so diverse and exposed, and so they tend to be more liberal and worldly. Oh and Jerusalem, I’d love to go one day … I really don’t know how I’d feel with what’s happening in East Jerusalem, but I do know that I would want to go and see it.
Although Sandra imagined her return to be in the form of visits that were most likely not to be permanent, she nevertheless referred to this as a ‘return’. Those of the younger generation did not perceive their return to necessarily be to the villages and towns from which their parents or grandparents had fled. Many imagined return to be visits, or to be over short periods of time. While their ancestral place held emotional significance to them, their own return was articulated and imagined flexibly. Sandra wished to return, but she was uncertain to where she would return, or how this return would materialise. Her emotional connection with her grandfather’s birthplace, Haifa, was apparent. Yet, Sandra’s articulation of return was imbued with knowledge of the current political context, in which she regarded all of present-day Israel/Palestine as a place to which she could possibly return. She acknowledged the changed character of her homeland, and in particular of her grandfather’s birthplace, Haifa as well as Jerusalem. For her, articulations of Palestine were not confined to specific locations (in this case, Haifa) in the way it was for many of the jeel filastin. Instead, her expressions were malleable and adaptive in ways that those of the older generations were not. She imagined her return as a return to anywhere in historical Palestine.

Nadine is 41. Her grandparents arrived to Lebanon in 1948, when they were both in their mid-twenties. They were both naturalised shortly after their arrival, because: ‘As Christians, naturalisation was a relatively easy process.’ She has spent the majority of her life in Beirut, and spent many summers in her mother’s village in the Lebanese mountains. Return is on her mind:

We just can’t let them get away with what they did to us. It’s true that I didn’t go through it, but my grandparents suffered. It was really hard for them and they didn’t know if they were going to make it. My grandmother was three months pregnant when she had to leave. I cannot imagine what that was like. We really have it easy compared to what they went through, but that doesn’t mean that they [i.e. the Israelis] can get away with it all, it doesn’t work like that … look at the refugees, they have been suffering for 70 years now. It’s our right and time won’t take that away from us … I think it was Golda Meir, the Israeli prime minister who once said, ‘The old will die and the young will forget.’ We have not forgotten.

Nadine did not wish to return to Acre, the place from which her grandfather fled and sought refuge in Lebanon; for her return was broader than a specific place. Return embodied dimensions of rights and justice to which she as a Palestinian felt was entitled. Nadine was a self-labelled ‘activist for justice’. She had contributed to some online
forums and had written some articles on the Palestinian refugee predicament in Lebanon. She believed that it was more important for the refugees in camps to return. There were many others who shared this sentiment. If return were to happen, they should go first. I don’t need to return but they do. The right of return is the right of every Palestinian, regardless of how they live, or if they’re Lebanese or American. But I mean that because of the awful conditions in the camp, it would make more sense for refugees to return.

She makes a crucial distinction between return as a solution to the refugee predicament (which is advocated by Lebanese political elites and Palestinian factions), and return as an inalienable right to which all Palestinians are entitled. While she recognises the entitlement of both, priority is granted to refugees and, in particular, camp residents. This was echoed by naturalised participants who despite recognising their entitlement to this right, which they deemed inalienable, nevertheless supported a refugee return over their own. The difficult conditions of Palestinian refugees, and in particular camp residents, are integral to these statements. In this sense, return is framed as a solution to the refugee predicament and very difficult living conditions to which Palestinians are subjected in Lebanon. This did not, however, deny or eliminate what they felt was also their own inalienable right.

Missing from the narratives of the naturalised of jeel lubnan were romanticised memories of beautiful places, orange groves and olive trees. These are traditionally associated with narratives of return to historical Palestine. Missing were the romantic recollections of traditions and stories about family, houses and gatherings. While return was imagined by jeel filastin as a return to an actual real place, for the younger generation, return was imagined as a restoration and rectification of wrongdoing and injustice. For Nadine, Hani and others born in Lebanon, physical return was secondary to justice. What was important to them was the recognition of a right to which they, as Palestinians, were entitled.

