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CREATING CAPABLE REFUGEES

UNRWA and the formation of Palestinian refugee subjectivity  
through human development

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### **Abstract:**

The thesis seeks to answer how The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and its human development goals can affect Palestinian refugee agency and subjectivity. Human development is analysed through a theoretical framework of neoliberal governmentality and biopolitics in order to understand the way in which refugees are to conduct themselves. In the thesis it is assumed that human development can have an impact on refugee subjectivities and that it includes its own rationale on how life is to be administered. Sources include UNRWA's publications which are interpreted using qualitative content analysis.

According to the analysis a permanent state of emergency and vulnerability of the Palestinian refugees are conditions for UNRWA's government of the refugees as a population. As interventions carried out in the name of human development are concerned with how human life is to be supported, sustained and steered they take on a biopolitical character. Furthermore, as they are informed by the economic knowledge underpinning neoliberal rationality, the desired form of subjectivity in human development also needs to conform to this knowledge. Even though human development focuses on expanding human capabilities and non-economic indicators of development such as healthcare and education, they become rationalised as means of accumulating human capital and the emergent subject should be able to utilise this capital in a productive way.

Though UNRWA's operations assume vulnerability of the refugees and pursue a specific form of subjectivity through neoliberal governmentality, the refugee status administered by the agency can also serve as a position from which political demands can be made. UNRWA's development programmes have occasionally been opposed by Palestinian refugees themselves for turning attention away from the politics of their condition. These actions presenting alternative refugee subjectivities have been labelled as dangerous and undesirable by the agency in turn. Critical assessments of governmentality and biopolitics could open up new ways of understanding how both these alternative subjectivities and conditions for existence, experience and action are produced.

Keywords: biopolitics, governmentality, UNRWA, human development, refugees

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## 1. Introduction

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established in 1949 by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to provide assistance and protection to Palestinian refugees living in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip (UNRWA, 2016b: ii). In my master's thesis I want to research UNRWA's human development approach to the Palestinian refugee population. What I am interested in is how its development policies can mould Palestinian refugee agency and subjectivity through its inscriptions of techniques of governmentality and what conduct is expected from the refugees. Throughout its history UNRWA has had varying policy goals and changes in its developmental and humanitarian approach manifest changes in policy on a broader, global level. The human development approach it currently promotes is not an isolated programme but showcases a larger paradigmatic change and the formation of a distinctive media for government. In this introduction I will discuss my motives for the research and its significance in relation to discussion of UNRWA and refugees in general, lay out the research questions for the thesis, introduce the sources chosen and methodology used and give a general outline for the structure of the study.

UNRWA is a relevant object of study for several reasons. The way it operates and the services it provides affect a population which has historically been politically significant to the whole Middle East. The ongoing disputes about Palestinian refugees' right of return and compensation, disagreements on who should be responsible for their current situation and whether or not they should even have a refugee status do not have only theoretical significance but can affect the whole area in very concrete ways. Amending UNRWA's budget and services are not just managerial issues and as the agency is reliant on voluntary donations, changes in single countries' policies can affect the way the agency can function. A recent example of this is the United States' decision to cut all funding to UNRWA.<sup>1</sup> Atia & Herrold (2018) even suggest that this form of relying on donations can be understood as a way for the

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<sup>1</sup> News coverage on the topic available from BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45377336>; Foreign Policy, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/08/28/middle-east-palestinian-israel-pompeo-trump-kushner-u-s-to-end-all-funding-to-u-n-agency-that-aids-palestinian-refugees/>; The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/31/trump-to-cut-all-us-funding-for-uns-main-palestinian-refugee-programme>.

fundlers to exercise their power and influence on organisations and presents a dispersed and subtle form of governance in itself.

