Cooperation and Community Building in Catastrophe

The *hegira*, or perilous journey, of refugees causes them to lose both their homes and the protections afforded to them by a state. Though the Geneva Convention specifies their rights, there is no accessible, state-bounded framework by which refugees can demand protection or expect the enforcement of these rights (Hajj 2014, 2016; Jacobsen 2005). This "protection gap," the chasm between promised legal protections and actual treatment, has widened in recent years because of the increasing demands placed on humanitarian services, with more than 68.5 million refugees displaced worldwide, and host countries' abrogation of their legal obligations to refugee communities (Aleinikoff and Zamore 2019).

The protection gap is especially evident with regard to Palestinian refugees because the ongoing violent conflict with Israel prevents refugee repatriation, even though United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 (III) of December 1948 states their right of return. While Israel contends that Palestinian refugees are the problem of neighboring Arab states, many Arab host states, like Lebanon, refuse integration (*tawtin*) of Palestinians into economic and social structures, even after more than seventy years (Masalha 2003; Sayigh 1995a). Denial of the right of return and meager host-country support are further compounded by dwindling aid for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the only UN agency responsible for providing welfare, goods, and services to Palestinian refugees. On August 30, 2018, President Donald Trump announced the withdrawal of US funding for UNRWA. On April 7, 2021, President Joseph Biden reinstated this funding, but the budget crisis of the last several years continues to limit access to vital goods and services.

The disorientation of the refugee condition was poignantly described to me by one Palestinian refugee in Lebanon: "I do not know what is up and what is down. I do not know the words to ask for help and the person to ask for it. Do I even

count anymore as a person?" (I-8L). Indeed, there is a pervasive sense of despair among Palestinian refugees that the world has left them behind. The Palestinian American poet and activist Suheir Hammad (2004) describes the Palestinian refugee condition: "Every day you die, and the world watches in silence. As if your death was nothing, as if you were a stone falling in the earth, water falling over water." The despair was echoed in a recurrent phrase I heard in conversations with refugees in camps across Lebanon. Refugees lamented, "Min 'eeash bedoun amal" (We live without hope).

Community "scouts" who traveled abroad to find economic opportunity and send money or remittances "home" to the camps mitigated abject poverty and hopelessness in the initial years after the 1948 Nakba (Jacobsen 2005; Levitt 2001; Masalha 2003; Schiff 1993). These scouts formed part of the Palestinian diaspora. Indeed, though much research on Palestinians today is centered on the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem, the Palestinian diaspora is vast and still plays an essential role in the survival of the Palestinian community (Hammer 2005, 11). I adopt the term *diaspora* because it attends to the liminal transnational space that Palestinian refugees occupy. As Thea Abu el-Haj notes in *Unsettled Belonging*, the term *diaspora*, unlike the category of *immigrant*, attends to the processes of globalization and migration that lead refugees to forge a sense of transnational belonging and connection (Abu el-Haj 2015, 29).

As members of the diaspora have worked hard to survive and adapt in new host states, their remittances have helped refugees in the camps build better homes, obtain food, send children to school, and access specialized medical care that is not provided by host states or aid agencies (Hajj 2016). Remittances often exceed the amount of official development assistance to refugees and marginalized communities. In 1995, migrants around the world sent more than US $70 billion back to families. Remittances significantly improve health, education, and welfare services in the imperfect market conditions that refugees face (Taylor 1999, 63, 81). In addition, they mitigate conflict and displacement because "some portion of the remittances also goes to religious organizations and hometown associations that sustain the community in crisis" (Koser and Van Hear 2003, 60).

Remittances have fueled economic growth and hope for new generations of Palestinians in the camps. One elderly refugee in the diaspora said: "There is no one else to help us. It is terribly unsettling to realize we are on our own despite all the bad things others have done to us, especially knowing that they legally owe us better. I do not operate in a world of perfect solutions, where I magically create a new state for us. I operate in a real-world place of sending as much money as I can, when I can, to help my people survive for a better future" (I-116L).

But remittances may decrease with time and distance, a phenomenon known as remittance decay (Jacobsen 2005). As global conflicts persist and the older generations of scouts dies, the diaspora's bonds of loyalty to the camp communities weaken while the protection gap widens. How do refugees today access the goods

and services they desperately need? Specifically, how do Palestinian refugees continue to motivate reciprocity, a cooperative interaction marked by the exchange of favors and privileges (Lawson and Greene 2014; Mauss 1954; Stack 1974), and, in turn, spark remittance flows from the transnational diaspora?

Even in lab-controlled conditions, cooperative behavior can be a challenge for people (Axelrod 1984; Axelrod and Hamilton 1981; Fehr and Gächter 2002; Fehr and Henrich 2003). Kin-based groups with repeated interactions are more likely to engage in reciprocity, but the time and distance separating refugee family networks create challenges. Though certainly not a perfect solution to the challenges refugee face, information communication technologies (ICTs) may offer a virtual space where refugees can reconstitute their community and memories. Furthermore, this space might serve to generate real-world material benefits in the form of economic remittances.

Studies of the role of ICTs in refugee spaces have generally been limited to exploring how aid agencies use them to map assets and distribute resources (e.g., Maitland and Xu 2015). These studies consider ICTs as a potential "digital lifeline" to improve the flow of international aid (Maitland 2018). Few studies have examined how refugees, without the intervention of international aid agencies, develop their own transnational digital networks and access resources that help them endure and even thrive (Oirzabal 2010).

In his novel *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid poignantly describes forced migrations and the refugee condition. He describes the relationship of two refugee protagonists to their cell phones: "Nadia and Saeed were, back then, always in possession of their phones. In their phones were antennas, and these antennas sniffed out an invisible world, as if by magic, a world that was all around them, and also nowhere, transporting them to places distant and near, and to places that had never been and would never be" (Hamid 2017, 39). In his portrayal, refugees use smartphones to transcend geographic borders and tap into a global network to build a community and access needed resources.

In the real world, however, researchers are divided over the question of whether Internet-based platforms generate tangible benefits for users. Technology pessimists view ICTs as a force causing individuals to turn inward, to deny their embeddedness in the social fabric, and to become apathetic (Simanowski 2018). Technology optimists consider ICTs to be a vehicle for sociopolitical change (LaBelle 2018). They view ICTs as nonstate market mechanisms that empower individuals to connect with one another, share information, and engage in collective action (Lynch 2011; Shirky 2011).

Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, philosophers have observed that although technology enables us to communicate with increasing speed—through, successively, the telegraph, the telephone, radio, television, and the internet—it does not bring us *nearer* to one another, in the sense of feeling that we are deeply connected to others even when separated by vast geographic distances.

Nearness entails the realization that our existence is dependent on the support of others. Technology enables us to overcome the barriers of time and distance, but, as the Nobel laureate Emily Greene Balch observed in 1948, "Technology is a tool, not a virtue. It may be used for good or bad ends, and bringing men closer does not make them love one another unless they prove lovable. Multiplying contacts can mean multiplying points of friction" (Balch 1948). ICTs may allow refugee communities to create transnational networks, but these connections do not guarantee and in fact may impede nearness and real-world exchanges of support.

To create nearness and all the potential benefits it entails for refugees, individuals must relate more to a communal truth—that people living far apart from one another are deeply connected and interdependent—than to the technology itself. For ICTs to inspire reciprocity and help the Palestinian community survive catastrophic conditions, refugees must use them to evoke culturally and historically specific connections with members of the diaspora. The enforcement of norms or shared understandings of expected behavior in familiar group settings is often identified as a key motivator for cooperation and reciprocity (Axelrod 1984; Boyd et al. 2003; Fehr and Gächter 2002; West, Griffin, and Gardener 2006).

