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What visibility conceals. Re-embedding Refugee Migration from Iraq

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Abstract:

This chapter aims at reconnecting the mass refugee migration from Iraq that has followed the fall of the regime of Saddam Hussein in April-May 2003 with previous and concomitant social and spatial migratory trends from Iraq through a combination of disciplinary approaches from the fields of the sociology of migration and social anthropology. Focusing on the case of refugee migration from Iraq to Jordan between 1990 and 2008, it is argued that the international humanitarian engagement with the post-2003 Iraq refugee crisis conceals previous dynamics of forced-migration from Iraq that have long taken a regional and global scope, the embededness of current refugee migration in other types of migration mouvements from and to Iraq, regional dynamics than span Iraq and the neighbouring countries that have played hosts to the majority of refugees from Iraq pre and post-2003, and the variegated experiences, self-perceptions and expectations of the refugees themselves.

Map of Iraq and neighbouring countries:

Iraq has undergone profound changes since the Anglo-American invasion and the fall of the Ba'athist regime in April-May 2003. Heightened and new levels of human insecurity have led to large refugee flows towards neighbouring countries - mostly Syria and, to a lesser extend, Jordan - and to internal displacement, in particular to the Kurdish autonomous region in the north of Iraq. Refugee migration started in anticipation of the 2003 American invasion with Iraqis looking for security in those neighbouring countries that allowed them entry. The number of refugees increased in subsequent years and reached a peak between early 2006 and early 2008 in response to the widespread development of communal-driven and criminal violence in the country, but also following sweeping policies of economic liberalisation and the dismantling of the army and public sector that resulted in increasingly high levels of unemployment (Marfleet 2007). Those who left during that two-year period looked for refuge mostly in Syria, after Jordan restricted entries of Iraqis following bombing attacks on hotels in Amman carried out by Iraqi nationals in Novembre 2005. While new regulations on exit from Iraq were introduced as of late 2005, early 2006 (conditional granting of a new type of passport, in particular), both Syria and Jordan introduced formal advanced visa procedures for Iraqis - the former in September 2007, the latter in January 2008 - further reducing the number of those able to exit Iraq in their quest for security.

Towards the end of 2006, and after a process of policy agenda-setting in which international refugee and human rights advocacies and humanitarian organisations, many of them US-based, played major roles in bringing Iraqi refugees from invisibility to visibility, the post-Saddam Hussein mass displacement from Iraq was designated for the first time as an unprecedented refugee crisis of huge proportions with figures as high as 2.2 million refugees gaining currency[1]. A complex set-up was deployed to protect and assist the refugees in neighbouring countries and further afield, supported by international funding and refugee resettlement schemes to western states (Sassoon 2008). These humanitarian operations, and the politically-laden aspects of the Iraq refugee crisis, in which the responsibility of the US government for failing to restore governance and maintain order and security in Iraq was pointed-out, have led humanitarian practitioners, advocacy groups, the media and scholars to focus their interventions and/or analyses on post-Saddam Hussein refugee mouvements.

The magnifying effect of the 'unprecedented refugee crisis' designation, together with the state-centered bias of the international refugee regime and, to some extend, of the academic field of refugee studies (Malkki 1995), have however created other invisibilities by obscuring the question of the embededness of the recent forced-migration in the longer-term political history of Iraq and in regional dynamics than span Iraq and the neighbouring countries that have played hosts to the majority of refugees from Iraq pre and post-2003. The short-term, operationally-bounded, humanitarian perspective has additionally disregarded the articulations between several types and scales of migratory movements from Iraq. In both Syria and Jordan, current refugee migration is a continuation, and only partial amplification, of previous trends, and takes place alongside a variety of other mobilities and circulations from and to Iraq (Chatelard and Dorai 2009). Refugee mouvements are not necessarily unidirectional and can include return visits to Iraq and subsequent migration to other Arab countries. Large numbers of Iraqi migrants and refugees maintain ties across borders with those who have remained in Iraq and those who have settled in migration or asylum countries in the West in previous decades, with pre-existing exile communities playing an important role in the migratory projects of those who have left more recently. Finally many Iraqis who had left their country before 2003 and settled in the West are also now engaged in circulations between their current country of residence and the main regional Arab states that have been hosting the latest wave of refugees from Iraq.

As is often the case with major refugee crises in the contemporary world, the recent mass

displacement from Iraq is overlaid on a continuum of previous displacements. Modern Iraq is in fact a classical case of 20th Century post-imperial nation-state formation of the type Aristide Zolberg analysed in his seminal 1983 article on 'The Formation of New States as a Refugee-Generating Process'. Successive regimes have exerted control over population mouvements both by limiting the mobility of certain categories of the population inside the national territory and across borders, and by forcibly displacing other categories internally or outside the national space (Chatelard 2009). In Iraq, the phenomenon of forced-migration has proved particularly durable and variegated, almost exhausting the typology of reactive migration proposed by Anthony Richmond (1993). Inscribed in the *longue-durée* of state-population relations, forced-migration mouvements from Iraq have long taken a broad regional and world-wide scope (Chatelard 2005b, 2009). The global social organisation of Iraqi migration has been shaped as much by the nature of the coercion subsequent Iraqi regimes have exerted upon the society – by fragmenting the population along corporate lines based on kinship, religion, ethnicity but also ideological orientations and class, and by exerting control upon the mobilities of individuals (Dawod and Bozarslan 2003)-, as by the nature of the polities within which the vast majority of migrants and refugees from Iraq have sought security.

Regional contexts, be they that of Iran that received the largest number of forced-migrants from Iraq between the late 1970s and early 2003 within a refugee regime (Alborzi 2006; Al-Meehy 2004), or that of Arab states or Turkey where the majority of Iraqis compelled to leave their country have been received as irregular migrants (Mannaert 2003; Zaiotti 2006), all exhibit common characteristics. The political orientations of host states vis-à-vis Iraq and the various components of its polity and population, and references to meta regional ideologies (pan-Islamism, pan-Shi'ism, pan-Arabism, pan-Turkism or Europeanism etc.), have created differentials in the context of opportunities of migrants from Iraq once again along ethnic, religious, political and class lines that have determined the unequal allocation of economic and social resources and of individual and group security. Most of the social fragmentations existing in Iraq have also been maintained among those who have settled in liberal countries in the West, where multiple communities of migrants origination from Iraq have been forming since the 1940s in Great-Britain, Australia, the USA, Germany, Sweden and several other countries. It is within socially fragmented transnational spaces that Iraqis from subsequent waves of emigration have maintained ties that span borders between Iraq, neighbouring states and more distant emigration and asylum countries. The result is that an understanding of migratory trends and the circumstances of migrants from Iraq in any given context needs to be based on a consideration of the dynamics of such social units as the family, the socio-religious or ethnic group, and the social or professional class that appear to be as relevant as policies vis-à-vis migrants or refugees and normative/legal categories in countries of transit or settlement.