Studying UNRWA can be a tedious task as the agency can be connected to an endless number of different disciplines and areas of study. It is tangled up in the general history of the Middle East as a geographic space occupied by multiple actors and incidents such as nation states and their interests, UN and non-governmental organisations, various terrorists groups and solidarity movements, uprisings and peace negotiations<sup>2</sup>. It also embodies an unique issue in the field of refugee politics and offers a possibility for endless empirical analysis for various schools of international relations and politics. Registered Palestinian refugees are excluded from the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and thus they are excluded from many mechanisms of international refugee protection as long as they are being assisted by UNRWA (Goddard, 2010: 475-476; Khalil, 2011: 684-686). The significance of the Palestinian question is in my opinion still prevalent and deserves academic attention. The situation in Israel and Palestinian territories has been volatile for decades and despite United Nations resolutions aimed at tackling these issues the question of Palestine is far from being resolved.

My goal is not to make prescriptive statements on why UNRWA's current goals might be flawed and how it should shape its policies in accordance with critical analysis. UNRWA is in charge of such a wide variety of basic service not otherwise available to the refugees that its collapse would also mean the collapse of welfare and despite the fact the agency's programmes can be analysed critically, they are nevertheless often vital for recipients of aid. Also, while sometimes the agency's policies reflect techniques of depoliticisation and containment of agency there is contradictory evidence too: according to a body of literature discussed later in the thesis UNRWA acts itself as a sort of a political totem that validates refugees' claims and makes their status political, not only a humanitarian issue. This ambivalence is at the heart of understanding how the agency operates.

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2 Qumsiyeh, M. B. (2011). *Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment*. London: Pluto Press; Said, E. W. (1996). *Peace and Its Discontents: Essays on Palestine in the Middle East Peace Process*. Vintage: New York; Schiff, B. N. (1995.) *Refugees unto the Third Generation: UN Aid to Palestinians*. New York: Syracuse University Press; Hanafi, S., Hilal, L., & Takkenberg, L. (Eds.). (2014). *UNRWA and Palestinian Refugees: From Relief and Works to Human Development*. Oxon: Routledge.

Offering a proposal for alternative ways to safeguard refugees' interests is beyond the scope of this thesis and also my own imagination. The main questions I have been asking while reading through UNRWA's materials and various literature related to the agency has been how the refugee is constructed by UNRWA's operations and what it can tell about human development and its goals in general. By providing one interpretation of how the agency functions in this task is only one possible reading as will be discussed also later in the thesis. Discussing how the refugees are constructed as subjects is however necessary to open up alternative ways of understanding how they are and could be politically engaged. This analysis could be done to other refugee operations too.<sup>3</sup>

It should be understood that in this thesis UNRWA is studied from a certain perspective and not all its operations have been analysed. For example the agency's relatively recent mandate of protection is something I have left completely out from my thesis even though it could also be addressed in a similar manner from the framework of human development. Also including materials not produced by UNRWA in the main analysis could provide a more comprehensive outlook on the alternative forms of refugee agency and allow for comparisons between how UNRWA and other actors frame issues in development. More importantly, Palestinian refugees are not a homogenous group as they are scattered geographically and their conditions are also dependent on the country in which they reside (Khalil, 2011). Much of the literature on Palestinian refugees is focused on a specific area, for example refugee camps in Lebanon have been studied from an anthropological perspective (Allan, 2014; Peteet, 2005) and those in Gaza have been analysed as biopolitical spaces (Tosa, 2009).

My focus is however not on only refugee camps or any other clearly defined spatial space. Rather, I seek to understand UNRWA's general principles that are applied to the refugees as biopolitical subjects, a population under government. According to Feldman (2015) refugee camps can be understood as "anomalous geopolitical spaces" that present an ongoing debate on how refugee lives are to be lived and pose various questions concerning legitimacy,

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3 Turner, S. (2006). Negotiating Authority Between UNHCR and 'the people'. *Development and Change*, 37(3), 759-778; Meyer, S. (2006). The 'Refugee Aid and Development' Approach in Uganda: Empowerment and Self-Reliance of Refugees in Practice. *UNHCR Working Paper: New Issues in Refugee Research, Research Paper No. 131*, 1-97; Bradley, M. (2014). Rethinking refugeehood: statelessness, repatriation, and refugee agency. *Review of International Studies*, 4, 101-123.

sovereignty and authority. These issues are also at stake when UNRWA is discussed and do not depend on whether or not the subject of study is an actual camp or the agency itself.