Rabinowitz argues that the Palestinian narrative is buttressed by the conviction of a collective injustice that was inflicted upon them at the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and that is only through return that justice will be attained (2009). Perceptions of injustice were experienced by all and passed down across the generations, and so the right of return remains the foundation that unifies the Palestinian people in
Nadine did not undergo the exile herself, but she reflected on the experience of her grandparents. This experience justifies her right to return.

In this sense, Nadine regards herself as a part of the greater Palestinian community, to which she continues to belong despite her Lebanese citizenship. In much the same light as the previous chapter discussed, many imagined themselves as part of a broader imaged Palestinian community, which is founded upon common and collective experiences centred upon notions of injustice and exile. There is a difference between the continued experience of exile and the Nakba as experienced by refugees on the one hand, and the collective injustice inflicted upon all Palestinians on the other. Although the naturalised do not relive the daily in the way refugees did (Sa’di and Abu-Lughod 2009), they nevertheless carry the experience of trauma and injustice with them. Nadine remembers her grandfather’s death when she was in her late teens. She was the oldest granddaughter, and was very close to him. He died in Beirut, less than a three-hour drive from his birthplace in Acre. Nadine imagined her return as a fulfilment of her grandfather’s wishes for himself: ‘My grandfather died here, but his mind was always somewhere else. I feel like if I could return, it would kind of be for him.’

Return remains poignant to the national struggle, to the prospect of self-determination and to national identity. The dominant rhetoric of return is founded on the belief that the future national existence of Palestinians hinges on whether, and how the issue of the right of return will be resolved (Rouhana and Peled 2007). The question of return for Nadine and others, however, was not framed within this political context. Insisting on their entitlement to the right of return despite their naturalisation was not regarded as a fulfilment of their Palestinian identity. It was a matter of human justice. Nadine had no intention of ever returning or visiting Israel/Palestine:

Our town [in present-day Israel] has been completely changed, there are no Arabs left there. It would hurt me to go and see that, so I’d rather not. Why would I want to go and see a Russian family living in the house my grandfather built?

Notions of justice frame return for the naturalised of the jeel lubnan. These narratives confirm that, despite their citizenship status, many of the naturalised imagine themselves as a part of a broad imagined community of Palestinians who continue to advocate their right to return, albeit in different ways. Jeel lubnan’s narratives of return embody negotiation, individuality and creativity. They have given these questions much thought, and the outcome was their own individual narrative that included and reflected their own
experiences. References made to the plight of parents and grandparents, for example, emphasised this and highlighted how each family’s experience can play an integral role in the formation of narratives of return.

*Tawtin* is often posited as a tool to weaken, undermine and even eliminate the prospect of return, but the narratives of *jeel lubnan* I encountered challenge these paradigms. They perceive both return and resettlement in unconventional ways. The dimension of choice, a dimension that underpinned the narratives of those of the younger generation, was the premise upon which narratives of return were constructed.

Kathy Long also emphasises the element of choice in her study on refugees, rights and repatriation. This is also an important consideration in the conversation pertaining to the question of return for refugees. Choice was subsumed under understandings of return as a political solution to the refugee crisis (by Arab states), and of resettlement as an apolitical *humanitarian* solution (by the United States). The US also played a major role in pressuring Israel to allow the return of at least a proportion of the refugees, leading to an offer in 1949 to repatriate 100,000 refugees on *humanitarian* (i.e. non-political) grounds. This offer was then swiftly withdrawn (Masalha 2010: 122-123). As Long explains:

> The right to return and the right not to return are certainly not incompatible: they can in fact be considered two sides of the same liberal freedom to choose. Given the operational context in which they developed during the 1940s, however, there was little if any attempt to link these two doctrines together because refugee crises were seen in relation to their specific historical genesis. The potential difficulty in trying to uphold both a right to return and not to return in a single setting would only become apparent decades later when the international community would become directly involved in trying to organise formal repatriation programs (Long 2013: 74).

Choice, as articulated by Long and by many of my informants, envisages return as an entitlement of *all* Palestinians regardless of legal status. It illustrates the many meanings of return.