Examining the digital behavior of Palestinians living in camps in Lebanon and the diaspora generates new data on the role of reciprocity and ICTs in refugee community building. Through refugee camp interviews, surveys with members of the diaspora, and Internet data scraping, or collection of data, using Selenium WebDriver and Google Maps API, I have found that Palestinian refugees are adept at strategically melding forms of social organization and norms of communal behavior with new technologies to rebuild their community amid the contemporary catastrophe. Specifically, the representation of precrisis family and village networks in digital spaces allows Palestinians living in refugee camps to connect with the transnational diaspora in culturally and historically familiar ways. ICT users strategically deploy behaviors that are malleable and fluid versions of traditional Palestinian communal behavior.

This research disentangles the multiple levels of connection that make up the transnational Palestinian identity. In the camps, people remain connected to Palestine through subnational, village, and family identities. These in turn enable those who have left the camp, who live in a kind of double diaspora—separated first from Palestine and second from the camp—to remain connected to the camp, and, through that connection, to Palestine itself. Broadcasting the Palestinian norms and values of loyalty, honor, steadfastness, and shame, collectively known as the ʿadat wa taqlid, via digital videos, images, and chat rooms motivates continued remittance flows to those in the camps. Diaspora remittances provide valuable public goods for the camp community and fill the protection gap left by host states, elite political parties, and international aid agencies. The reciprocal networks of remittance flows speak to the power of the ahl and hamula identities, but also to the power of a Palestinian refugee identity that exists within a larger Palestinian

national identity. These digital spaces of subnational connection also empower new community members and new conversations that may disrupt the very social dynamics and norms that initially anchored the community. Nevertheless, Palestinian refugees' strategic use of ICTs to generate reciprocity and remittances offers a window into the resilience and reimagined identity of a marginalized community enduring a broken world.

THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS IN LEBANON

Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon are an unlikely site for the emergence of a vibrant transnational community, capable of providing its own public goods and services, because there are numerous atomizing forces at work. The protracted conflict, the exposure to violence, and the host country's refusal to integrate Palestinians into its economic structures have pushed many young Palestinians to seek economic opportunity abroad (Hajj 2014, 2016).

For the Palestinian refugee community, both in the camps and in the diaspora, Israeli occupation makes the return to their ancestral lands practically impossible. This situation was born of violence and instability when the state of Israel was created (Schiff 1993). The scale of this catastrophe cannot be overestimated. In 1948, 720,000 to 750,000 Palestinians were forced into exile—a majority of the Arab population at the time (Brand 1988; Schiff 1993). Dispossession is not merely a state of mind for refugees: it is codified in the legal statutes of host states and Israeli occupation. The purpose of Israeli occupation is to accumulate territory, deny the existence of an indigenous community, and cut off the possibility for commonality, connection, and collective activism. Patrick Wolfe maintains the occupation is "not a singular event but an on-going organizing principle" that "strives for the dissolution of native societies" (2006, 388). Through a variety of legal codes, informal policies, and Israeli lobbying, Palestinians are treated as mythical. Masalha (2003) argues that Israel's denial of the right of return has created a permanent situation of "warehoused" Palestinian refugees who are kept in a marginalized, disenfranchised status while Israel reinforces its own power and domination over Palestinian territories through legal and policy strategies. The impossibility of returning home, the erasure of Palestinian identity, and denial of Palestinian claims to territory forcefully atomize society (Masalha 2003; Wolfe 2006, 388).[1]

Aside from Israeli policies, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have had a front-row seat during many of the violent conflicts in the Middle East region. Even after settlement in refugee camps outside the Occupied Territories (OT), they witnessed and experienced massacres, like the ones in Sabra and Shatila in 1982 during the decades-long Lebanese civil war (Sayigh 1986). Since the end of the civil war, Palestinian refugee camps have become pawns in regional elite politics.

In *After the Last Sky*, his 1986 collaborative venture with Jean Mohr, Edward Said, the famed Palestinian scholar, reflects on the dispossession and fragmentation

of Palestinian society. The first part of the work, called "States," is a passionate and moving meditation on displacement, landlessness, exile, and identity:

> Do we exist? What proof do we have? The further we get from the Palestine of our past, the more precarious our status, the more disrupted our being, the more intermittent our presence. When did we become a people? When did we stop being one? Or are we in the process of becoming one? What do those big questions have to do with our intimate relationships with each other and with others? We frequently end our letters with the motto "Palestinian love" or "Palestinian kisses." Are there really such things as Palestinian intimacy and embraces, or are they simply intimacy and embraces—experiences common to everyone, neither politically significant nor particular to a nation or a people? (Said 1986, 34)

Indeed, the living conditions for Palestinians in Israel and Lebanon work against any sense of "Palestinian intimacy and embraces." The Nahr al-Bared refugee camp offers a microcosm in which to examine the processes of atomization and community efforts to build transnational networks and procure diaspora remittances. Nahr al-Bared was built in 1951 roughly sixteen kilometers from the port of Tripoli in Lebanon, on the Mediterranean Sea.

On May 15, 2007, Nahr al-Bared was destroyed during a military conflict between the Lebanese army and Fatah al-Islam, an extremist group with murky, non-Palestinian origins that attacked Lebanese forces using Nahr al-Bared as a base of operations (Butters 2008; Hajj 2016). Roughly twenty-seven thousand of the thirty thousand people then resident in the camp were forced to relocate. UNRWA, international donors, and the Lebanese government have slowly rebuilt the camp. The reconstruction project involves 4,876 residential units, 1,150 shops, the UNRWA compound, and the camp's entire infrastructure (Hajj 2016, 26). As of 2020, 54% of camp residents had returned to Nahr al-Bared (De Stone and Suber 2019).

Palestinian refugees' exposure to violence is compounded by the Lebanese refusal to integrate them into Lebanese society (Sayigh 1995b). In Lebanon, the state leadership actively works against Palestinian community building. In an international interview in 1999, Prime Minister Rafic Hairiri said, "Lebanon will never, ever integrate Palestinians. They will not receive civic, or economic rights, or even work permits. Integration would take the Palestinians off the shoulders of the international agency which has supported them since 1948" (Cooley 1999). The economic isolation of Palestinian refugees has been codified through work restrictions and impositions against property ownership outside the refugee camps. Palestinian political parties like the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) also oppose *tawtin*.

Palestinians in Lebanon, unlike those living in Jordan, were not issued passports. Obtaining alternative travel documents is often difficult. Lebanon's 1964 and 1995 laws outline the rights and responsibilities of foreigners to live and work in Lebanon, but Palestinians are considered a special case. A 2002 law forbade Palestinians from owning land or buying property in Lebanon (Christoff 2004).

Even though these laws have been amended, the majority of Palestinians lack access to legal employment in Lebanon (Chaaban et al. 2016). These conditions have encouraged young Palestinians to leave the camps to seek economic opportunities. In a recent survey, a college-educated twenty-three-year-old Palestinian engineer from Nahr al-Bared wrote:

> There is nothing for me here in Nahr al-Bared camp. I *could* go to Beirut like my brother and work as an illegal laborer in a restaurant. Maybe I become a waiter and make a pittance . . . but then I am always fearful of getting ripped off by my boss and working like a dog. I would barely be able to make enough to feed myself. I can't save enough to afford my own place and get married. It is not a real life worth living. So I came up with a different plan. I borrowed money from my [second] cousin, who digitally sent me money to buy a passage to Turkey. From Turkey I will try to make it to Croatia or even Germany. I am a trained engineer with skills, and I have drive. I want to make it and use my God-given talents. I want a good life too. Why shouldn't I want a good life just because I am Palestinian? I am willing to risk my life to live with some dignity. (S-16)[2]

However, leaving the camps for diaspora scouts means leaving the family and village networks that remain essential for individual and community survival (Levitt 2001; Hajj 2016). Moreover, as the flow of remittances dwindles over time, those left behind in the camps no longer benefit from the opportunities discovered by the diaspora scouts (Jacobsen 2005, Levitt 2001).