My decision to study UNRWA is also founded on a personal interest in Palestine. During several trips to the occupied West Bank I have had the chance to converse with inspiring people from all over the world and many of the questions I have asked in the process of writing this thesis were first vaguely formed during these aimless travels. I am forever grateful to friends and strangers who have helped me and my travel companions in numerous ways, be it pouring a cup of tea or giving a ride to Qalandia checkpoint at night.

## 1.1 Research questions and objectives

The main research question in my thesis is how UNRWA's human development policies can effect Palestinian refugee agency and experience and what kind of subjects are potentially created by a certain paradigm of development. To answer the question it is necessary to understand what kind of conduct is expected from the refugees, what kind of actions are labelled as undesirable and how UNRWA's policies and various programmes present the refugee. My question presumes that there is a connection between human development and agency and that human development policies can include their own intrinsic rationale on how human life is to be conducted.

I have also utilised two other research questions to better understand the broader theme of human development. Firstly, if human development is understood as a process of increasing the ability of people to make decisions affecting their own lives by its proponents, it is then reasonable to ask how the refugees UNRWA is taking care of are to gain this ability and what kind of qualities human development seeks to foster in order to meet its own intrinsic goals. Secondly, it is also relevant to ask what are the conditions of UNRWA's government to begin with – how the agency has become in charge of such a large population and most importantly how it nowadays sees the environment it has to work in.

To examine these processes I have chosen the concepts of biopower/biopolitics and governmentality as my main theoretical framework. My decision to interpret UNRWA's

policies as operations in biopower and biopolitics is based on the fact that the agency, as an organisation in charge of a specific population and mandated by the international community, is an important actor in governing how Palestinian refugee lives are to be conducted and regulated. As Palestinian refugees reside in various countries (also outside UNRWA's operational areas) the importance of UNRWA becomes even more relevant as its scope reaches beyond nation states and is not limited by borders between countries. Instead of criticising humanitarian and development efforts for creating bare, apolitical life that presents refugees as mute victims utilising concepts of biopower and biopolitics should also include investigating their productive capacities.

If biopolitics includes the presence of a productive power and the incorporation human life as a target of political processes, questions of agency and subjectivity thus become relevant. By incorporating neoliberal governmentality to the analysis it is possible to reach a more comprehensive understanding what and how human development aims to produce, be it intentionally or not. Governmentality acts and impacts its subjects through specific forms of knowledge. Rather than addressing refugee government and human development as practices that reduce life to pure biology, I seek to understand both as operations that create subjects guided by neoliberal knowledge. This point of view also allows for a richer analysis of why refugees can sometimes oppose actions undertaken in name of human development: instead of struggling for any form of agency, their opposition could also be targeted against the form of life advanced by organisations and other actors governing populations within the refugee regime.

## 1.2 Methodology and sources

To interpret the sources chosen I have used qualitative content analysis. Typically content analysis can be inductive in its early stages and move on to more deductive analysis as the results are placed within a wider theoretical framework and inductive results are tested for their appropriateness (Patton, 2002: 453-454). I started my analysis by closely reading through a wide array of UNRWA documents ranging from their earlier strategies and reforms that are not all studied in the thesis. From there I chose human development as the main target of my inquiry and decided to interpret the general themes and categories from the angle of

biopolitics and neoliberal governmentality. Some of the concepts introduced in the later chapters are not directly derived from the more general theoretical framework but rather serve to complement the theorisations involved. My approach is constructivist – it is assumed in this thesis that social reality is constructed by people, institutions, other actors and all their interactions (Flick, 2007: 12) and there can be multiple realities that are constructed in different ways by different actors (Patton, 2002: 96).

To understand and analyse how human development is framed and validated in UNRWA's documents it is necessary to ask what is to be developed, how development should be undertaken, why development needs to take place and what is to be gained from a decent level of development. These questions have served as general guidance in analysing source material as often I have found myself trailing towards a completely different set of issues which, though they could be analysed based on the same sources as used here, do not necessarily have anything to do with the main theme of human development and would require a completely different theoretical framework to comprehend.