While the naturalised are cast outside existing categorisations of what a ‘Palestinian’ is in Lebanon, their narratives of return, and the emphasis placed on the notion of choice, suggests a need to rethink the question of who is a Palestinian. The boundaries that distinguish between the naturalised ‘us’ and the ‘other’ (Palestinian refugees or Lebanese citizens) are blurry. This becomes most apparent when speaking of the right of
return. By articulating that they too had the right to choose, the naturalised were in fact redrawing the boundaries that cast them outside the Palestinian collective. At the core of this claim was the entitlement to the return. In the same way that experiences of discrimination (discussed in the previous chapter) led to a shift in categories of belonging, the right of return undercuts and overrides categories thought to be fixed and static. Entitlement to the right to return undercut legal status, age, generation, gender or social class. It undercuts the factors thought to impede its survival.

Return, al-awada, has remained a banner under which Palestinians organise, and is a potent driver of Palestinian national consciousness. The narratives of the jeel lubnan illustrate that return extends beyond nationalist conscriptions that bind it to territory. For them, return is individual and, at the same time, collective.

Whereas for Nadine for example return was a symbolic gesture that she did not necessarily wish to fulfill even though she continued to advocate it, Rania hoped to one day return to her ancestral homeland. Yet for her, return was imagined as visits and not as a permanent move. Despite these disparities, which provide an important contribution to conversations on return, the collective dimension of return weakened existing cleavages differentiating between Palestinians (i.e. class, gender, socioeconomic and legal status). Return is too often understood as a solution to the plight of impoverished refugees. The entitlement articulated by the naturalised, who believed that they also had the right to return, was understood not as a solution to an unacceptable status quo but still as a right to which all Palestinians are entitled. The boundaries that distinguish between naturalised and refugees should be revisited; the naturalised in Lebanon should be allowed to participate in conversations pertaining to return.

**Conclusion**

In drawing upon the narratives of return articulated by the naturalised, this chapter highlighted how return is individual and personal. It differentiated between two conceptualisations of return: physical (i.e. the actual return of Palestinians to an ancestral homeland) and symbolic. It was with the latter, the symbolic dimensions of return, with which this chapter engaged.

This chapter was structured upon a generational categorisation that divided the naturalised into two broad categories: jeel filastin and jeel lubnan. The first category refers to individuals who were born prior to the events of 1948, and who remember
historical Palestine. The second category included individuals born in Lebanon. *Jeel filastin* imagined a return to the places, home, villages, orchards and orange groves they once knew. The younger generation imagined return as an individual and a collective right to which all Palestinians are entitled.

While the naturalised remain absent from the majority of scholarly investigations concerning the topic of return, the narratives presented here in many ways illustrate the need to include these Palestinians. Their expressions dispel dominant political rhetoric that posits *tawtin* to be the antithesis of return. The naturalised have not given up their right to return.
Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusion

This thesis investigated the phenomenon of *tawtin* in Lebanon between 1948 and the early 1960s. The implications and significance of this *tawtin* extend beyond naturalised individuals and their descendants. My research on *tawtin* and its aftermath demonstrates that it does not lead to the end of Palestinian identity, to the abandonment of the right of return or to the destabilisation of the already fragile Lebanese state.

This rhetoric of *tawtin* inextricably binds citizenship (and naturalisation) to notions of belonging, identity and identification with the Lebanese state. It is upon this assumption that both Palestinian factions and Lebanese political elites have opposed the prospect of naturalisation. Testing this presumption was a primary objective of this study. This presumption has for a long time worked to impede any improvement to refugee conditions in Lebanon. It has also led to the marginalisation of naturalised Palestinians from the field of Palestine studies.

A main objective of this study was to carve a space and present alternative narratives. Bringing to light expressions, narratives and experiences of the naturalised allowed me to shed light on the relation between expressions and practices of citizenship and notions of belonging, territory and Palestinian/Lebanese national identity. Little is known about *tawtin*, and relatively little is known about the naturalised or their condition, their sense of place, belonging, citizenship, and their understanding of ‘home’ and ‘return’. This thesis has been a step towards filling a gap.

The introduction of permanent resettlement as a viable solution to the refugee predicament emerged as early as 1949 at the Lausanne conference in Switzerland, when the international powers (led by the US with the support of Israel) advocated that refugees should remain in the countries in which they had sought refuge (Talhami 2003). Since 1949, Palestinian refugees have advocated against the prospect of resettlement, and called for their return to their homes (Al-Husseini 2010; Tahlami 2003). At that time, refugees were not yet politically organised, and so this resistance to *tawtin* emerged from grassroots collectives. Indeed, it was the proposal of *tawtin* as a solution to the refugee predicament that contributed to the existing rhetoric that posits *tawtin* as a politically motivated tool that works to further dispossess.