Certain community strategies can overcome the fracturing of ties. The Palestinian diaspora, especially the young, is shaped, according to one observer, by the "crucible of globalization with its attendant mass migration, dislocation culture, and technological advances that allow people to remain connected to multiple places" (Abu el-Haj 2015, 43). This process is less about Palestinians figuring out how to negotiate between cultures than about how they have developed discourses and practices of belonging *across* transnational social fields.

Palestinians, like members of many Arab communities, most certainly enculturate with societies they have migrated to, but they often maintain connections across transnational social fields too (Gualtieri 2019; Lybarger 2020). In *Arab Routes* (2019), Sarah Gualtieri examines the rich presence of Syrians in California. The cover of her book shows a quintessential California muscle-man beach scene with a Syrian ice-cream store "hidden" in plain sight. Arabs are a normal part of the American landscape.[3] Other scholars have identified myriad ways in which transnational migrants can engender sustainable forms of diasporic cultural production and creatively navigate the complexity of living in transnational social fields (Abu el-Haj 2015, 30; Appadurai 1996; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1999; Fouron and Glick Schiller 2002; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Levitt and Waters 2002; Ong 1999).

Some communities manage to overcome remittance decay through strategies like altruism, social pressures, and diaspora scouts (Levitt 2001). Researchers have

observed that "the [home] community notices who sends and who does not, and remittances are a way to exhibit connections, prove that relatives are cared for, and maintain contact with the country of origin" (Koser and Van Hear 2003, 62). ICTs may serve as one means of overcoming geographic limitations, connecting refugees with their diaspora community, and inspiring economic remittances. Of course, fulfilling economic aspirations will not serve as a cure-all for the challenges faced by Palestinian refugees, but the continued flow of remittances to the camps is a critical aspect of refugee community building.

ICTS AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Long before the internet, scholars argued that "new" media lowered information costs, empowered everyday citizens, and strengthened the public sphere. Jürgen Habermas (1962) argued that the printing press helped democratize Europe by providing space for discussion and agreement among engaged citizens even before states had consolidated democracies. However, the emergence of new media alone does not spur individuals to action. Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) argue that information must be repeatedly shared by engaged citizens and then echoed by other people to generate discussion. Widening the public sphere and motivating action requires the consumption and (re)production of information through the use of new media. The internet moves beyond earlier forms of media in that it enables individuals to produce as well as consume information in a decentralized manner, using non-state-run technologies like smartphones. Yochi Benkler refers to this new form of the information economy as a "networked information economy" (2006, 3). The existing scholarly record provides mixed perspectives on the potential of ICTs in building communities.

On the one hand, technology pessimists doubt that the use of ICTs will create empathetic individuals capable of consuming accurate information and translating that knowledge into activism. In recent years, a wave of scholarship has disputed the notion that ICTs are effective in countering the unequal distribution of power. In *The Death Algorithm and Other Digital Dilemmas* (2018), Roberto Simanowski (2018) wonders if humanity is on the brink of relying on technology to solve socioeconomic and political ills. He reviews the algorithms programmed into driverless cars that remove elements of human agency and deliberation (including algorithms that make choices about potentially fatal collisions). He provocatively describes smartphone zombies (or "smombies") who remove themselves from the physical world to the parallel universe of social media networks and thereby lose their awareness and agency for finding solutions to the real problems our world is facing. According to these theories, refugee and diaspora members immersed in digital technologies would not be capable of making personal connections that could overcome the brokenness in which they are embedded.

Moreover, technology pessimists fear that even if individuals are interested in more than just self-serving "likes" on social media platforms, the information they

consume is rarely truthful, because people succumb to "fake news" online—false stories and rumors that impede social organization and collective action. This problem is compounded by the fact that state officials often produce their own fake stories or monitor and control the digital space. In her study of Russia's "winter of discontent," Sarah Oates argues that "on-line communication is not a 'magic bullet' that can empower citizens and change regimes" (Oates 2013, 2–3). Technology pessimists further assert that even if individuals are engaged and have access to accurate information, this rarely translates to real-world activism. In effect, they become "slacktivists," or individuals who express interest in activism online but do not behave accordingly. In a networked information economy filled with smombies, fake news, and slacktivists, the prospects for community building through ICTs seems dim.

By contrast, technology optimists maintain that the internet could serve as a solution for the world's ills. Mohsin Hamid's optimistic, albeit fiction-based, view of the internet (2017) is echoed in Brandon LaBelle's *Sonic Agency* (2018). LaBelle's radical scholarship assesses the connection between sharing sounds (not just visual images) in networked digital spaces and the capacity to (re)generate communities and motivate resistance to the existing world order. In this view, by lowering the cost of producing and consuming information, ICTs promote (although they do not guarantee) transformative social and political behavior. Some digital platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, enable public displays of social engagement through the sharing of written and audiovisual material. Others, like WhatsApp and Viber, offer opportunity for "private" conversations with specific individuals or family and village groups.[4] Optimists agree that social media platforms have the most dramatic effects in places where the public sphere is constrained by the government (Groshek 2012; Lynch 2011; Shirky 2011). This was especially evident during the Arab revolutions of 2010 and 2011, when ICTs played a key role in catalyzing social change (Hajj, McEwan, and Turkington 2017).

REFUGEES AND ICTS

Refugees, in contrast to citizens of states, face different challenges and possibilities in using ICTs for community building and development. Scholarship in refugee camps has assessed access to and use of ICTs. For example, Maitland and Xu (2015) focused on basic ICT usage demographics among Syrian refugees in the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan. Za'atari is one of the world's largest camps, accommodating eighty thousand Syrian refugees. The researchers hypothesized that urban, camp-based, and resettled refugees might have distinct information needs and varying levels of access to mobile networks and the internet compared to citizens of in host states. They found that "the diversity of Internet access modes is reduced, with mobile becoming critical, as people are displaced" (Maitland and Xu 2015, 2). Refugees were eager to use social media for a variety of reasons, including communication with loved ones, feeling connected, overcoming isolation, and

having their stories told (Maitland and Xu 2015, 1). Social media such as Facebook and mapping technologies were seen as useful in coordinating travel to neighboring countries. Refugees primarily used WhatsApp, Google Voice, and Viber to communicate with people living in Jordan and Syria. Their three most popular information sources were Google, Facebook, and YouTube.

AID AGENCY USE OF ICTS

Scholars studying refugees and ICTs have extended their research to investigate how the UN and other international aid agencies might better deliver resources, assess asset distribution, and build community in refugee spaces. In *Digital Lifeline* (Maitland 2018), scholars consider how ICTs are pushing humanitarian aid agencies into a new world of "digital humanitarian brokerage," where technology serves to assist organizations in tracking patterns or flows of refugees' movements, identifying immediate needs, delivering resources, and facilitating resettlement.