Furthermore, the highly political nature of the causes that have led to reactive migration from Iraq, even when proximate causes appear to be economic (such as was the case under the embargo between 1990 and 2003, and continues to be the case under a neo-liberal system imposed by occupying powers), render the distinction between refugees or political exiles on the one hand, and economic migrants or expatriates on the other hand, particularly difficult. Another difficulty in upholding these categories stemms from the context of opportunities offered to qualified professionals and holders of capital from Iraq in a number of other Arab countries that have long practiced selective migration policies (De Bel Air 2006, 2007). Large numbers of those who have been compelled to leave Iraq since 1990 in response to a combination of economic and political threats on their security and that of their families have found employment as qualified migrant workers in several Arab countries, where others have invested capital in properties and businesses and obtained residence rights. A further issue is that of what Jordanian anthropologist Seteney Shami (1996) has deemed 'the forces or regionalism' in shaping migratory trends and experiences in the Middle East. Senses of alienation or, conversely, proximity between migrants from Iraq and host

societies in the region are largely shaped by such cultural determinants as language and religion.

If the general categories of refugee or forced-migrant are used in this chapter to encompass all those Iraqis who left their country under duress, it remains nevertheless that many of them have not framed their experiences in such terms. Migrants' self-perceptions of the experiences that prompted their departure from Iraq and their self-definition along migration categories and other collective identities are important elements to consider to account for their migratory trajectories and experiences in time and space and will be dealt with in this chapter, premised on the necessity to explore what lays beyond academic, normative and policy-relevant categories when looking at the sociological dynamics or refugees and forced-migration (Bakewell 2008; Polzer 2008).

For all the above reasons, it seems heuristic to look not only beyond the spaces, time-frames and social/legal categories that international humanitarian and advocacy actors define as those of their engagement but equally beyond the recent disruptions in Iraqi political history, and hence, following on Elizabeth Colson (2007), to adopt a multidisciplinary linkage methodology. Whereas a systematic history of forced-migration mouvements from Iraq remains to be written, this chapter aims at reconnecting the mass refugee migration from Iraq that has followed the fall of the regime of Saddam Hussein with previous and concomitant social and spatial migratory trends, through a combination of disciplinary approaches from the fields of the sociology of migration and social anthropology. Due to the limitations imposed by the format of this chapter, focus will be on the mouvements of Iraqis between Iraq and Jordan, covering a period that extends from 1990 to 2008, set within broader migratory trends and trajectories. The argument developed, based on original research conducted since 1998 among Iraqi migrants and exiles and relevant institutional actors, is that the recent visibility of the former, a factor of the international engagement with the post-2003 Iraq refugee crisis, conceals previous dynamics of forced-migration from Iraq, the embededness of current refugee migration in other migration mouvements of Iraqis, and the variegated experiences and self-perceptions of refugees from Iraq.

Invisible Iraqis in Jordan

The context of refugee migration from Iraq

During the 1990-1991 Gulf War, according to accounts from humanitarian and refugee organisations, 1 million Iraqis and foreigners working in Iraq had crossed into Jordan over a period of 2 months. In the following years, while some refugees returned to Iraq, successive groups of individuals kept arriving in Jordan, the only country neighbouring Iraq whose border constantly remained open between 1990 and 2003. Iraqis were fleeing the deteriorating economic situation ensuing from the UN-imposed embargo on Iraq, various types of violence exerted by the regime on active or perceived opponents - especially the Shi'ite Islamist Da'wa party-, and for some groups, like Christians and Sabeans[2] from rural areas, vexations that were unhindered by the security forces. Most Iraqis identified as members of the educated middle-class, with a large proportion of professionals, including amongst women, and former civil servants. Leaving Iraq was a long, costly and arduous undertaking in particular for holders of university degrees who faced financial disincentives imposed by the authorities, and those who were targeted by the Iraqi repressive apparatus, with the result that most migrants had had to prepare their departure secretly over several months, even years, and that many had to bribe their way out. The cost of emigration (compulsory bank-guarantee, exit tax etc.) had a selective effect on migrants, allowing out only those who could mobilise enough financial capital and/or social relations, hence migrants who arrived in Jordan belonged in their majority to the educated middle-class (Chatelard 2009).

The stock of Iraqis in Jordan in the year 2002 was estimated by the UNHCR at 300,000 in a country of 5 million people (UNHCR 2003). Iraqis were mostly concentrated in Amman, a city of 1.5 million inhabitants. Large flows has also transited Jordan in the previous twelve years, mostly on their way to Western Europe where over 200,000 Iraqi nationals claimed asylum over that period. The Jordanian authorities however barely acknowledged the presence and transit of this vast number of migrants, and Iraqis remained in many ways invisible to the eyes of the Jordanian public or foreign and national relief agencies. At the request of the Jordanian government, the latter concentrated their operations on the poorer sectors of the Jordanian population, including the most vulnerable of the Palestinian refugees or displaced from the 1948 end 1967 wars with Israel, and, until the mid-1990s, on the 300,000 Jordanian nationals (the majority of Palestinian origin) that had been expelled from Kuwait in 1990-1991 and had to be integrated in Jordan (Van Hear 1995).

Jordan did not have and still does not have in 2009 a domestic asylum regime, nor is the country a signatory of international refugee conventions (Zaiotti 2006)[3] In 2002, only 5% of the total estimate of Iraqis in the country were registered with the local office of the UNHCR that had started operating in Jordan during the 1990-1991 Gulf war to conduct status determination and resettlement of refugees to third countries. Refugee recognition rate for Iraqis was notoriously low and registration as an asylum seeker did not guarantee any form of social benefit nor did it protect against *refoulement* to Iraq by the Jordanian authorities that was said to happen albeit in very limited numbers. This last fact acted as a particularly strong deterrent on those who might have considered approaching the UNHCR since the Iraqi government had *de facto* created the categories of 'illegal emigrant' and 'illegal asylum seeker'. Perpetrators of the latter category were liable of death penalty in case of return, whereas family members left in Iraq incurred serious threats from the authorities. The Iraqi secret services were also said to carry out assassinations of refugees with a high political profile in Jordan and in countries of asylum further afield, including in Europe.