Studying UNRWA's publications involves taking into account the context in which they have been produced. As institutional documents one should consider why and how they have been produced, how accurate they are, link them with other relevant sources and also aim to demystify them as institutional texts (Patton, 2002: 498-499). Although UNRWA publishes many of their documents also in Arabic and other languages, the ones chosen here have been written in English. As UNRWA is an agency that relies on voluntary contributions from United Nations member countries and private actors<sup>4</sup>, many of its official publications are probably designed to attract potential donations through giving a specific image of the agency and highlighting both its achievements and future needs. Continuous reporting, adaptation of practices and attempting to demonstrate quantitative results provides the donors a way to measure agency performance (Atia & Herrold, 2018: 1047). Annual reports of UNRWA's commissioner-general presented to the UN General Assembly have a somewhat different audience and include more current events and issues. They are also commented by the UN advisory commission for UNRWA.

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<sup>4</sup> More detailed information on how UNRWA is funded is available on the agency's website, <https://www.unrwa.org/how-you-can-help/how-we-are-funded>.

The main body of text analysed in the thesis is UNRWA's current medium-term strategy spanning from 2016 to 2021 (UNRWA, 2016b). It gives a general guideline for UNRWA's current objectives and provides a general image of how the agency positions itself. In addition to descriptions of UNRWA's areas of operation with their specific issues, it includes outlines of all of its main objectives. The paper has also sections dealing with more detailed bureaucratic and financial dimensions of the agency and annexes concerning risk registers, evaluation guidelines and planning strategies.

In relevant parts of the analysis I have also discussed other material produced by and about the agency. Constructing a corpus for study can begin by setting up the initial selection of documents and be redesigned later on to fill in gaps in the analysis (Flick, 2007: 32). Though the medium-term strategy might provide adequate material in itself, it has felt necessary to include complementary texts. In the context of vulnerability, I refer to UNRWA's own registration requirements (UNRWA, 2009) when mapping what the definition of a Palestinian refugee entails and a vulnerability assessment to conceptualise what vulnerability itself is concerned with (UNRWA, 2015a).

Two different emergency appeals (UNRWA, 2018a; UNRWA 2018b) and a paper discussing the protection of Palestinian refugees (UNRWA, 2015b) are referred to in the section concerning complex emergency as a condition for governance as they best illustrate the way in which emergency is operationalised in UNRWA's rhetoric. There are also three reports included that were originally presented to the UNGA (UNRWA, 1951; UNRWA, 2014; UNRWA, 2015c), the oldest one to show how UNRWA has depicted refugees in the past and more recent ones to get more detailed information on certain events. Two short statements found on the agency's website (UNRWA, 2013; UNRWA, 2016c) and an annual operational report (UNRWA, 2016a) have been selected for similar reasons, to understand events that cannot be discussed in detail in more general strategies and general reports.

Including all of these sources has felt necessary to provide a more comprehensive picture of UNRWA. All of them could be treated in separate papers but at the same time they all overlap significantly by including almost identical phrases and general justifications. By studying various reports as well as shorter writings on the agency's website it is possible to get a more

varied picture of the agency. As human development is such a broad concept it touches various different issues and can take on various different forms. It is not the product of a single strategy and can be explored from multiple angles.

### 1.3 Structure of the study

In chapter 2 the main theoretical framework of biopolitics and neoliberal governmentality is introduced. Both concepts are discussed mainly following the works of Michel Foucault though the concept of biopolitics is expanded by including also Giorgio Agamben's theorisations on bare life and the camp. In my understanding the two concepts share many similarities and together they can be understood to form a broad framework for analysis. Biopower and biopolitics are concerned with the government of human life at the level of populations and neoliberal governmentality describes the governing rationality which is underpinned by similar emphasis on populations, economic knowledge and security.

Chapter 3 gives an outline of the subjects of study, UNRWA as a development agency and human development as a governmental paradigm. Understanding how UNRWA was established and what it is mandated to pursue gives a better idea on how its current programmes in human development impact refugees. UNRWA has never been meant to be political agency and it still strives to maintain a strictly apolitical role. Shifts in UNRWA's operations reflect the ways in which development in general has become more focused on human development instead of relying on only purely economic markers of development such as growth in gross domestic product. Human development can be understood as a new way of understanding what is to be valued and what development should achieve to begin with. However, it is by no means free of economic calculations but instead expands the field of economy in a manner that makes it compatible with neoliberal governmentality.