Much of the existing literature presents *tawtin* in one of two ways: (1) as a prospect to be avoided to ensure stability of the Lebanese state; (2) As a political tool in the hands
of global elites seeking to weaken the Palestinian struggle. Existing narratives pertinent to *tawtin*, in both the scholarly and political spheres, reiterate one or both of these positions. Scholars who raise normative humanitarian concerns pertaining to improvements to the status quo do so on the premise that refugees would reject *tawtin* if it was offered and argue that *tatwir* (development) should not be regarded *tawtin* (Salih 2013; Knudsen 2009). The problem therein lies in the dichotomy opposing *tawtin* and Palestinian identity/return/national belonging. The acquisition of the former is assumed to mean the elimination of the latter. This link is too often posited without asking the underlying question: what is the outcome of *tawtin*?

As a naturalised Palestinian with established networks among the refugee community, I was granted access through networks of friends and acquaintances. In spending time with refugee friends and participants, it was not uncommon to hear phrases referring to the naturalised as those who ‘sold the cause’ (*ba’u al-qadiyya*). This perception is potent and exists among refugees. In Chapter 3, I suggested that the binding of Palestinianness and refugee status serves as a coping mechanism by which camp refugees make sense of their condition. For many, refugee status was an assertion of identity (Al-Husseini 2009). Binding Palestinianness to refugee status as argued by camp refugees works to marginalise the naturalised population and cast them out of the national collective. The Chapters 5 and 6 aimed at contextualising the conditions under which some Palestinians sought citizenship.

This mutual exclusivity opposing *tawtin* or Palestinianness was problematised within this thesis, which sought to question it by investigating and reflecting upon the experiences of the naturalised themselves. All these experiences challenge this dichotomy, and some suggested alternative narratives in which citizenship is divorced from notions of identity and identification altogether.

Scholars of citizenship have argued for this decoupling since the mid-1990s, with the emergence of theories of post-national citizenship and de-national citizenship (Soysal 2011, 1994; Sassen 2002; Tambini 2001). However, these theories were premised on cases of citizenship practised in Europe and the Americas. These arguments were not extended to practices of citizenship in the Arab world. While I did not argue that the naturalised practice citizenship within a post-national context, these theories, however, did guide my approach and provided an alternative paradigm through which citizenship could be analysed.
**Responding to the research questions**

The notion of a Palestinian identity, and what it means to be a Palestinian refugee both socially and politically are disputed concepts. Sayigh (2010) warns against reducing the Palestinian experience in the diaspora to a singular identity (see also Said 1999; Hanafi and Knudsen 2011). The Palestinian experience has been shaped, negotiated, and renegotiated vis-à-vis various legal, social and political factors, which have all worked to construct what is more accurately understood as many Palestinian identities (Fincham 2012).

The first question set out to understand expressions of Palestinianness among the naturalised. Answering this question necessitated following a grounded approach, as I wanted to avoid conforming to existing discourse of Palestinian identity that remains conscripted to a national Palestinian narrative that no longer resonates with most, both naturalised as well as refugees. Common cultural Palestinian symbolism includes poetry, the significance of the land and agriculture, citrus fruits (this is most relevant for refugee who fled from the Galilee region known for its fragrant citrus orchards), and the olive tree and branch. It was these cultural symbols that became synonymous with the homeland in the aftermath of exile (Shalhoub et al. 2014). However, these symbols did not resonate as strongly with participants, especially those of the younger generation.

For them, the Palestinian experience was intricately interwoven with also being Lebanese. The two were so tightly bound that they could not be regarded as separate from one another. Refugees in Jordan refer to themselves as Palestinians of Jordan, and those in Lebanon label themselves falstiniyat lubnan, Palestinians of Lebanon. This expression emphasises the extent to which geographical context has impacted and influenced expressions of identity among Palestinians, both naturalised and refugee.