Illegality of status was making the situation of Iraqi residents precarious: most had overstayed the visit permit on which they had entered Jordan. Access of the majority of Iraqis to the work market was confined to the informal sector where they were unprotected by labour laws. They were denied welfare benefits and free access to health. On the other hand, education in primary and secondary government schools was by royal decree available to Iraqi children even when parents did not have a residence. However very few availed themselves of this possibility. In the vast majority of cases, Iraqis experienced a painful social degradation in Jordan. Informality and irregularity compelled them to keep a low profile and to establish residency in several poor or lower middle-class neighbourhoods of Amman with few clusterings particularly around the existing churches that served Jordanian Christians. Whatever their socioeconomic background and geographical origin, the majority were cut off from possible sources of income or remittances from inside Iraq at a time when the blockade precipitated a dramatic economic crisis and the devaluation of the Iraqi currency. Those who managed employment in the formal or informal sector in Jordan remitted income back to dependants through informal systems of money transfer (*hawala*). Other forms of communication with Iraq were very limited: telephones were tapped by the Iraqi security services, the Iraqi postal service read letters, and internet was not available to the public in Iraq (Chatelard 2005a).

Social fragmentation and solidarity networks

There was a more ancient migration of Iraqis to Jordan dating back from 1958 when the Iraqi monarchy was toppled and members of the former ruling elite were welcomed by King Hussein of Jordan, a close relative of the assassinated Iraqi monarch. This group, and successive ones who came before the large influx of the 1990s, were composed of members of the political, intellectual

and business elite who were either incorporated into the equivalent social class in Jordan, either later migrated durably to third countries mostly in Europe and America (Fattah 2007).

Relations maintained between the 'old' and 'new' generations of Iraqi migrants to Jordan and between Iraqis and Jordanians were primarily a factor of class and professional identities. Artists and intellectuals, academics, members of the professions and the business elite represented throughout the various periods of Iraqi migration to Jordan formed solidarity networks encompassing Jordanians and Iraqis who had arrived a different periods therefore playing an efficient role in reanchoring the newcomers socially and professionally. A few thousands Iraqis professionals and academics who arrived in the 1990s accessed a status as foreign residents with a work contract. Many of those were still professionally active in Jordan in the late 2000s.

Other Iraqis, who had less social or professional capital to negotiate in Jordan and with members of the previous generation of exiles, did not form a cohesive group. Interactions were limited by the absence of financial means, feelings of insecurity and mistrust, and several layers of social barriers that resulted in socialisations and solidarities taking place along religious lines. Whereas Iraqi Christians could associate with Jordanian Christians of the same social class, Sabean families remained socially isolated although they received help from several Christian congregations. The religiously-oriented Shi'ites were the most marginalised in a staunchly Sunni country that denied them communal organisation (Chatelard 2005a).

A quest for security

As I was gathering the testimonies of Iraqis staying in Amman without a legal status, trying to understand their coping strategies and which factors, apart from institutional ones, explained their invisibility, three common recurrent themes kept surfacing in more informal face-to-face interviews or collective discussions. These were the situations that they had fled in Iraq, their anger and anxiety in the face of their new conditions in Jordan, and their projects of further migration.

Those who had fled to espace direct coercition exerted by the agents of the regime, and who were mainly active members or sympathisers of political Shi'ite currents (in particular the Da'wa party), described Iraq as hell, the locus of terror, of unlimited and inescapable tyranny exerted by Saddam Hussein and his security forces, the site of torture, death, social dislocation and the unbearable division of family and friendship groups. Their widespread sentiment was that ones' physical integrity and that of close associates was never guaranteed. They read economic deprivation, that had affected many of them under the embargo, or as a result of discriminatory policies (many had been dismissed from their jobs as civil servants), within the context of regime coercion. Religiously oriented refugees were likely to interpret their experience within a metaphor of divinely-imposed suffering and redemption, that fitted well within both Christian and Shi'ite worldviews, and entertained the hope of punishment for the tyrant although this was not projected within human but eschatological times[4]. These individual experiences and collective representations were incommunicable to most Jordanians. The latter's general feeling was of support to and admiration for Saddam Hussein, perceived as the champion of Arabs vis-à-vis Western imperialism and whose attributes of masculinity, authority, strong leadership, unchecked power and military force where precisely the ones that had been put to bear so brutally on the minds and bodies of refugees.

Both by those who had suffered at the hands of the regime and by those who had left Iraq to espace deteriorating economic circumstances, Jordan was rarely mentally constructed as a place of permanent abode. It was spoken of as a locus of economic and social insecurity where one could be nothing but uncertain about the future. Iraqis were sharing a diffuse sentiment of anxiety in part

lingering from past trauma, in part fuelled by rumours of deportation carried out by the Jordanian authorities or of assassinations conducted inside Jordan by agents of Saddam's regime, or by the widespread belief that one such agent had infiltrated the local office of the UNHCR. Unlike Iraq, Jordan was not a site of terror, but it was still a site of fear because it was not perceived as an entity totally separated from Iraq where individual security could be guaranteed. Hence many migrants adopted strategies of physical and identity concealment that resulted in their social invisibility. As a whole, and excluding those who had secured a legal status via professional, class or family connections, most Iraqis interacted with Jordanians only when it was necessary to ensure their basic living requirements. Mistrust was the norm, accompanied by a feeling of bitterness that what they had expected from Arab brothers in Jordan, a country that had championed Arabness, was unmet. The corollary was withdrawal into the close circle of family members, friends and co-religionists with whom to share trust, mutual assistance, and the feeling of a common experience in Iraq and in Jordan.

As their stay endured, so grew their desire to travel further afield and reconstruct livelihoods in what many interviewees termed as 'safe' (*amin*) countries. By this they always meant Western Europe, North America or Australia. A large part of the every-day discussions of the Iraqis I met dealt with the feeling that they were but at one stage of an unfinished journey, with imaginations of the destination as a place where they would escape physical threats and economic insecurity, with the project of raising a family, but also narratives of the uncertainties faced by relatives and friends who had taken the underground routes to such destinations, and finally discussions and exchange of information about the means to that end.

It is almost exclusively in this type of narrative that references to actors in the international refugee regime such as the UNHCR or national asylum agencies in prospective host countries were uttered. Often, they were simply juxtaposed with mentions of other facilitating institutions or individuals such as churches that sponsored refugee arrivals through national schemes in Australia or Canada, embassies of various 'safe' countries in Amman, migrant smugglers who operated travel services in the city, religious leaders, Christian or Shi'ites, who were in Amman or had made it to a safe country, or the International Committee of the Red Cross that offered an international family identification service that some migrants used to locate relatives in the diaspora, reconnect with them to gather information on destinations countries and sometimes to request financial assistance. The only hierarchy of preference was that of all other means over smugglers. The UNHCR was neither trusted nor favoured for the reasons mentioned above, but also because the UN system in general was perceived to be responsible for imposing the economic blockade over Iraq, and because many migrants did not want to be forced to resettle in a country that they had not chosen, since thus were the rules of the system. Most Iraqis knew rather precisely where they wanted to go: places where they had friends or relatives (who were not necessarily under a refugee status and with whom the UNHCR-sponsored family reunification schemes could not be activated), or destinations about which they has formed an idea and which they thought would meet their moral, social or economic expectations.