Conditions for UNRWA's government, emergency and vulnerability, are analysed in chapter 4. By assuming constant emergency that cannot be tamed the agency validates its own position as a governing subject and by labelling refugees vulnerable it necessitates the government of a population. Both emergency and vulnerability can also be understood as conditions for the

emergence of biopolitical bare life, but in my understanding they do not constitute the ends of human development but act as precursors for creating other subjectivities.

The analysis continues in chapter 5 by dissecting the ideas of human capital and homo economicus, concepts integral to neoliberal governmentality in development. Both concepts have been more broadly applied in general economic discussions as well as contemporary literature concerning conditions of work, capitalism and consumerism in society. Analysing them as rationalities of governmentality allows to critically assess human development beyond its own vocabulary. They also form the subject of interest in human development and describe what kind of identity and agency is to be fostered.

Chapter 6 includes analysis on how UNRWA understands refugees as a risk in themselves and how the state of being a refugee could potentially open up alternative subjectivities to those dictated by economic reasoning underpinning human development. Even though refugees form the population UNRWA is mandated to develop and protect, they can also undertake dangerous behaviour that could tarnish the image of the agency by channelling their demands through demonstrations, strikes and other forms of dissent. These actions are not in line with general forms of subjectification embraced in human development and instead present refugeeness as a political position from which demands are made.

Chapter 7 recaps the main points of the analysis and discusses general utility of its results as well as the theoretical framework and sources used in the thesis. It also addresses ambiguities present in biopolitics and governmentality, especially when applied to studies on development and refugees. In order to provide a more coherent understanding of the subjectivities formed through human development the limitations of the chosen manner of approach should be understood. Moreover, different approaches to biopolitics could be chosen in order to better understand it as a productive power and move beyond the rationalities embedded in governmentality.

## 2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on the concepts of biopower/biopolitics and neoliberal governmentality. Biopower and biopolitics frame the level in which politics functions in development, human life and human beings. As development can be understood to work in order to support, sustain and steer human life as such understanding it as a practice in biopolitics becomes logical. Governmentality in turn illustrates the more general apparatus in which this politics is practised as biopolitics takes on a neoliberal rationality and human development becomes preoccupied with producing a certain form of subjectivity.

Many aspects in all three, biopolitics, governmentality and human development are interlinked and share similar vocabulary. In a preliminary version of my thesis I originally included also human development in the theoretical framework though in reality it only serves as a subject of analysis. Biopolitics and governmentality serve as the guiding concepts and provide the theoretical landscape in which human development is situated and also help to form the questions to be asked from the material.

### 2.1 Biopower and biopolitics

Biopower and biopolitics direct the level of analysis and constitute the general grid against which politics and power relations are understood in the thesis. I draw mainly from the thinking of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben who, despite differences in their approaches towards biopolitics, both have defined concepts that can offer a wide vocabulary for understanding contemporary issues in development.

According to Foucault, biopower means a power to “‘make’ live and ‘let’ die” as opposed to the preceding right of the sovereign to “take life or let live”. He examines this new form of power by tracing its origins back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries during which disciplinary technologies of power were aimed at the individual body. Alongside discipline a new form of power began to take shape in the second half of the eighteenth century and “the new nondisciplinary power is applied not to man-as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being; ultimately, if you like, to man-as-species”. (Foucault, 2003: 241-242)

Foucault makes a separation between disciplinary forms of power and biopolitics which works through statistical estimates and forecasts to install security measures to optimise a state of life and achieve a level of regularity (Foucault, 2003: 246). Both disciplinary power and biopolitics are concerned with replacing the right to take life or let one live with “a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death” and they have evolved alongside each other into two basic manifestations of this power: firstly, assessing the body as machine, something that can be disciplined, whose capabilities can be optimised and which can be integrated into systems of economic controls and secondly, focusing on human beings as species and necessitating both interventions and regulatory controls in the name of biopolitics of a population (Foucault, 1978: 138-139).