When it came to investigating expressions of Palestinianness among the naturalised, following a grounded approach proved most fruitful as it accounted for the multiplicity of definitions and experiences, which were broadly categorised into three main themes (one for each chapter): (1) deconstructing the meanings of ‘refugee’ and ‘citizen’ (Chapter 3); (2) negotiating a sense of home and belonging (Chapter 5); (3) expressions of return (Chapter 6). The Chapter 4 provided the perspective of the refugee pertaining to tawtin and its aftermath.
In deconstructing, or reimagining *tawtin*, the naturalised expressed agency. In giving meaning to their own citizenship status and process of naturalisation, they expressed their Palestianness. Reflecting upon the many meanings of *tawtin* as expressed by the naturalised, it becomes clear that *tawtin* cannot be defined as simply a national policy of absorption and assimilation. On the contrary, the concept was ‘opened’ and explored afresh. The expressions of Palestianness offered by the naturalised demonstrated how ‘home’, ‘place’, ‘territory’ and ‘belonging’ can be negotiated. These concepts lie at the core of the Palestinian experience, and for many of the naturalised they were negotiated with the complexity that comes with belonging to two ‘places’ at once. However, this notion of place was in itself also malleable and fluid. In speaking of ‘return’, many of my informants did not imagine a physical place to which they wished to return. They did not even necessarily construct the ‘homeland’ as a place of belonging or identity. Return to the homeland was imagined in ways that accounted for rights that many felt they were entitled to as Palestinian. The fluidity between categories of refugee and citizen, and the shift between them, was most apparent when speaking of rights, whereas many of the naturalised felt entitled to rights as both Lebanese citizens and as Palestinians in the diaspora.

The second question necessitated an exploration into the meaning of citizenship. The construction of citizenship was an ongoing process. Citizenship was not understood as a static concept. Instead, expressions of citizenship were shifting, changing and influenced by various factors, least of which was the identity of the researcher. Bearing this in mind, expressions of home and belonging were also not understood as static. As many of my informants remarked, their own expressions of ‘home’ had significantly changed from what they had been, and had been determined by various factors such as the political climate, discrimination, hostility, or their own inclinations and awareness. It was important, nevertheless, to convey the malleability and changing nature of these expressions, as they hinted at the extent to which meanings of Palestianness also changes.

The third and final question aimed at investigating narratives of the naturalised pertaining to expressions of nationalism. This necessitated firstly exploring how nationalism or Palestinian national expression was defined and understood by the naturalised. The answer to this was not clear-cut. For some, it involved fighting on the side of the Palestinian militias in the Lebanese civil war, while for others it was
described as a feeling they did not act upon. Expressions lacked uniformity. For many, especially those of the younger generation, belonging was neither singular nor unitary.

The naturalised carved spaces within their citizenship status to foster and harbour their Palestinianness; while the latter meant different things to different people, it was compatible with their Lebanese citizenship. This finding speaks to the discourse of *tawtin* discussed above, which posits that *tawtin* would weaken and eventually eliminate expressions of Palestinianness. The findings of this study presented an alternative to the dichotomy of *tawtin* or Palestinianess. *Tawtin* and Palestinianess were open to interpretation by individuals, and participants expressed a range of responses regarding both these concepts.

Some of my informants noted that discovering their origins and expressing their Palestinian identity did not occur until their mid-twenties. It was expressed as an exploration of sorts; their Palestinian identity was learned. For others, expressions and feelings of Palestinian sentiment were contingent upon circumstances to which they were exposed. Exposure to discrimination, direct or indirect, left individuals reluctant to identify as strongly with the Lebanese state and guided them towards questioning and revisiting who they exactly were. Discrimination towards themselves (as Palestinians) or towards their refugee counterparts, all forms of discrimination, were internalised, and many had become reluctant to ‘belong’ to Lebanon, and left them uneasy to identify as Lebanese.

**Refugee/citizen**

This thesis challenged rigid categorisations separating refugee and citizen. This distinction, as mentioned in Chapter 1, was not intended to be mutually exclusive. It merely referred to the legal status of those belonging to either category. Those with Lebanese citizenship were referred to as the naturalised, and holders of refugee status were categorised according to their residence and legal status: either camp or urban refugees. These categories were not in any way intended to be exclusive.