For example, some scholars have considered the role of mapping technology in facilitating community building in refugee spaces. Mapping technology was first used by international humanitarian aid agencies during the early stages of disaster and crisis situations to make rapid, accurate, geocoded population counts and identify the most urgently needed supplies. Carleen Maitland and Ying Xu (2015) argue that a public participation geographic information system (PPGIS) can be used to engage a variety of camp stakeholders in making critical decisions that influence the living conditions and welfare of all camp residents. They found that PPGIS was a critical tool for community building in the Za'atari camp because it enabled camp managers and some refugees to access mapped data and coordinate long-term plans as the camp evolved from a temporary place to a more citylike space.

Despite the advantages of deploying ICTs to solve logistical problems in providing aid, they have limitations for refugee community building. One is that the use and management of digital technologies and maps are often restricted to camp leaders and aid officials, with limited opportunity for much of the community to participate. Often the most vulnerable and marginalized—those with the greatest need for resources and connectivity—are precisely those who are left out of these community-building projects (Maitland and Xu 2015).

Second, while these applications of ICTs certainly support community well-being in refugee camps and improve organizational responses to crises, they have limited capacity to connect refugees to their transnational diasporic networks, which may represent an untapped resource. When ICTs connect refugees with their family members in the diaspora, pockets of opportunity that had previously been ignored or underutilized can be identified and harnessed.

Third, while aid agency funding for basic web connectivity in the camps, like free Wi-Fi hubs, is crucial, ICTs are more effective at generating a sense of nearness among refugees because they replicate existing community kinship networks

and norms. Dana Moss (2016) finds that ICTs played a critical role in developing transnational connections between refugees in the Syrian diaspora. Moreover, Pedro Oirzabal's excellent analyses of Basque diaspora digital networks (2010, 2012a,b) show that ICTs may be crucial in allowing diaspora groups to maintain community identity and share information. Men, women, the young, and the old all access and communicate through the Basque association groups on Facebook (2012a). Similar uses of ICTs to establish transnational identity have been observed among Salvadoran families (Benitez 2012), Uighurs (NurMuhammad et al. 2016), Filipinos (McKay 2010), and Arabs in Germany (Rinnawi 2012). These studies, which evidence the vast community-based digital networks organically patterned on precrisis or "home" groupings, show that many refugee communities might already have digital networks in place, which can then be activated to maintain bonds and access financial resources. In summary, though aid agencies have instituted top-down programs and designed technologies to efficiently map refugee communities and distribute aid, they rarely harness existing family and village support networks and their wealth of resources to facilitate community building amid protection gaps.

GENERATING RECIPROCITY

Existing scholarship on ICTs and refugees does not contend with the central insight that technology is powerful only insofar as it creates nearness among people: that is, it creates an awareness that each individual's existence is bound up with that of others in the same web for survival and that they must take real action to preserve that interconnection (Stevenson 2014, 290). The digital space encourages real-world action and overcomes the ever-present issues of remittance decay and drift among refugees when it inspires cooperation in the form of *reciprocity*, or the exchange of privileges and favors. However, *how* reciprocity can occur in digital spaces among geographically fragmented refugee communities living in catastrophic protection gaps is fertile research territory.

Before considering the roots of reciprocity, it is important to establish clear definitions of relevant terms. At their core, terms like *cooperation, altruism, collaboration*, and *reciprocity* convey a general sense of care for others (Oliner and Oliner 1988).[5] There is a spectrum of caring activity, ranging from small, everyday acts like holding a door open for another person to extraordinarily creative and self-sacrificial ones, like donating an organ to a stranger (Gruber 1997). *Cooperation* refers to a behavior that provides a benefit to another individual and, from the perspective of evolutionary biology, is selected for because it benefits the recipient. *Altruism* is a behavior that is costly to the actor and beneficial to the recipient; in evolutionary biology, the cost and benefit are defined on the basis of lifetime direct fitness, or the survival of the community through productive offspring (West, Griffin, and Gardener 2006).

In this book I focus on *reciprocity* because it underscores the mutual nature of the relationship, sometimes imposing great cost, self-sacrifice, or inconvenience on those involved. Moreover, reciprocity is not an attribute evident in only the most generous among us. Even in contexts that would otherwise reward selfish behavior, reciprocity may emerge (Fehr, Fischbacher, and Gächter 2002). Reciprocity is the fundamental social interaction involving giving and receiving gifts, like goods and services, among both kin and communities kinlike in nature (Lawson and Greene 2014). An object given or traded represents "a possession, a pledge, a loan, a trust, a bank account—given on the condition that something will be returned, that the giver can draw on the account, and that the initiator of the trade gains prerogatives in taking what he or she needs from the receiver" (Stack 1974, 38). Marcel Mauss's classic interpretation of the gift exchange stresses the obligation inherent in gift giving, receiving, and repayment. Although giving a gift may appear to be voluntary, the offering is essentially obligatory and required. Mauss shares the story of Tamati Ranaipiri, a Māori, to illustrate how the spirit of gift giving works in some societies. Tamati Ranaipiri explains:

> I shall tell you about *hau*. Hau is not the wind. Not at all. Suppose you have some particular object, *taonga*, and you give it to me; and you give it to me without a price. We do not bargain over it. Now I give this thing to a third person who after a time decides to give me something in repayment for it (*ute*), and he makes me a present of something (taonga). Now this taonga I received from you and which I passed on to him and the taonga which I receive on account of the taonga that came from you, I must return to you. It would not be right on my part to keep these taonga whether they were desirable or not. I must give them to you since they are the hau of the taonga which you gave me. If I were to keep this second taonga for myself I might become ill or even die. Such is the hau, the hau of the taonga, the hau of the forest. Enough on that subject. (Mauss 1954, 261).

This account reveals that the obligation associated with a gift is not inert but a living thing that strives to bring some equivalent to take its place. According to Mauss, one may feel a compulsion to rebalance the scales after an exchange, but it is more likely that sanctions are necessary for procuring repayment of a gift. The recipient of the gift can discharge debts by providing a good or service of comparable worth to the original gift; however, not all recipients can repay the givers. In these cases, recipients may balance the ledger by according the giver greater social status, esteem, or loyalty (Lawson and Greene 2014; Mauss 1954; Stack 1974).

There is a rich literature on reciprocal exchanges. Importantly, this literature is divided on the universal and proximate causes of reciprocity, and these causal mechanisms are often conflated. However, it is useful to differentiate the two because my project is decidedly focused on proximate causes of reciprocity. Studies that focus on universal arguments tend to consider the indirect and direct benefits of cooperation for the "fitness," or survival, productivity, and reproduction of a

species. Social evolutionary biologists and neuroscientists conclude that we coop-
erate because it ensures the long-term survival of our species (Lawson and Greene
2014; West Griffin, and Gardener 2006). Proximate causes of cooperation consider
how individuals spur reciprocal behavior. Humans are different from other species
in that the proximate causes of reciprocity tend to involve schemes of incentives,
rewards, and punishment that are attentive to specific local conditions (Crespi
2006; Fehr, Fischbacher, and Gächter 2002; Fehr and Fischbacher 2004; Fehr and
Gächter 2002; Henrich et al. 2005; Mauss 1954; Stack 1974; Wedekind and Braith-
waite 2002; West Griffin, and Gardener 2006).