For that group of Iraqi who had constructed a vision of Iraq as intrinsically unsafe, return was never on the agenda. They had no hope that tyranny in Iraq was about to come to an end in the near future. The only ones who attempted to go back did so with the aim of rescuing close family members, a spouse, children, sometimes a father or mother left behind, and bringing them to Jordan, or to sell a property in order to sustain themselves in exile or pay for a journey to safety. Others, whose motives for living in exile were based on strict livelihoods consideration, also refrained from going back to Iraq on a regular basis. Their movements were impeded by the

limitations the regime had on the exit of its nationals and those who re-entered Iraq were rarely assured to be able to leave again.

Mobilities, circulations and the redistribution of migrants

In the pre-2003 period, the composition of the newly arrived Iraqi population in Amman changed quickly over just more than a decade: many of the original working-age males were joined by their spouses and children, and families experienced natural growth. The Iraqi migrant population in Jordan was in permanent recomposition as many of its members were only in transit for variable time-lengths, sometimes as long as several years, and a large number of Iraqis were circulating between Iraq and Jordan: cross-border traders living off the embargo, businessmen and other members of the Iraqi elite whose movements out of Iraq and residence in Jordan were facilitated, bus, taxi and truck drivers that connected Iraq to Jordan. As new migrants seeking economic or physical security arrived from Iraq, other ones left Jordan. Many went to look for employment in Libya, Yemen and Arab Gulf states that recruited trained professionals. But the largest number traveled to countries where they applied for asylum and subsequently appeared in the statistics of national refugee agencies in Western states.

In this instance again, secondary migration often took place in stages, one family member leaving ahead of his spouse and children, who were reunited with him or her either after a long institutional process within the framework of asylum, and more rarely migration, regimes, or who embarked on a clandestine journey across continents (Chatelard 2005a). In contrast to previous generations of Iraqi exiles, who had been able to enter and settle in Europe or America through labour or student migration regimes, the post-1990 migrants were faced with the non-entry policies that most wealthy states had started to adopt in the 1980s and had little choice but to acquire legal status through asylum regimes. At that point, they started talking about themselves as asylum-seekers (*talbin luju'*) or as refugees (*laji'in*), to denote the legal category host states had placed them in. However, they did not use these terms to qualify Iraqi migrants collectively, but spoke of themselves using various Arabic term, such as *muhajirin* (emigrants), *manfiyin* or *mughtaribin,* the latter two carrying the same sense of alienation as the English 'exiles'.

Over that period, Jordan played the role of a sieve and filter, or Frontier zone, between Iraq and the rest of the world. The control and coercion mechanisms put in place by the Iraqi regime exerted a selection on would-be migrants, allowing out only specific categories who could mobilise financial and relational capital. In Jordan, other mechanisms were at play that redistributed Iraqi migrants and refugees regional and globally. Amman was a meeting point for Iraqis from previous decades that had accessed the nationality of their country of settlement in West and those who had left Iraq more recently, allowing for mariages and other family-based or communal-based strategies of secondary migration. The country's integration in international communication and transport networks, the presence of several foreign embassies, the availability of technologies for forging identity and other documents allowed the development of a trade in services for irregular migration to Europe or, for a smaller number, to Australia or North America. Air transport was available to other Arab countries that offered employment opportunities. UNHCR-operated resettlement and family-reunification programmes, together with the refugee-sponsorship schemes of Australia and Canada accessible from these countries' embassies in Amman, further distributed a few thousand refugees to Western countries. Class, political and professional identities, and previous migration histories of members of the family or the religious or ethnic group were all factors liable to direct the migratory strategies and trajectories of those who used Jordan as a stepping stone for further migration.

It is the interplay between the policy choices of Western countries on asylum, refugee resettlement and family-reunification, on the one hand, and the dynamics of migrants' social networks, on the other hands, that shaped the global distribution of Iraqi migration. Pre-existing migratory poles specific to certain categories of Iraqis were further reinforced (Australia and California for Christians; the UK for the secular middle-class; Germany for the Kurds who had left Iraq across Turkey), while new ones emerged (Canada for Christians; Sweden for Christians and Kurds; suburbs of Detroit and London for religious Shi'ites). In each of these migratory poles, several discrete communities of migrants/refugees from Iraq maintained limited interactions.

In the Arab region, the distribution of those who could or would not migrate further happened also along class and socioreligious or sociopolitical lines, once again as a combined factor of the policy choices of Arab states and of the social networks migrants could access. Within Arab migration regimes, those well integrated into Jordan through class or professional networks remained long-term or maintained facilitated circulations between Iraq and Jordan, whereas multi-directional migration of professionals took place between Jordan, Libya and Yemen according to opportunities for labour and social connections. By contrast, supporters of the Da'wa party who had fled to Jordan later left to Syria where the authorities allowed the religious activities of Iraqi and other Shi'ites based both on the legal recognition of a Shi'ite community in the country and on regional politics such as Syria's ties with Iran and Hizbollah in Lebanon.

A concealing visibility

After the post-2003 Iraq refugee crisis was set on the international humanitarian agenda, the situation of what is, by the reliable accounts available, a proportion of Iraqis similar to that of the late 1990s within the Jordanian population (6 million in 2008) has not only brought Iraqi refugees in Jordan - and in other regional host states, particularly Syria - attention at the international level, it has also made them much more visible in the social landscape of Jordan and the objects of a discourse from the part of the Jordanian authorities, media and public. However, by framing populations mouvements from Iraq exclusively in refugee terms and by isolating post-2003 trends from previous ones, this visibility conceals more than it reveals.

The new context of refugee migration to Jordan

Immediately after the collapse of the regime of Saddam Hussein in April 2003, the new context in Iraq prompted new refugees to come to Jordan: initially those who were closely associated with the former regime and feared arrest and/or retribution, then many others who had been unable to realise their migratory projects during previous years and who took the opportunity of the lifting of restrictions on exit from Iraq, and finally, as of early 2006, those who experienced or feared sectarian, political and criminal violence, including retribution for having worked with the occupying forces or foreign companies. Members of the second category soon became 'displaced by absence' (Kunz 1973, quoted by Richmond 1993: 8) after insecurity in Iraq prevented them from returning.