As biopolitics turns its attention to human-beings as population its focus is not the total sum of individual bodies but “a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on.” (Foucault, 2003: 242-243). And as power becomes exercised at the level of population (though it should be noted that individualising techniques of discipline have not vanished after this induction) it includes also the power to expose a whole population to death instead of focusing only on punishing the individual (Foucault, 1978: 137). Death marks however also the limit of biopower which is concerned with improvement of life “by eliminating accidents, the random element, and deficiencies” (Foucault, 2003: 248).

When life becomes politicised both collective and individual lives become the target of various disputes, efforts, struggles and problematisations which are concerned with how life should be amended and directed (Helén, 2016: 40). Concepts of biopower and biopolitics can be hard to distinguish. Foucault himself has written and lectured about them in multiple ways that sometimes overlap and he does not necessarily make clear distinctions on which of the two is being addressed. For Foucault, power relations are not given or seized but power is something that is constantly practised in different types of relationships and power relations result from inequalities of for example knowledge and economic processes (Foucault, 1978: 93). Furthermore, power always exists together with resistance (Foucault, 1978: 95). Power does not act directly on others but rather on their actions. Without the pole of resistance power

acts on passivity and this set-up transforms from a relationship of power to a relationship of violence (Foucault, 1982: 789). Biopower is productive and life at stake in biopolitics should not be understood as only biological life: instead, when people as groups or individuals act in the field of biopolitics they contest and negotiate multiple ways in which life can be reshaped through biopolitical confrontations, government of life and personal conduct (Helén, 2016: 42-44).

For Foucault biopolitics is a novel phenomenon that began to take shape at a distinct point in time, not something that has always characterised how power and politics are conducted. It was also a necessary element in the development of capitalism which would not have become possible “without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes” (Foucault, 1978: 141). Giorgio Agamben takes an opposite position and understands biopolitics as a theme that has been prevalent for much longer. Instead of focusing on preservation of life his concept of biopolitics is more characterised by the act of separating different forms of life and calculating politics in accordance to these separations.

The foundations of Agamben’s thinking derive from ancient Roman law and Greek philosophy from which he borrows some of the concepts used. He states that life can be divided – according to ancient Greek texts – to *zoe* and *bios*. *Zoe* means pure life itself, a form of living that is common to animals, plants and human beings. *Bios* on the other hand refers to a “way of living proper to an individual or a group” and occurs as a form of life distinct to living in a polis. In other words *bios* is the form of political life that we experience and execute through living as a part of a family, a society, a state. This form of interaction makes a human being an Aristotelian political animal separate from forms of pure life with no political or social context. (Agamben, 1998: 9)

Agamben continues on theorising on the figure of *homo sacer*, the sacred man. This term also originates from Roman law and *homo sacer* can be seen as the first embodiment of pure life which defines the borders of sovereign power. The sovereign is the one who can declare exception in the normal judicial order and *homo sacer* is symmetrical to the sovereign: “the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially *homines sacri*, and *homo*

sacer is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns”. Homo sacer can be killed without punishment and he is excluded from the normal political order, the sphere of bios. (Agamben, 1998: 52-54)

For Agamben the appearance of bare life and biopolitics is not only a contemporary phenomenon. As he explains, even the Greek polis recognised the differences between forms of life and the transformation of politics has not been one decisive moment. What is new is the way in which the pure, or biological life, is becoming more and more inseparable from today's politics and how biopolitics has grabbed our attention in the first place. Modern democracy has not abolished the figure of homo sacer but rather has expanded its boundaries and made it into something at stake in political conflict. Biopolitics is not only concerned with bios, the life of a citizen, but also with anonymous bare life. Now the individual bearer of rights and liberties is controlled also through his body, his bare life. With the expansion of this interest in zoe the sovereign's state of exception also becomes permanent. (Agamben, 1998: 72-74)

The camp is where the sovereign's state of exception and the creation of bare life become visible. Agamben refers to Nazi concentration camps and the previous analyses of Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault (Agamben, 2000: 38-40; Agamben, 1998: 10), but the concept of camp should not be understood only in historic terms or as a specific geographical space.