From the extensive literature I have distilled several proximate causes of
reciprocity. First, individuals are more likely to engage in reciprocal relation-
ships when the other party is familiar and not "lost in an anonymous sea of
others"(Axelrod and Hamilton 1981, 1395). Patterns of social organization that
breed familiarity and discourage anonymity make it easier to monitor individual
and collective behavior. Evolutionary biologists have observed that kin- or family-
based groups are more likely to reciprocate, but even non-kin groups can engage in
reciprocity (West, Griffin, and Gardener 2006). Though one might be tempted to
think that reciprocity is an aberration, especially among unrelated human groups
(after all, just a cursory glance at Twitter or the local news reveals a wealth of self-
centered and hostile behavior), cooperation is common, but not always easy, even
in "one-shot" interactions (Fehr and Fischbacher 2004; Fehr and Gächter 2002;
Fehr and Rockenbach 2003; West, Griffin, and Gardener 2006).

Even among non-kin, familiarity can be established through a set of shared
understandings of appropriate or wrongful behavior, called norms. In effect, unre-
lated people can become "like kin" when they agree, even tacitly, to engage in
exchanges and follow communal rules or norms (Stack 1974). How these norms
develop is a subject of continuing debate. Some scholars contend that they develop
out of sincere beliefs in what one should or ought to do, and others maintain that
they emerge from an unconscious self-interest in how a community should con-
duct itself (Elster 1989; Hajj 2016). Regardless of their source, norms or shared
understandings generate rules of behavior (such as those governing the sending
of remittances to distant kin) because they are easy to replicate. Ease of replicating
the norms in a variety of geographies helps them persist (Elster 1989). Replicable
norms are critical in generating a sense of connection and patterns of expected
behavior within a community (Scott 2009).

The existence of norms is not enough to ensure that people will adhere to them.
Norms of appropriate and wrongful behavior must be enforced. Enforcement
is dependent on repeated interactions and the presence of a party with enough
power or will to reward compliance and punish defection (Axelrod and Hamilton
1983; Fehr, Fischbacher, and Gächter 2002; Fehr and Rockenbach 2003). Repeated
interactions are important because when parties are likely to meet again in the

future, if one party effectively defects in one encounter, then the other party will have the opportunity to retaliate in the next encounter (Axelrod and Hamilton 1981, 1395; Axelrod 1984).

Even in situations where selfishness would be very easy, because of fewer encounters and less observable action, reciprocity may occur if there is an enforcer. Fehr and colleagues consider how cooperative relationships arise even in contexts in which pure self-interest would cause a breakdown in reciprocity. They find that cooperation happens when a community has a *strong reciprocator*, or an individual with a "predisposition to reward others for cooperative, norm-abiding behavior, and a propensity to impose sanctions on others for norm violations" (Fehr and Rockenbach 2003; see also Fehr, Fischbacher, and Gächter 2002). In other words, reciprocity is more likely to occur when there is someone who acts as an enforcer of community behavioral norms.

There is evidence that enforcement of social norms involving sharing food or collective action is likely to occur even if enforcement is costly e there is no guarantee of in-kind rewards. Strong reciprocators can fundamentally affect the aggregate outcomes of social interaction because they change the incentives of selfish types in a population (Fehr, Fischbacher, and Gächter 2002). Over time, through social learning and imitation—that is, cultural transmission—a contextually specific "manual" for cooperation and punishment evolves at a rate that maximizes fitness. The studies by Boyd and colleagues (2003) and Fehr and Gächter (2002) indicate the overlap of proximate and ultimate causes of cooperation. They show how and when culturally specific strategies of reciprocity mix with strategies promoting long-term survival or fitness.

These studies on the proximate causes of reciprocity suggest how Palestinian refugees in the Nahr al-Bared camp might use ICTs to facilitate community building and economic remittances with their transnational diaspora. Louise Cainkar's studies (1999, 2006) of Palestinian American women in Chicago, Sarah Gualtieri's (2019) research on Syrian Americans in California, and Loren Lybarger's (2020) research on Palestinians in Chicago also demonstrate the power and reach of norms in encouraging and enforcing reciprocal exchanges in maintaining transnational diaspora-refugee connections. For example, Cainkar (1999, 2006) studies how families choose marriage matches in America that benefit relationships among families still in the refugee camps or business engagements with other Palestinian Americans that increase and stabilize the flow of wealth back to people in the camps. Melding diaspora studies and reciprocity scholarship can help predict when reciprocity is likely to emerge, even when violence, time, and distance may separate communities and when members of those communities are not necessarily biological kin. Reciprocity is likely to emerge among refugee diaspora networks when there are social groupings or patterns of social organization that breed familiarity and discourage anonymity; connection among people is based on easily replicable shared norms of expected behavior; there are repeated
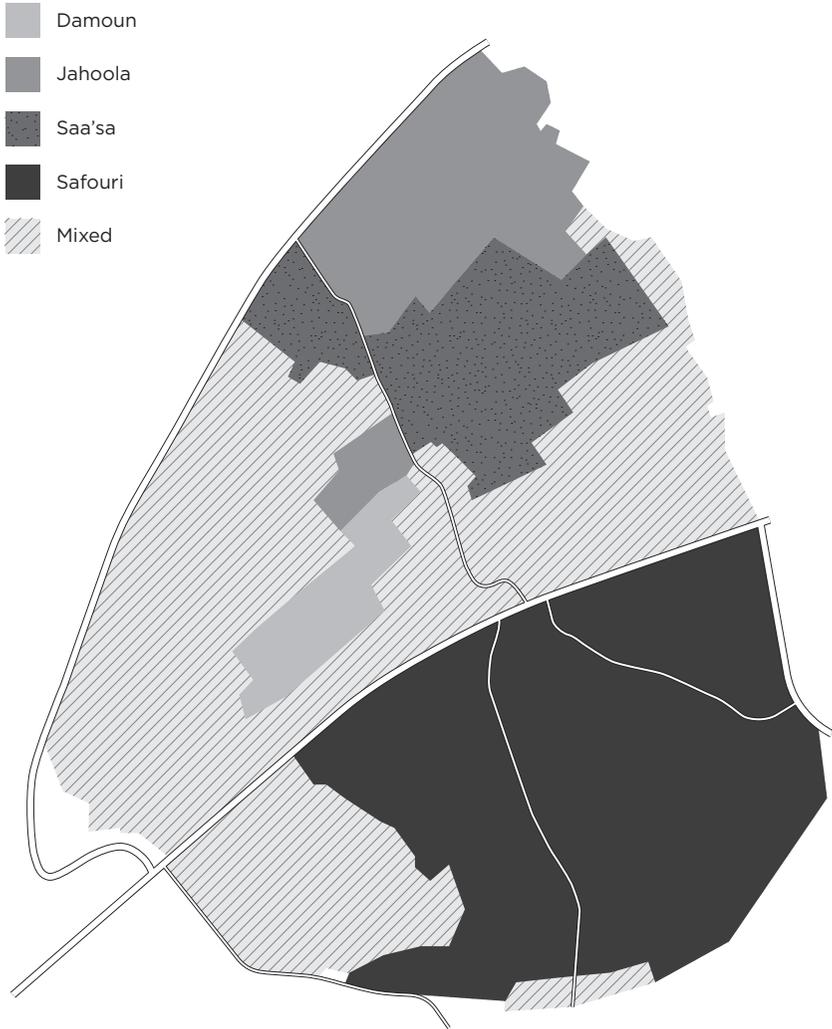
interactions; and there is a strong enforcer with a willingness to reward adherence to a set of culturally specific behavioral norms and punish deviations from those norms.

THE ADAPTIVE VALUE OF PALESTINIAN PRECRISIS NETWORKS AND NORMS

Extending the scholarship on reciprocity to refugees and digital spaces provides an opportunity to witness community resilience even in the face of a broken international order. It shows how refugees can generate vital economic remittances to fund public goods and welfare services with little or no state or aid agency involvement.