In my attempt to broaden the spectrum of inclusion, which has for so long remained conscripted to the refugee narrative, the importance of the naturalised voice was emphasised. This narrative works to dispel and challenge much of the rhetoric associated with *tawtin* in Lebanon. While existing discourses cast the naturalised well
outside the scope of who qualifies as a ‘refugee’, this study encouraged a rethinking of the existing categories.

At the core of much of the discussion, as put forth by participants, especially those of the younger generation, was an overlap between citizen and refugee. This overlap was discussed throughout this thesis, and became most potent when naturalised participants were asked to define who is a Palestinian refugee. Many struggled and included themselves within this category. Others felt excluded and did not regard themselves as refugees. Conversely, many refugee status holders, and in particular camp refugees, had very clear definitions for a refugee. They excluded the naturalised from this definition.

Among the naturalised, it was the younger generation who readily expressed simultaneous belonging to both categories. For the majority of them, the status of refugee was inherited, passed down through their predecessor’s dispossession and exile, even though they had not themselves experienced it. For refugees, and camp residents in particular, the refugee experience is a central component of how they perceive themselves and make sense of their daily experiences, and thus they were more likely to cast the naturalised outside of it. For the refugee, to be a refugee was not a state of mind; it was a state of being. It is a lived experience to which they are subjected daily. The naturalised lived their refugee status within; their daily lives and encounters did not reflect the experiences of their refugee counterparts.

A naturalised participant, Rania, summed up the overlap up when she said: ‘To be a refugee is a state of mind … it is a feeling.’ Despite not living the day-to-day struggles of her refugee counterparts, she stated that she lives what she describes as ‘fekr lujoo’ (mentality of a refugee). This refugee mentality is rooted in dispossession and exile; it reflects what Said once described as a perpetual state of homelessness.

In illustrating how individuals negotiate themselves as part of both these categories of citizen and refugee, and yet, somehow never belonging fully to either, allowed individual participants a voice. Many regard themselves as both refugees and citizens simultaneously. This self-categorisation was tied into broader themes of belonging and national identity. Those naturalised who regard themselves as refugees expressed a reluctance or inability to feel at home in Lebanon. One of the main questions with which I was concerned was how the naturalised understood and defined home. What home means to people changes over time, it is circumstantial and determined by a set of
external and internal factor. While an individual may be at home in Lebanon, experiences can alter and shift this feeling.

This was especially challenging. Scholars write of ‘home’ as a shifting and changing concept, rooted in notions and expressions of belonging and identification (Levitt and Waters 2002; McIntyre and Williams 2001). As noted in Chapter 5, there is no Arabic equivalent to the English word ‘home’, and thus expressions of home were intricately bound with expressions and narratives of place as it relates to belonging, identity and identification. There are various factors that shape the meaning of home. Take for example the case of Rita, for whom the question of home was transformed when she perceived and became aware of discrimination against Lebanon’s Palestinian refugee population. Although she is a naturalised citizen, she felt at the nexus of both groups. She became increasingly reluctant to identify as a Lebanese and became increasingly unwilling or perhaps unable to feel at home in Lebanon. This finding illustrates the extent to which the notion of home was malleable and flexible, and its close link with identity and belonging.

**Discrimination: an issue for all**

Both refugees and citizens focused on the issue of discrimination in particular. While I was anticipating that refugees would posit discrimination as the main hindrance to their ability to feel at home or belong in Lebanon, the naturalised also spoke of discrimination. Discrimination also shapes the naturalised experience.

For refugees, and in particular camp residents, discrimination was experienced both politically and socially. Politically, they are denied even the most elemental human rights such as employment, freedom of movement and property ownership. Socially, the stigma associated with refugee status and the aftermath of the Lebanese civil war has subjected Palestinians to negative stereotypes. Participants recalled various stories and experiences of discrimination. They posited discrimination as a crucial issue in their opposition to *tawtin*. Many did not wish to naturalise because of the way they were treated. This was more prominent among camp refugees compared to urban refugees, due to their easily identifiable difference. Camp refugees were arguably more aware of their refugee status.