The flow of Iraqis to Jordan, unhindered before attacks were carried out on hotels in Amman by Iraqi nationals in November 2005, was thereafter curbed at entry points (with adult males and those carrying identifiable Shi'ite names liable to be refused entry) and a formal visa procedure was introduced in early 2008, favoring holders of capital and those who had an institutional guarantor in Jordan or in Iraq. The result is that a very large part of those who fled generalised violence as of

2006, particularly those who expected to be refused entry into Jordan, had no choice but to flee to Syria.

Although motives for flight have been different from those refugees of the previous period, Iraqis who have made it to Jordan still belong to the same social category: the educated urban middle and upper-middle class, originating mostly from Baghdad. The major change in the sociological profile of the refugees before and after the fall of Saddam Hussein concerns religiously-oriented Shi'ites who, having been made more welcome in Syria, have redirected their migration there. Among the current wave of Iraqis in Jordan, with a majority defining themselves as secular, such categories as Sunni or Shi'ite sectarian affiliation appear of little relevance, even though they are forced - allegedly for statistical purposes - upon those who seek assistance or protection from the UNHCR or NGOs. On the other hand, religious minorities such as Christians and Sabeans, who face higher levels of insecurity in today's Iraq, continue to be well represented among the refugees. Demographically, and according to the survey conducted by FAFO (2007), there is also now a higher proportion of women to men, with numbers of women on their own, and most probably, a higher proportion of children, although this is difficult to verify in the absence of systematic statistics covering this population before and after 2003. In terms of spacial distribution, the newcomers to Jordan have settled mostly in Amman and in less numbers in other cities in the north of the country, with those with less financial capacities finding rented accommodation in middle and lower-middle class neighborhoods, and others, who could pay higher rents or buy properties, in more affluent areas of the capital. Distribution has therefore happened on a class and income basis, with few clusterings along similar lines as those Iraqis who came between 1990 and 2002, in particular, for poorer Christians and Sabeans, in the vicinity of existing churches that offer them social services.

In Jordan, Iraqis, especially since the bombing attacks of 2005, have become highly visible in the public discourse of the government and the local media, the latter generally reproducing uncritically the rhetoric of the former in a country where the Arabic press has limited scope for diverging from the official line. The Jordanian public has composed a shared imagining of the Iraqi presence in Jordan assembled out of the representations offered by the local media and government officials in which the sectarian conflict in Iraq and the fear of a Shi'ite expansion figure prominently, and of their own individual and collective concerns for political, societal and economic security in Jordan. This imagining of the presence of Iraqis combines two main elements. On the one hand, a vision of their role as predators on the scarce natural and economic resources of Jordan and primary forces in driving up prices of goods and properties, therefore legitimizes claims to international assistance to 'relieve the burden' on Jordan. On the other hand, Iraqis are perceived as a risk on the religious and national identity of Jordan that needs to be contained by the security apparatus of the host state. Other perceptions of the Iraqi presence in Jordan that are not grounded in the predation and security discursive orders are not uncommon among Jordanian intellectuals, academics, professionals, artists and Jordanian employees of relief organisations who are those most likely to maintain regular exchanges with Iraqis in the work place - as colleagues or as beneficiaries of assistance - or in social circles. However, these perceptions do not inform the contend of the government-controlled information that flows in direction of the general public, while there lacks a public sphere where diverging voices, including that of the Iraqis themselves, could debate the realities and implications of the Iraqi presence in the country. Therefore the prominence of the issue in public and popular discourses renders Iraqis in Jordan both highly conspicuous and equally mis-represented by a hegemonizing state-driven rhetoric.

Circulations, mobilities and immobility

As was the case in the pre-2003 period, transit refugees and migrants from Iraq have also been using Jordan as a stepping stone towards Yemen, the Arab Gulf or more distant destinations. Via Jordan, Egypt has replaced Libya as an Arab destination, however offering markedly different opportunities, with irregularity and absence of employment being the norm (Fargues *et ali* 2008). Conversely, those Iraqis who had left Iraq in previous decades and settled in a Western country within a migration or refugee regime, and who have accessed the nationality of their country of residence, have been using Amman as a safe base from where to explore possibilities of returning to Iraq or establishing business links. Amman has reinforced its previous role as a meeting point between members of the distant diasporas who come to visit those relatives and friends who remained secluded in Iraq under the Ba'athist regime. Iraqi marriages held in the Jordanian capital are occasions for family reunions, bringing together people still living in Iraq, others who have taken residence in Jordan, and those who come from abroad. Frequent unions also take place between those from abroad and those from Iraq, or those newly arrived in Jordan as refugees, with a view to transferring residency rights and/or citizenship of a Western country to the Iraqi spouse.

Amman is perceived by Iraqis as Iraq's second economic capital. Jordan plays in fact a broader social, political and cultural role as a safe Frontier where to withdraw temporarily and conduct a number of activities in the context of the fragmentation of the Iraqi territory where entire areas, between 2006 and 2008, had fallen outside the control of a central government, thus restricting and making unsafe the mouvements of people. This is why a considerable flow of circular migrants has also kept shuttling between Baghdad and Amman in what can be conceptualised as a translocal space: Iraqi businesspeople use Amman as a regional center in which several have made investments and in which two Iraqi business associations are active, members of the Iraqi government and public institutions hold meetings with international organisations that operate their activities in Iraq from Amman, Iraqi employees of foreign NGOs and international organisations come to meet their foreign colleagues whose trips to Iraq are restricted, new recruits from the Iraqi police forces and employees from an array of public and non-governmental institutions receive training in Jordan, patients flown in from Iraq are treated in Jordanian hospitals, students complete their education in Jordanian private universities before returning to Iraq etc. Among the Iraqi governmental and business elite, but also less prominent socioeconomic categories such as civil society activist, a possible way of capitalising on the safety and stability offered by Amman while maintaining professional, business or political opportunities in Iraq has been to buy a property in Amman and secure a Jordanian residence permit either as an Iraqi or as a national of western country. While spouses and children live in Jordan, the head of the household, or both parents in some cases, travel frequently between Baghdad and Amman.

Businessmen are the only category of Iraqi residents to have been allowed to form associations, whereas membership to Jordanian civil society organisation or the establishment of NGOs by non-nationals is prevented under Jordanian law. In February 2009, Jordan further reinforced its inclination towards Iraqi holders-of-capital over other migrants by facilitating visa and residence procedures for investors and businesspeople from Iraq. Françoise De Bel-Air has qualified this policy as one of 'segmented assimilation (assimilation of the migrant to a sub-group within the host population)' where 'rich migrants from Palestine, Iraq and elsewhere continue to be welcome, thus composing a transversal, globalised elite, involved in consumption and select leisure infrastructure' (De Bel-Air 2007).