“Inasmuch as its inhabitants have been stripped of every political status and reduced completely to naked life, the camp is also the most absolute biopolitical space that has ever been realized – a space in which power confronts nothing other than pure biological life without any mediation. The camp is the paradigm itself of political space at the point in which politics becomes biopolitics and the homo sacer becomes indistinguishable from the citizen.”

(Agamben, 2000: 41)

Agamben claims that biopolitics is as old as the sovereign exception and he equates both biopower and sovereign power from this angle of a juridical state of exception (Koivusalo, 2012: 356). For Agamben modern biopolitics is characterised exactly by its tendency to

reduce life to pure biological life that can then be destroyed on a whim. The political and speaking man is now without protection and agency and the processes of biopolitics actually takes on a form of thanatopolitics, politics of death (Blencowe, 2010: 116). This entanglement of politics of life and politics of death has also been discussed by Foucault:

“But this formidable power of death - and this is perhaps what accounts for part of its force and the cynicism with which it has so greatly expanded its limits - now presents itself as the counterpart of a power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations. Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity: massacres have become vital.”

(Foucault, 1978: 137)

Rabinow & Rose (2006: 197) propose that for an actuality to present biopower it must include at least one truth discourse about “the vital character of living human beings” and a corresponding authority to speak the truth. It also has to deploy strategies to intervene with “collective existence in the name of life and health”, be it populations, nation, society or categories such as race or gender. Finally it should include “modes of subjectification, through which individuals are brought to work on themselves, under certain forms of authority, in relation truth discourses, by means of practices of the self, in the name of their own life or health, that of their family or some other collectivity, or indeed in the name of the life or health of the population as a whole”.

In the context of this thesis, biopolitics is understood as a form of politics which assumes life both as its subject and object. Following Rabinow’s and Rose’s definition, a form of biopolitics therefore also has to work with what is understood as the truth on human life in order to decide what phenomena need to be assessed in the sphere of politics-of-life. It values outcomes of policies at the level of population and measures its impacts in the same scale. Biopolitics is also a form of politics that makes questions of life and death public and turns them into something else than only technical and economic issues (Helén, 2016: 41).

Departing from Agamben's definition, the notion of bare life is not the end of biopolitics but rather serves as a starting point from which various forms of subjectification can arise and from which individuals enter the sphere of governmentality through working on themselves.

## 2.2 Neoliberal governmentality

In this chapter I will give a brief introduction to the theoretical framework of neoliberalism and governmentality following Michel Foucault's work and the discussion inspired by his lectures and writings. Governmentality provides a framework to examine how UNRWA's programmes and policies imagine, create and facilitate certain forms of knowledge, power and through them agency. It can also be closely linked with the analysis of motives and aspirations related to biopolitics as, especially when understood as a neoliberal form of power, governmentality includes its own grid of truth in the form of political economy and is dependent on subjecting life to act corresponding to this truth. Studying governmentality is increasingly focused on studying the shift from the welfare state to the increase of neoliberal political projects and provides a framework for scrutinising "end of politics" as a political program instead of focusing on statements about the retreat of state and market domination (Helén, 2016: 188; Lemke, 2007: 45). It can also be applied more specifically to both refugees (Lippert, 1999; Lui, 2004; Mavelli, 2017a) and development practices (Li, 2007; Ove, 2013).

Neoliberalism can be understood as both an ideology and an economic doctrine that has been widely applied at least since the 1970s. Because of a wide political consent neoliberalism became regarded as common sense and some acclaimed it as the only viable alternative to solve a wide array of problems ranging from pure economics to social issues. As an economic doctrine neoliberalism generally vouches for fiscal discipline, cuts in public spending, financial and trade liberalisation, privatisation of state enterprises and abolishing regulations that might disrupt the market. It has been accused of individualising collective problems, eroding social solidarity and creating extreme wealth inequalities. (Dardot & Laval, 2017; Harvey, 2005)

The purposes of my thesis is however not to review specific economic doctrines as signals of neoliberalism nor provide a comprehensive account of its history as economic policy. Instead

of treating it as a purely economic rationality furthering interests of large corporations or analysing its internal inconsistencies and relationships with existing social formations it can be understood as a regime of subjectification aimed at producing subjects “capable of adapting to the neoliberal mechanisms of production, exploitation, accumulation and dispossession” (Mavelli, 2017b). It is a rationality which connects various tactics to provide an internal cohesion of thought and that rationality can then be applied to a wide variety of different phenomena (Rose, 1999: 27). As Dardot & Laval (2017: 3) point out, neoliberalism is not only an ideology that destructs (regulations, social safety nets, public institutions) but it also creates specific subjectivities – according to them, neoliberalism is “the form of our existence”. This is where the analysis of governmentality becomes relevant as it moves away from neoliberalism’s symptoms, for instance economic musings, and provides a framework for addressing neoliberalism as a form of power and government.