The first step in generating nearness among diaspora in digital spaces is to use and project patterns of relationships that breed familiarity and avoid the anonymity that the digital world and transnational distances can engender. There are myriad ways to organize a Facebook group, a WhatsApp messenger chat group, or a photo-sharing page. However, strategically emphasizing the familiar, and in some cases the familial, is critical for incubating reciprocity. Despite the challenges of living in refugee camps for more than seventy years, Palestinians have developed strategies for preserving and resurrecting their family and village identities, and these are reflected in digital refugee spaces.

Family, tribe, and village structures have rooted the Palestinian people and offered a shared understanding of how to resolve problems and maintain cohesion amid instability (Hajj 2014, 2016). In particular, Palestinians share what Roy (2001) and Sayigh (1979) refer to as the "primary" identities of blood (family, clan, tribe, and ethnicity), place (village, neighborhood, city, and country), and religion, which is predominantly Sunni Islam. *Ahl*, or family, and *hamula*, or village-clan, are particularly salient units of social organization and "world making" for Palestinian refugees (Bowker 2003). This network or web of family-village connections was a valuable bulwark against outsiders in times of ambiguous rule and conflict, such as during the Ottoman Empire and the British mandate, and remains relevant even today (Bowker 2003; Hajj 2016; Lybarger 2013; Roy 2001; Sayigh 1997). Bowker notes, "Palestinian refugees in general possess a sense of imagined community, in that the group is defined not by a geographic space but rather the creation and reproduction of a social organization or networks not located in a specific place" (2003, 67). This sense of imagined community is "oriented toward sustaining kinship ties." It is preserved in refugee neighborhoods and reflects, in broad terms, the social structures of pre-1948 Palestine. Map 1 shows how residents of the Nahr al-Bared camp organized themselves according to their villages of origin and thus kept the villages "alive." Using these networks, Palestinian refugees "rebuilt lives socially, commercially, and employment ties with compatriots from their own towns and cities of origins" (Bowker 2003, 69).

Damoun

Jahoola

Saa'sa

Safouri

Mixed

MAP 1. Contemporary map of pre-1948 village groupings in Nahr al-Bared refugee camp.

Ahl and *hamula* networks were crucial for surviving and thriving in *fawdah*, or the chaos of camp life (Hajj 2016). Yezid Sayigh remarks that the ghettoization of Palestinian refugees within colonial empires and host countries "reinforced the tendency of Palestinian peasants to conduct as much of their lives as possible within their villages, not replaced by camps, in which UNRWA, rather than national government, provided virtually all the basic services and jobs" (1997, 47). ICTs offer another opportunity to redeploy established units of social organization and behavioral norms to meet contemporary challenges. A proliferation of *ahl-* and *hamula*-based ICT platforms helps generate a sense of familiarity among

multiple generations of camp residents and members of the transnational Palestinian diaspora. Beyond building on *ahl* and *hamula* patterns of social organization, ICT spaces devoted to creating reciprocity between Palestinians across borders must emphasize easily replicable norms of behavior (Elster 1989), using the digital dissemination of images, videos, narratives, and memories to underscore how one should behave toward the community in order to generate reciprocity and reflect culturally specific and relevant codes of behavior (Boyd et al. 2003).

The ability to extend easily replicable pre-Nakba communal patterns and norms into digital spaces has likely arisen because, as research has shown, refugee and stateless communities are particularly resilient in the face of chaos and selectively draw on their community's social networks and norms to meet contemporary challenges (Hajj 2014, 2016; Scott 2009). In difficult conditions groups strategically convert parts of their group history to manage assets and insulate themselves from the tumult of the outside world (Hajj 2014, 2016). For example, Scott's study of "fractured" indigenous groups in the Zomia in the *Art of Not Being Governed* (2009) helps clarify how stateless people strategically dip into their well of communal experience to protect themselves in challenging spaces.

Whereas many scholars view norms as stable reservoirs of culture and practice, Scott maintains that "traditions among stateless people are the jellyfish, shape shifting, pliable form of custom and law. They permit a certain 'drift' in content and emphasis over time—a strategic and interested re-adjustment" to confront life on the political economic margins of states (Scott 2009, 230). It is a "political calculation" to use certain aspects of their identity and history to combat the power structures and gaps in protection by states (Scott 2009, 244). For example, at times some groups asserted particular historical ties and family connections in order to ally with a reigning authority. If its leader lost power, a group would abandon particular claims and emphasize different aspects of its identity to appear favorable to the new power. Strategic conversion of identity has an adaptive value. The more turbulent the social environs, the more frequently groups fractured and recombined (Scott 2009, 259, 233).

In the same way, Palestinians have strategically deployed aspects of their history to protect their community and gain access to necessary and valuable resources. I have mapped this process with regard to the formation and evolution of property rights in Palestinian refugee camps across Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria (Hajj 2016). That study demonstrates how Palestinian refugees draw on traditional social units of organization, like their *ahl* and *hamula*, to define expected group behavior using codes of behavior anchored in their pre-1948 experiences (see Davis 2010) but adaptable to current conditions. They have negotiated property sales, adjudicated conflicts, and negotiated claims on the basis of notions of honor, shame, steadfastness, and loyalty (Hajj 2016). One would expect these coded norms of behavior to be replicated and digitally broadcast on *ahl-* and *hamula-* based ICTs to the diaspora through images, videos, narratives, and shared memories.

According to reciprocity scholars, frequent interactions remind people of their connection with camp residents and offer an opportunity to reward or punish particular behaviors. To encourage reciprocity, digital spaces should facilitate frequent interactions between and among camp residents and the diaspora (Axelrod 1984; Axelrod and Hamilton 1981) and enable the community to share news and information in real time.

This ties into the fourth component of how Palestinians might engender reciprocity in digital spaces: through the presence of a strong reciprocator who can enforce norms or expectations of appropriate behavior (Fehr and Rockenbach 2003).The ultimate enforcer of norms, codified into formal rules or laws, might be the state (North 1995; North and Thomas 1973). However, in Palestinian refugee camps, largely devoid of state protection or intervention, community elders serve as reservoirs of community wisdom and arbitrators of conflict. The *ahl* and *hamula* serve as the key decisionmaking units and enforcers on matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, social security arrangements, and land disputes (Bowker 2003, 70; Hajj 2016). Usually the family patriarch, the oldest living male relative, has the final decision on issues of importance. This is evident in patterns of property ownership and enforcement (Hajj 2016) and the predominance of endogamous (clan) marriage in the refugee camps and the diaspora (Bowker 2003, 70). According to one person I interviewed, elders in the *ahl* and *hamula* have "wisdom as to how we should live together and how community loyalty should be maintained. They also have authority to force people to do the right thing if people are inclined to shirk" (I-111L).

In digital spaces, however, Palestinian elders are rarely the enforcers or gatekeepers. Though they may have power in the "real" world to enforce communal norms when it comes to business, marital, or property contracts, on digital platforms it seems likely that the platform managers serve as additional enforcers. ICT platform managers have the ability to reward diaspora members who send remittances by featuring them in a post. They also have the power to punish indifferent or negligent diaspora members by shunning and ostracizing them on digital message boards. At times, the technology gatekeeper may reinforce real-world norms; but their decisions might also deviate from community expectations, and therein lies a potential problem.