Strategies of mobility across the Iraqi-Jordanian border (or air space) are conditional upon a number of economic, social, administrative or legal pre-requisites: either enough financial capital to make

productive or consumptive investments that entitle Iraqis to residence rights in Jordan, or the backing of institutions or prominent individuals in Iraq or in Jordan that act as guarantors vis-à-vis the visa-granting Jordanian authorities, or the possession of a passport from a Western country that facilitates entry and an up to 6-month stay in Jordan. At the other end, in Iraq, the main pre-requisite is the availability of a system of social or armed protection that allows circulation and the conduct of activities, or the restriction of these activities within secured spaces, like the Green Zone in Baghdad, or some 'pacified' neighborhoods. Those most mobile across the border generally cumulate several of these assets. Their circulation between Jordan and Iraq does not preclude many of those to be registered with the UNHCR in Amman or to have applied to various humanitarian schemes for resettlement operated by such countries as Australia and Canada.

Mobility is not available to all Iraqis who have come to Jordan and many are immobilised either for lack of the financial assets or social connections that would allow them a residency in Jordan. Those have entered before restrictions were placed on entries, or in later years with a visa that they have overstayed. Applying a discretionary toleration regime grounded in commitments, somehow eroded, to Pan-Arabism, the Jordanian authorities define those Iraqis who lack a legal residence as 'temporary guests' who can stay in Jordan pending return or secondary migration, but who then need to apply for a visa for re-entry into Jordan. The guest status is however not-legally binding for Jordan that can be revoke it at any time (Olwan 2007). It maintains Iraqi 'guests' in a situation of legal and social insecurity, with limited opportunities for engaging in professional pursuits or collective social or advocacy activities.

Since the late 2008, with the improved security situation in Iraq, many of those immobilised would wish to undertake a visit back home to see relatives, friends, check on businesses, evaluate the conditions of their properties or the situation in their neighborhoods, often with a view to plan for return in stages. However, these projects have been impeded by the fact that they have no guarantee of being allowed back into Jordan and that they are liable to be asked to pay upon exit a substantial financial penalty for overstaying their visit permits.

Others who have the administrative and/or financial possibility to travel back to Iraq opt not to: they are prevented by concerns for their physical security as former prominent Ba'athists or for having worked for companies or armies of occupying countries, or following traumatic experiences as objects or witnesses of violence, by their lack of trust in the fragile stability to which Baghdad and other areas of Iraq have been restored, or by their absence of interest in maintaining ties with Iraq, a feeling prevalent among Christians and Sabeans and others whose entire family groups have left Iraq before or after 2003. Most of those are engaged in projects of secondary migration to a Western country (in particular through registration with the UNHCR in view of resettlement, the activation of ties within transnational family and communal networks, and the facilitating services of migrant smugglers), although the time factor and changes in the situation inside Iraq play a role in shifting migratory strategies, directions and priorities for those who still have stakes, assets and family or social connections inside Iraq.

Many of those immobilised, be they registered or not with the UNHCR, maintain connections with Iraq trough other types of circulations and exchanges. Information technologies and free-market economy, both introduced in Iraq under its new governance regime, have considerably reshaped the relations between the Iraqi community in Amman and Iraq. Remittances have changed direction after 2003 and now flow from Iraq to Jordan, either because families have split with bread-winners staying in Iraq, or because business-owners have settled in Jordan and left their establishments under the care of employees. Those who have retired from the Iraqi public sector or the army can also collect pensions at the Iraqi embassy in Amman. Mobile phones and internet connections, that

were unavailable to the public under Saddam Hussein, are now widespread. Information flows freely between Jordan and Iraq, with a host of internet sites and discussion fora in which Iraqis from 'inside' and 'outside' participate, and Iraqi journalists and academics turned experts based in Jordan receive payments for reports written on the situation in Iraq in collaboration with colleagues who have remained there.

The space of humanitarian intervention

Compared to the pre-2003 period, another important novelty in the opportunity context of Iraqis in Jordan has been the high-level involvement of institutional humanitarian actors and refugee organisations. On the occasion of a UN conference on displaced Iraqis held in Geneva in April 2007, the Jordanian government publicly acknowledged the presence of large numbers of Iraqis on its soil, calling for international support and expressing willingness to allow the operations of international relief and assistance NGOs. However, the conditions posed by the Jordanian authorities have been that Western countries, and especially the USA, commit to resettle those whose refugee status is recognised by the UNHCR in Amman and that bilateral or multilateral aid be allocated to Jordan within a development framework to benefit all sectors affected by the presence of Iraqis. No parallel system of refugee assistance has therefore been put in place. Within that context, the UNHCR in Amman resumed its registration operations that had been put to a near halt after the American invasion of Iraq under the assumption that refugees from the previous period were going to return back to Iraq. As of early 2009, some 55,000 Iraqis in Jordan had registered as asylum seekers, the majority with a view to being resettled. In 2007 and 2008, a few thousands had already been accepted as refugees in the USA, Sweden, Australia, Canada, and some other European countries. Many more are in the pipe-line if one considers the 240,000 Iraqis registered with the UNHCR in Syria in early 2009. However, registration figures are not precise indications of the number of those who will be proposed for resettlement as they also include those who will eventually be denied refugee status by the UNHCR.

Although aid to Jordan in the framework of the country's assistance to Iraqis has been largely used to develop public institutions (in particular the educational and medical sectors), and has only marginally benefited Iraqis (Chatelard 2008), donors (the USA, the EU, the UN etc) have also allocated budgets to over twenty international and local NGOs that started operating programmes for Iraqi refugees in most large cities of Jordan, with beneficiaries selected on the basis of vulnerabilities (legal, social, economic or psychological), be they or not registered with the UNHCR. Between 40 and 60,000 Iraqis benefit from one or several of these programmes. These initiatives are particularly important for those who lack other forms of social protection, have limited or no access to incomes from employment or remittances from relatives, or who have been deeply affected by the violence they have experienced in Iraq: women on their own - many whose husbands have been killed in Iraq- and other isolated individuals, households where breadwinners are unable to work, children who find difficulties joining Jordanian schools, former victims of torture etc. NGOs, together with some Churches, provide social support and financial help to several families, paying schooling or medical fees, or delivering food and cash assistance to those most in need. Several community centers in various neighborhoods on Amman and secondary cities welcome those Iraqis who lack other spaces to socialise or exchange their experiences of violence in Iraq and exile in Jordan.