As the findings illustrated, the issue of discrimination undercut legal categories. Although the naturalised are not easily identifiable as Palestinians in the way refugees
are (due to their legal status, accent, place of residence, or identification card), the issue of discrimination was nevertheless very relevant to many. However, discrimination seldom targeted the naturalised directly. Many responded to the social and political discrimination that targeted their refugee counterparts; it was their belonging to the Palestinian broader community that resulted in the face of discrimination in a reluctance to feel at home in Lebanon. There is indeed overlap between the categories of refugee and citizen.

**Return, identity, and citizenship**

One of the main factors sustaining anti-*tawtin* agendas in Lebanon is the desire to preserve the ‘sanctity’ of the Palestinian right of return. Lebanese political elites have repeatedly stated that *tawtin* cannot take place. Return must remain on the international and domestic agenda (Haddad 2004; Hanafi and Knudsen 2010). But why would the acquisition of citizenship impede return? This question was addressed throughout this thesis, and the focus on return in Chapter 6 allowed me to challenge rigid or preconceived notions about the relationship between citizenship and return.

This challenge contributes to a larger scholarly trend. It is only in recent years that scholars have opened up the concept to include the varied ways in which refugees negotiate return (Allan 2013; Richter-Devroe 2013). While a focus on the naturalised is original, Allan (2013) also speaks of the diverse ways in which a Palestinian refugee camp community in Lebanon expresses its right to return. The naturalised too articulate various expressions of return. They should not be excluded. Return means different things to different people, and in applying a generational lens, the previous chapter highlighted how generation works to shape how return is perceived and articulated. Those of the younger generations, who did not directly experience life in historical Palestine, were willing to articulate return in creative ways. For some, return was symbolic and metaphorical, while for others it was physical and tangible. For the majority of my generation of Palestine informants, however, return was conceived as a return to an ancestral homeland. Nonetheless, return focused prominently in all my informants’ responses. There is no Palestinianness without it.

**Suggestions future research**

The findings in this work are premised on a non-exhaustive cross-section of the naturalised and refugee population in Lebanon. The thesis focused on three main aspects
of their experiences, their perception of *tawtin*, of home, and of the right of return. This focus leaves much room for exploration that goes beyond these categories. The naturalised have been understudied and this study is only a first step towards understanding their experience. Moreover, the scope for further study extends well beyond the confines of Lebanon. A similar approach could be replicated elsewhere in the diaspora.

**Further implications**

The majority of Palestinians in the world today are not refugees – they are citizens. Citizens of countries all over the world, they carry an array of identities, passports and identity cards. Scholars have told a very different story, however. The exiting scholarship pertaining to the study of Palestinians focuses primarily on the refugee experience, leaving the experience and lives of the majority of Palestinians around the world in need of further study and research. While there are exceptions, such as the study of naturalised Palestinians in the Americas, Jordan and Australia (Abu El-Hajj 2008; Mason 2012; Baeza 2014; Boyle 2014), these are somewhat limited. My intention is not to undermine the importance of research conducted on Palestinian refugees, of course, but it is important to reflect upon the lives of the majority of Palestinians in the world today. The future of Palestine is also with them.
References


Appendixes

Appendix A: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees: Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions

UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)

1. Introduction

UNRWA’s mandate is to provide relief, humanitarian, human development and protection services to Palestinian Refugees and other persons of concern in its Area of Operations. In pursuance of its mandate, UNRWA has formulated criteria and standards for identifying those who are entitled to be registered in its Registration System and/or to receive the Agency’s services. These standards and criteria are intended to facilitate the Agency’s operations. The provision of UNRWA services is subject to budgetary limitations and all relevant Agency Instructions, Regulations and Rules.
Appendix B: Summary of the results of the census of inhabitants of the Lebanese Republic taken in 1932 according to the Regulation of the Higher Census Committee (see p. 223 for original (Figure 1)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residents</th>
<th>Before August 30, 1924</th>
<th>After August 30, 1924</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>793,396</td>
<td>178,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emigrants</td>
<td>254,887</td>
<td>2,653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>61,297</td>
<td>2067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,109,680</td>
<td>9,840</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Before August 30, 1924</th>
<th>After August 30, 1924</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>178,100</td>
<td>1,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shi'ites</td>
<td>2,977</td>
<td>1,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druze</td>
<td>3,205</td>
<td>1,183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maronite</td>
<td>31,697</td>
<td>21,809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Catholic</td>
<td>7,190</td>
<td>4,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Orthodox</td>
<td>16,544</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian Orthodox</td>
<td>1,575</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian Catholic</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syriac Orthodox</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syriac Catholic</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>214</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chaldean Orthodox</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaldean Catholic</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>758</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>793,396</td>
<td>21,713</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thereof</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before August 1924</td>
<td>44,749</td>
<td>15,232</td>
<td>72,447</td>
<td>54,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pays fees and does not pay before 30 August 1924</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After August 1924</td>
<td>68,003</td>
<td>5,135</td>
<td>26,246</td>
<td>20,044</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>254,887</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: al-jārida a-rasmiyya, Official Gazette, 2718 (5 October 1932).
Appendix C: The Ta’if Agreement