Even when patterned on community traditions and beliefs, technology has the potential to disrupt the very foundations of a community. In *The Seventh Sense*, Joshua Cooper Ramo considers how digital relations disrupt real-world relations. In the short run, real-world actors are crafting platforms and driving digital relations, but in the long run, these digital relations transform the gatekeepers and enforcers. He asserts that "mastery of gatekeeping" is the key to control of the networks (Ramo 2016, 2). By linking our bodies, our villages, and our ideas through ICTs, we introduce a genuinely new dynamic to our world: the technology creates dense concentrations of power that can be harnessed in new and potentially disruptive ways by new gatekeepers (Ramo 2016; Padgett and Powell 2012).

Digital networks of Palestinian refugees are generating spaces for new conversations that empower new generations of Palestinian stakeholders inside the camps and in the wider diaspora (Ashtan 2020). The new gatekeepers may develop different ideas about appropriate behavior through online exposure to new ideas and people. The transnational flow of new ideas—what Levitt (1998, 2001) refers to as *social remittances*—and disruption of the traditional power base of community elders have the potential to undercut the established networks and norms that were originally harnessed in digital spaces to rebuild the community.

In summary, in the midst of a protection gap, refugees may fund their own public goods and reimagine their community identity by using old kinship networks melded with new technologies to engage the diaspora. Refugee communities, like Palestinians in Lebanon, show how technology may facilitate reciprocity and remittance flows when digital spaces are patterned on precrisis family and village networks; when they replicate and broadcast communal norms of honor, loyalty, resilience, and shame; when they are frequently updated; and when they are enforced through the authority of both community elders and technology gatekeepers. At the same time, ICTs may empower new actors and forces that can undercut the very networks necessary for community reciprocity.

RECIPROCITY, REMITTANCES, AND STATE BUILDING

The strategic formulation of reciprocity in digital spaces among transnational Palestinian refugees is not simply a reactive coping mechanism within a global neoliberal context; nor does the intense focus on village and family identity neuter larger political aspirations. Palestinians are members of a transnational diaspora actively engaged, in person and online, in constructing conscious ideas and embodied feelings of who belongs to the Palestinian community. Because of their continued dispossession, thwarted state-building attempts by the political elite, and abandonment by the political establishment, Palestinian refugees in camps and their transnational villagers, particularly from camps outside the Occupied Territories, engender sustainable forms of diasporic identity and belonging via reciprocity and remittances. These strategies contribute to a powerful subnational identity, distinct from the nationalist aspirations embodied by the predominant Palestinian political parties like the PLO-Fatah and Hamas, that is especially resonant for Palestinians outside the OT.

Most scholarly work on nationalism and state building in Palestine situates the process in the OT and contends that it is driven by nationalist political groups like Hamas and the PLO, the military and economic strategies of those groups (Brand 1988; Krause 2017; Jamal 2005), and their nationalist narratives of Palestinian authenticity, as opposed to Israeli "otherness" (al-Hardan 2016; Khalidi 1997). Since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, Palestinians living in camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria have been formally and informally marginalized from the state-building project (Sayigh 1994; Hammer 2005). Palestinians living

in the diaspora are almost entirely excluded from any discussion about the future of Palestine (Davis and Kirk 2013, 6). When diaspora Palestinians are mentioned, it is usually with regard to how effectively competing political parties consolidate their power and loyalty inside the camps (Brand 1988). Moreover, the refugees living in camps outside the Occupied Territories are largely ignored by researchers as independent agents for political change, even though the numbers of Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem are vastly outnumbered by those documented as refugees or resettled elsewhere around the globe (;Hammer 2005, 11). Indeed, the role of the Palestinian diaspora in crafting their own sensibility and strategies is often overlooked. Some academics seem to hold an idealized vision of Palestinian nationalism and how it is enacted in daily life. As with the documented disjuncture between scholarly imaginations of Tibet and the actual politics of that space for everyday Tibetans (Dodin and Rather 2001), there is dissonance between the understanding of Palestinian nationalism and state building among scholars and the daily lived experience for the vast majority of Palestinians.

There is a growing academic counternarrative to this limited view of Palestinian world making. Some scholars are turning their attention to an alternative, transnational community-building endeavor among Palestinians in refugee camps outside the OT and the diaspora. In her extensive interviews with young Palestinians in America, Thea Abu el-Haj describes their deep knowledge of cultural, religious, social, and political life in their *bilad* (homeland) and the way it is reenacted in the United States. This knowledge is transmitted largely through filial connections that generate a sense of economic and moral obligation to support the community financially and champion justice (Abu el-Haj 2015, 51, 56). It is a sense of Palestinian subnational identity, identification with their *ahl* and *hamula*, that anchors their vision and support of a free and just Palestinian state.

In his extensive studies of Palestinian families in Gaza Camp, Bethlehem, and, more recently, the Palestinian diaspora community in Chicago, Loren Lybarger (2013, 2020) also observes that the communal identity and strategy for self-determination may be rooted in village and family networks. He contends that religious and secular parties have failed to galvanize Palestinians refugees and the diaspora to their cause. To assuage their fundamental existential anxiety and develop trust in other people, he argues, it is essential for Palestinians to establish and sustain "a biographical continuity," or a coherent narrative of self in relation to others across time and space in the category of "home." Local identities will grow and intensify to regain this sense of security (Lybarger 2013, 159). Again, for Lybarger, the subnational communal identity inspires a sense of economic and moral duty to Palestine.

For example, Lybarger shares the story of Abu Jamil's family conflict in the Gaza camp. Within the family were people who identified with Fatah and some who had more recently aligned with Hamas. Abu Jamil was increasingly disenchanted with elite politics altogether because he believed it divided and weakened the Palestinian family network. He rhetorically asked Lybarger, "Why die for a

bunch of corrupt leaders from the 'outside' who lived in ostentatious villas and hired Sri Lankan maids while everyone else was left to eke out a miserable existence in the camps?" (Lybarger 2013, 165). He preferred to focus on his neighborhood, village, and family and traditional values to help keep the community alive and thriving. Abu Jamil shared the story of a friend in the camp who sewed clothes for Abu Jamil's family without his ever having to ask. In exchange, Abu Jamil provided electrical services without asking for payment. For Abu Jamil, traditional communal values anchored in the family and village were critical to the success of the Palestinian people. In his view, declaring loyalty to a political party over one's family would erode the very bedrock of the community. Abu Jamil's family was torn apart and divided over such competing loyalties. Unfortunately, his brother declared loyalty to Hamas and began turning his energy and attention to the party instead of the family. He married a woman who supported Hamas rather than someone from within the *ahl* or *hamula*. In the end, this prompted Abu Jamil and his brother to build walls to separate their living spaces in the family home. Though it was an extreme example, Abu Jamil considered his brother's choices as a betrayal of norms that were essential to communal survival and moral wholeness in favor of a political faction that would sell out to the highest bidder at the first opportunity. According to Lybarger (2013), for Abu Jamil "the only authentic identity, the sole source of security, lay in familial and neighborly systems founded on the ethic of reciprocity, an ethic that was at the core of the '*adat wa taqlid* (customs and traditions) of the *hamula* and its *fellahin* (farmer) peasant ethos" (166).