It remains that such initiatives as income-generating projects or professional or vocation training for Iraqis are not veted by the Jordanian authorities that want to prevent competition with their own nationals on an already congested work market and that strive to maintain the temporary nature of the stay of poorer Iraqis on their soil. Nevertheless, foreign NGOs play an economic role vis-à-vis

this population by providing employment opportunities for many qualified Iraqis: administrative or medical personnel or social workers, some with a work contract and an attached residence permit, but an even larger number as paid volunteers without legal protection. The space of humanitarian action is therefore mostly limited to relief and assistance, catering for the immediate needs of those most socially or economically marginalised and physically or psychologically affected refugees, but with little scope for supporting either long-term stay in Jordan or even for preparing families for repatriation to Iraq.

What the UNHCR terms 'the urban context' of refugee protection and assistance in Jordan, to contrast it with situations where refugees are regrouped in camps or other specific areas, has been viewed as a challenge by all institutional actors involved with Iraqi refugees. Such challenges have been identifying and reaching out to beneficiaries scattered in several neighborhoods of Amman and in other cities; providing services that meet the needs of Iraqis while, upon the request of the Jordanian authorities, serving a broader population of vulnerable Jordanians; and tailoring programmes for individuals whose needs, expectations, and context of vulnerabilities and opportunities in Jordan are different from those of refugees in other contexts of operation relief NGOs are familiar with. International institutional actors have been slowly coming to terms with the reality that vulnerable Iraqis in Jordan exhibit characteristics both of irregular migrants, due to their legal and social context of reception in Jordan, and of refugees socially, psychologically and/or physically affected by violence in Iraq. Humanitarian actors have also started to admit that those in need of international assistance and protection might be much less numerous than was initially expected based on the very high figures publicized by Jordan in its funding appeals.

Locating 'refugeeness'

More Iraqis than in the previous period readily define their experiences in refugee terms, a label which has gained currency among those submitted to successive interviews with the UNHCR and various NGOs, and those offered a range of opportunities (assistance, employment, paid expertise, resettlement etc.) within a refugee framework. The international political, humanitarian and media discourse on the Iraq refugee crisis has undeniably come to provide an interpretative framework, largely unavailable in the previous period, within which those who find themselves displaced in Jordan and other Arab countries can recast their individual and collective experiences as refugees from conflict and violence. Many Iraqis in Jordan, however, remain uncomfortable with the term: some outwardly refuse the label, others shift, in their discourses, from one terminology to other ones to describe their migratory experiences and statuses, with some qualifying themselves as refugees exclusively when they evoke their dealings with specialised agencies. It remains that, whatever the level of appropriation of and identification with the refugee category, Iraqis do not locate their 'refugeeness' inside the political, social, cultural or physical space of Jordan, nor do they expect or claim 'refugeeness' within these spaces. The subjectivities of Iraqis in Jordan are as much a factor of the externalisation of the framework of intervention in favour of Iraqi refugees - manifested in the involvement of international institutions within Jordan and mechanisms of resettlement outside the Middle East that are the ones shaping the experiences of Iraqis as *refugees*-, as of the internalisation of 'the forces of regionalism' (Shami 1996: 3) in shaping forced-migration dynamics and the identities of refugees in the Middle East.

In the Arab world, regional linkages, Seteney Shami recalled, 'are salient in shaping identity, allocating mutual responsibility and hence informing the geographical trajectories and consequences of migration' (Shami 1996: 4). Beyond consideration of the political economy of hosting Iraqis (De Bel Air 2007), the perspective of Jordan on the presence of Iraqis in its territory, and the expectations of Iraqis vis-à-vis their Jordanian hosts - be they the state or the society - is

inseparable from Arab nationalism, or Pan-Arabism, as a political ideology or Arabness as a sense of common identity, but also from the Sunni religious identity of the Hashemite monarchy, the country and the people.

It is within that context that one must read the resistance of the Jordanian authorities and public to the labelling of Iraqis as refugees and their preferred use of the terms migrants (*muhajirin*) or guests (*dhuyuf*). So far the legitimacy of this resistance has largely remained uncontested within the Arab region. In Jordan, as in other Arab countries, the notions of refugee and refugeeness have come to be inseparable from the Palestinian experience with the result that, between Arabs, refugeeness can only signify the experience of individuals who have been denied national existence. Other Arab forced migrants are conceived of (and usually conceive of themselves) as *migrants* or *guests*, by which they express a link to an existing Arab state and by which they can make claims to specific entitlements vis-à-vis their Arab hosts. It is the nature, quality, durability and guarantee of these entitlements as Arab migrants or guests, and the differentials that exist between Arab countries and over time, that may constitute an object of insatisfaction from the part of Iraqis who have taken refuge in Jordan and in other Arab countries.

Islam as a historical and cultural framework or reference, including in its capacity to accommodate non-Moslem communities such as the Christians, together with the geopolitics and Sunnism and Shi'ism, represent other major regional forces that account, on the one hand, for the various inclination of regional countries towards hosting specific groups of forced-migrants, but also for the inclinations of these migrants to seek security in one or another country of the region. Religiously-oriented Shi'ites from Iraq feel more exiled in Sunni Jordan than in Syria whose religious fabric is more pluralistic. In the 1980s and 1990s, many Iraqi Shi'ites who benefited from a generous refugee status in Iran later established themselves in Syria where they felt less culturally exiled as Arabs although they were received within a migration regime.

Iraqi refugees and other exiles in Jordan express their claims, identities, experiences and expectations along a variety of *relational* categories of self-definition, and rarely along mutually exclusive normative ones. Therefore one can think of oneself as a refugee to make claims to an international (perceived as Western) refugee order that grants entitlements, security and futures, while at one and the same time thinking of oneself as an Iraqi, an Arab, or a Moslem to make claims to a Jordanian or Syrian migration order that grants others types of entitlements such a temporary safety, and continuing to make claims to an Iraqi national order from which one does not want to be detached even as a migrant or refugee. Based on these relational identities, individual migratory strategies can be single or multiple, concomitant or subsequent with choices and configurations that vary over time based on a multiplicity of variables that pertain to the national and international contexts of migratory opportunities and to the experiences, assets and projects of individuals, families and broader collectives. It is within this relational field, and within changing contexts of opportunities and constraints, that the location of refugeness for Iraqis need to be reembeded.