The Taif Agreement

*This agreement, which ended the civil war in Lebanon, was negotiated in Ta’if, Saudi Arabia, in September 1989 and approved by the Lebanese parliament on 4 November 1989.*

First, General Principles and Reforms:

I. General Principles

A. Lebanon is a sovereign, free, and independent country and a final homeland for all its citizens.
B. Lebanon is Arab in belonging and identity. It is an active and founding member of the Arab League and is committed to the league's charter. It is an active and founding member of the United Nations Organization and is committed to its charters. Lebanon is a member of the nonaligned movement. The state of Lebanon shall embody these principles in all areas and spheres, without exception.
C. Lebanon is a democratic parliamentary republic founded on respect for public liberties, especially the freedom of expression and belief, on social justice, and on equality in rights and duties among all citizens, without discrimination or preference.
D. The people are the source of authority. They are sovereign and they shall exercise their sovereignty through the constitutional institutions.
E. The economic system is a free system that guarantees individual initiative and private ownership.
F. Culturally, socially, and economically-balanced development is a mainstay of the state's unity and of the system's stability.
G. Efforts (will be made) to achieve comprehensive social justice through fiscal, economic, and social reform.
H. Lebanon's soil is united and it belongs to all the Lebanese. Every Lebanese is entitled to live in and enjoy any part of the country under the supremacy of the law. The people may not be categorized on the basis of any affiliation whatsoever and there shall be no fragmentation, no partition, and no repatriation [of Palestinians in Lebanon].
I. No authority violating the common co-existence charter shall be legitimate

II. Political Reforms

A. Chamber of Deputies:
The Chamber of Deputies is the legislative authority which exercises full control over government policy and activities.
1. The Chamber spokesman and his deputy shall be elected for the duration of the chamber's term.
2. In the first session, two years after it elects its speaker and deputy speaker, the chamber may vote only once to withdraw confidence from its speaker or deputy speaker with a 2/3 majority of its members and in accordance with a petition submitted by at least 10 deputies. In case confidence is withdrawn, the chamber shall convene immediately to fill the vacant post.
Appendix D Ethical Clearance and Declaration

I, Hind Ghandour, declare that SUHREC Project- 2013/110 Naturalised Palestinians in Lebanon: experiences of belonging, identity and citizenship\(^1\) has ensured the following:

- Ethical clearance
- Submission of all annual and final reports

Hind Ghandour (Nov.2016)

-----Original Message-----
From: resethics@swin.edu.au
Sent: Tuesday, 29 September 2015 8:04 AM
To: Linda Briskman <lbriskman@swin.edu.au>
Cc: RES Ethics <resethics@swin.edu.au>
Subject: Acknowledgement of Report for SUHREC Project - 2013/110

Dear Linda Briskman,

Re: Final Report for the project (Report Date: 29-09-2015)

2013/110 'A comparative citizenship study of naturalized and non-naturalized Palestinians in Lebanon'

The final report for the above project (Report Date: 29-09-2015) has been processed and satisfies the reporting requirements set under the terms of ethics clearance.

Research Ethics Team

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PO Box 218
HAWTHORN VIC 3122
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Email: resethics@swin.edu.au

\(^1\) Note change in title from 'A comparative citizenship study of naturalized and non-naturalized Palestinians in Lebanon' (referred to in email) to 'Naturalised Palestinians in Lebanon: experiences of belonging, identity and citizenship.'