Palestinian village networks and norms, both in person and in digital spaces, are not insular, tribal, inherently selfish, apolitical, or premodern. The subnational identity does not reify neo-orientalist visions of the region as a tribal space incongruent with the "modern" world (Lybarger 2013; Peteet 2008). Recent empirical studies by Singh (2015, 2017) show how subnational regional and village identities in India were creatively mobilized to provide solutions to health and welfare problems that benefited communities beyond a particular region or village. Similarly, subnational family and village networks generate both a moral and economic site of world making for Palestinians in real-world and virtual spaces. Networked refugees are using reciprocity and remittances to solve collective problems and thereby incubate an embryonic state administrative capacity rooted in a flexible and distinctively Palestinian sensibility of what it means to belong to and serve the community. Although ICTs may give rise to new voices that undercut the power of established gatekeepers, norms, and tropes, they provide space for a more expansive understanding of Palestinian identity (Ashtan 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this book, I use information obtained from computer data scraping, hundreds of in-depth interviews, and dozens of surveys of diaspora members across

the Middle East region, Europe, and North America to show how transnational Palestinian refugees outside the OT are strategically using digital spaces to encourage remittances that solve collective problems and provide public goods. I used a multipronged approach to assess the central hypothesis that digital spaces patterned on precrisis social networks motivate reciprocity and generate economic remittances. I conducted research on the behavior and motives of community-building stakeholders in three distinct but overlapping sites: inside the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp, with the Palestinian refugee diaspora around the globe, and in digital spaces where camp residents connect with the extensive diaspora network. Each research site required a different set of tools.

First, I conducted interviews with Palestinian refugees living in Nahr al-Bared, from a variety of *ahl* and *hamula* networks, to understand their access to and usage of ICTs. The interviews are listed in the research appendix. I interviewed Facebook group page managers, refugees between the ages of 18 and 25, middle-aged men and women, and people over the age of 65. I endeavored to get a representative sample, though I relied on snowball sampling to identify interested participants. I began by initiating conversations with members of families originally from Samoie village because of my established connections with them (Hajj 2014, 2016). However, I also interviewed members of families from Damon, Safouri, Saa'sa, and other villages.

Next, I conducted eighty-two survey interviews with Palestinians from a variety of villages who grew up in Nahr al-Bared and are currently living in North America, Australia, Europe, and the Arab Gulf region to gain an understanding of their internet usage and reflections on digital and real-world communication with the refugee camp. I initiated contact using the telephone or digital meeting apps like FaceTime, WhatsApp, and Skype. These surveys are described in detail in the research appendix.

Finally, I "scraped" data from digital sites identified by camp and diaspora respondents using a tool called Selenium WebDriver to analyze user demographics, the content of digital conversations, and the intensity of engagement in relation to geographic location. Usually used for web application testing, Selenium WebDriver allows users to write code that, among other capabilities, clicks on web page buttons, enters text into text boxes, and scrapes text and links from websites to help verify whether a web application is working as expected. My unconventional use of this tool involved using Selenium WebDriver scripts to scroll through the Facebook pages of Palestinian families and villages to obtain data on who comments on posts on the Facebook pages, the geographic location of the commenters, and the content of their comments. Using the Python programming language in conjunction with Selenium, these scripts were run on a variety of posts on the village Facebook pages over a period of more than one year. The posts were selected to represent a diversity of topics, including obituary and funerary remembrances,

marital celebrations, political campaigns, and business openings. Research was focused on the Samoie village Facebook group page because I received permission from the Facebook page manager, users, and the Wellesley College Institutional Review Board (IRB) to analyze and use the content of specific posts for publication. Although the IRB regards this type of data as public and does not require user permission, in order to maintain my own ethical research standards, I sought the consent of every user when running an analysis or using an image. I used my entire methodological toolkit to gain a comprehensive understanding of refugee ICT usage, reciprocity, and remittances in digital spaces.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

In chapter 2 I map Palestinian *ahl* and *hamula* networks in analog and digital spaces. Prior to 1948, Palestinian villages were accustomed to ambiguous rule and shifting power dynamics. They were adept at managing community needs and solving dilemmas within the family and village networks. Even when the community experienced the Nakba and moved to the refugee camps, the family and village remained important to survival. As the generation who had grown up in Palestine began to pass, and more camp residents migrated seeking economic opportunity, the community developed a "geography of the displaced," or a moral space, represented in village history books, where the community could craft and rebuild their family and village community.

Using Davis's (2010) excellent analysis of Palestinian village history books, I examine how the community initially sought to connect with new generations and the diaspora. These books are valuable reservoirs of shared stories and values. However, they suffer from the limitations inherent in analog tools: they are largely static representations of the past, because they are not easily updated, and their readership is limited because of the cost of production and difficulty in dissemination. Palestinian digital spaces offer a reinterpretation of the village history books. In the latter half of the chapter, I catalog the vast number of ICT platforms patterned on *ahl* and *hamula* networks. I highlight the activity on the digital pages, describe the type and content of digital posts, display the number and activity of users, and map the diaspora networks.

In chapter 3 I show how these vibrant digital connections engender real-world action. I trace how one Palestinian *hamula* Facebook page used particular images, videos, narratives, and memories to build connections and reproduce Palestinian norms of honor, shame, steadfastness, and loyalty. Building on Stack's (1974) ethnography of poverty and gift giving among Black Americans, I find that gift giving is an adaptive strategy of the poor. In addition, I examine the Amish practice of shunning, which provides a useful analogy to Palestinian practices of shaming and punishment. Through extensive interviews with Palestinian camp residents

and surveys with the transnational diaspora I trace how the replication of traditional norms in digital spaces inspires economic remittance flows that fund desperately needed public goods and services.

In particular, I examine how the real-time broadcasting of Palestinian burials and the needs of critically ill individuals and promising young students in digital spaces remind people living outside the camps of their connection and duty to those left behind. In the absence of state and aid-agency funding, the transnational Samoie village diaspora raised more than US $20,00 to fund a facility in Nahr al-Bared for washing the bodies of the dead before burial and to provide burial shrouds so that all families in the camp, not just those from Samoie, could bury their loved ones with dignity. They also raised $10,000 to fund a skin graft for a child burned in a fire and the annual tuition fee of $6,000 for a young woman in medical school. These initiatives demonstrate the community commitment to honor and support the next generation of Palestinian refugees, with the expectation that these young people will pay it forward in their turn. These community successes were spotlighted in digital posts.

Despite the success, reciprocity is not universal among those in the diaspora with financial means. I explore how the community enforces norms of honor and loyalty by shunning shirkers online and imposing financially costly punishments on their extended families in the real world. The use of shame is an effective tool for sanctioning repayment of gifts, but it runs the risk of alienating already marginalized community members. I briefly explore the dark side of shame as a tool for community sanctioning and highlight how some family units are pushing against patriarchal strictures and adopting more expansive notions of Palestinian identity and norms in order to encourage the younger generation to remain connected to the community.

In chapter 4 I examine the flow of new political ideas into the camps and the tensions between digital guardians of community norms and real-world enforcers in Palestinian refugee camps and the diaspora. The flow of social remittances from the diaspora to those in the camps prompts new positions on the establishment of a Palestinian state, financial remittances, and transnational activism. Yet the empowerment of new digital gatekeepers also has the potential to disrupt the very traditions and norms that initially anchored the community.

Chapter 5 summarizes the main findings and lessons learned from Palestinian experiences. ICTs are particularly effective in generating reciprocity and remittances when they are patterned on familiar social groupings, are updated with relevant information, transmit replicable norms of appropriate behavior, and are maintained by both real-world and digital gatekeepers. The book concludes with a blueprint for reciprocal activism among those of us motivated to support refugees and other struggling communities. With ICTs, activists and advocates do not need to reinvent the wheel to supply desperately needed remittances. We do not need huge organizational structures or large operating budgets to make a

real difference in the daily lives of refugees and others who are suffering. Direct engagement with others over the Internet can transform conflict settings into more-just spaces. After connecting to the Internet with our smartphone or other digital device, we can complement existing refugee community networks, listen to refugees' needs and requests, and buoy them with our own resources to close the protection gap.