Conclusion: Revealing and concealing

Iraqis refugees in Jordan and other Arab host countries have become highly visible at the international level: as refugees in the humanitarian and human-rights discourses and spaces of intervention, as objects of contested representations (as migrants, guests or refugees) by various political actors (the Iraqi government, the authorities of Arab host states, those of donor governments and agencies and resettlement countries in the West, and, most recently, the Arab League), and as objects of debate between these various actors as regards their future (resettlement,

return or local integration). This visibility has revealed extreme levels of human suffering and created scope for international humanitarian operations in countries that were previously reticent to such interventions. It has also compelled governments of countries that have played a direct role in precipitating a new order of insecurity in Iraq to engage with the issue of displacement in and from Iraq. Nevertheless, this recent visibility has arguably merely redressed the imbalance of the previous oblivion within which forced-migrants from Iraq had fallen under the last period of the regime of Saddam Hussein. For over a decade, Iran bore the burden of hosting hundreds of thousands of Iraqis in addition to two million Afghans with minimal international support (Alborzi 2006), no international pressure was exerted in the face of Jordan's denial of the situation of a majority of Iraqis on its soil, and advocacy campaigns did not set the international refugee agenda on the responsibility of the UN, the USA and some of the latter's allies for creating a context of economic and political insecurity in Iraq that led to the durable outmigration of at least one million Iraqis.

From a social sciences perspective, the new 'Iraq refugees agenda' conceals the multi-layered embededness of migratory mouvements from Iraq and the socially and spatially stratified patterns of security and protection available to current migrants and refugees. This angle of vision prevents analysts to distinguish between those Iraqis that have been forced out by violence or fear and do not have the necessary social or financial capital to 'buy protection' in Iraq and in a country of the region, and between those who have been able, through their access to financial and relation assets, to adopt a form of translocal mobility as a response to the uneven distribution of security and opportunities between Iraq and neighbouring countries. The narrow 'refugee lens' obscures the complexities of migratory strategies from and to Iraq and the nature of the challenges those who need to be mobile across borders are facing ensuing from shifts in systems and mechanisms of control over population mouvements in Iraq and neighbouring countries. It furthermore precludes an understanding of the articulations between previous mouvements and current ones, of the links maintained across time and space by Iraqis at home and in migration, and of the dynamics of current migratory trajectories that are based on the policies of states as much as on transnational ties with previous generations of migrants in various locations across the globe. It obviates the need to situate the identities, expectations and coping strategies of refugees in a multi-relational field. It finally obliterates the fact that the aspirations of those Iraqis that cannot or will not return to Iraq are rooted as much in their experiences of the Iraq of today as in the memories of the Iraq of yesterday.

A final note on the comparability of the current refugee migration from Iraq and the Palestinian exodus of 1948 that has become of *topos* of reports by advocacy organisations. Parallels exist between the two displacement crises: prominent Palestinian refugee scholar Julie Peteet has pointed out at communal sorting-out, territorial fragmentation, the absence of a framework for the protection of refugees in neighbouring countries, and the creation of spaces of refugee containment as common policy contexts facing Palestinians in 1948 and Iraqis after 2003 (Peteet 2007). The two displacement phenomena however are not analogous. Historical and political circumstances are markedly different not least because, unlike Palestinians, Iraqis have a state. The legacy of the Palestinian refugee issue, on the other hand, has shaped Arab perceptions of and policies towards subsequent waves of refugees. Socioeconomic characteristics and the social capital of refugees in migration are also not equatable: whereas the vast majority of the Palestinian refugees of 1948 were of rural background, the Iraqi refugees of post-2003 belong to the urban middle and upper middle-classes with a high level of education. But maybe the most significant difference is that the recent forced-migration from Iraq is engrafted in long histories and broad geographies of migration under constraint with the result that, unlike Palestinians in 1948, and in a era of widely available information and communication technologies, recent refugees from Iraq have to be considered in relation with vast pre-existing Iraqi disporas.

If a comparaison is to be attempted between these two very large refugee populations at regional and global scales, a more relevant endeavour would be to question the politics and sociological dynamics of identity and diaspora formation among, on the one hand, Iraqi refugees since the 1970s (after the Ba'ath party took power in Iraq and started exerting repression on entities with competing nationalist claims - such as the Kurds -, and on leftist oppositions parties, leading to recurrent large-scale forced-migration) and, on the other hand, Palestinian refugees after 1967 (when one generation had lived in exile, Palestinians were becoming the population with the highest rate of education in the Arab world, and the PLO was starting to formulate political claims).

<div align="right">Amman, February 2009</div>

Endnotes:

1. In Septembre 2007, public estimates by the UNHCR, based on figures provided by host governments, put the number of Iraqi refugees at 2.2 million, concentrated mostly in Syria and Jordan, with another 2.2 million displaced inside Iraq. Although the UNHCR mentioned that 1 million were displaced before the 2003 war, it was not clear from their published documents how many of those were displaced inside Iraq and how many had sough refuge across borders (UNHCR 2007). At the time of writing (February 2009), recent interviews in Jordan and Syria wit the UNHCR, NGOs, funding agencies and researchers engaged in field-work with Iraqi refugees revealed that figures publicized by host governments were the objects of debates among humanitarian and refugee practitioners and that credible numbers were though to be between half a million and one million refugees having left Iraq since April/May 2003. For Jordan, the figures publicised by the government and the UNHCR have ranged between 450,000 and 750,000. By contrats, a demographic survey conducted by the Norwegian research institute FAFO in early 2007 estimated the total stock of Iraqis as 161,000 (FAFO 2007: 7). However the Jordanian authorities contested these figures as being to low, basing their argument on the number of Iraqis subscribing to telephone lines and on statistics on arrivals and departures at borders. This led FAFO, in its final report, to use a revised number of between 450 000 and 500 000 Iraqis in the country, nevertheless admitting that mobile phone lines are used by a large number of temporary visitors and that Jordanian statistics on departure underestimate more than those on arrival (FAFO 2007: 7-8). On the last point, see also Arouri (2008: 12). For the politics of counting refugees see Bakewell (1999) and Crisp (1999).
2. Sabeans (also called Mandeans) are a demographically small religious community specific to the Shatt el-Arab, a region spanning southeast Iraq and southwest Iran. They are not attached either to Islam or Christianity.
3. Palestinian refugees in Jordan, the majority of whom are also Jordanian citizens, benefit from a particular status under the assistance mandate of the UN Works and Relief Agency (UNRWA) created in 1949-1950 (Al-Husseini 2007). On the Jordanian legislation on refugees and other forced-migrants see Olwan (2007).
4. On Iraqi Shi'ites living in 'religious time and space' in Dearborne (USA) see Shoeb et alii (2007).

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