Foucault describes governmentality as “the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security” (Foucault, 1991: 102). These reflect a modern governmental reason which includes freedom as its main element (Foucault, 2009: 354) as modern individuals are now not only free to choose but “obliged to be free” (Rose, 1999: 87). When discussing government and governmentality Foucault is not discussing only the state as a source of power. Instead of thinking of a state that extends its reach to various sectors, governmentality allows to address various stakeholders, actors and networks of power that regulate individual lives (Miller & Rose, 2008: 27).

More specifically, Foucault’s description can be understood as a description of neoliberal governmentality. The components he attaches to the concept are also those that in his understanding make up neoliberal reason. The two concepts complement each other as knowledge and techniques regarding population, economy and security form the core for both governmentality and neoliberalism in his writings. In his lectures Foucault (2008: 91-93) discusses also the possibility of an autonomous socialist governmentality but states that no such thing can be found in socialist programmes. This differentiation does not mean that the

analysis of governmentality should be limited to a specific set of countries or areas in the global North. Instead, governmentality can be understood as a globally diffused form of power as specific rationalities and technologies have spread beyond borders since their actualisation in eighteenth century Europe (Busse, 2015: 173-175).

For Foucault political economy, the basis of knowledge for neoliberal governmentality, is an instrument for self-limitation of governmental reason that made its debut in the middle of the eighteenth century during the rise of liberalism (Foucault, 2008: 13). Its function is to reflect on governmental practices themselves, not discuss their legitimacy or rightfulness and it has to be left to function with as little interference as possible so that it can become both the truth and norm (Foucault, 2008: 15, 30). What became the site of this truth was the market – one could now judge governmental practices through production, demand, supply and value as the market and its natural mechanism became a site of veridiction (Foucault, 2008: 32). Liberalism finds an incompatibility between the “optimal functioning of economic processes and the maximization of governmental regulation” (Burchell, 1991: 138-139). When governmentality becomes neoliberal, the state is no longer regarded as the absolute sovereign but the market becomes the main regulatory and organising principle (Lemke, 2012: 16).

According to Foucault, this shift in governmental rationality was preceded by the problem of unlimited government and law opposing it (Foucault, 2008: 37). But now the market was reassigned as the site of truth that government should not intervene with (Foucault, 2008: 38). This interest in political economy, similarly to biopolitics, moves the focus from family to population – phenomena not irreducible to the level of family such as mortality and labour are what is now governed and the family becomes an instrument of this form of governance (Foucault, 1991: 99-100). Government now directed its tactics and techniques to the level of population regardless of individual interests which it is composed of and acts on it through directing its migration, health et cetera (Foucault, 1991: 100). A population is now to be improved either directly or indirectly through campaigns attempting to for example simulate birthrate or direct migration flows (Foucault, 2009: 105). What is at heart of government is an attempt to shape human conduct – it is seen as something that can be regulated and controlled in order to achieve certain goals (Dean, 2010: 18) and population becomes both “the end and instrument of government” (Foucault, 2009: 105). But as human conduct can be understood as

men in all their relations, not only in relations between men each other, studies in government and governmentality can also be stretched out to encompass the material environment and technical networks concerning non-human actors(Lemke, 2012: 96).

Neoliberal rationality of governmentality assumes that the economic form of the market becomes unlimitedly generalised through the social body (Foucault, 2008: 243). Non-economic matters become discussed in economic terms and according to Foucault, this is partially due to its investment in human capital: “[...] for example, how the mother-child relationship, completely characterized by the time spent by the mother with the child, the quality of care she gives, the affection she shows, the vigilance with which she follows its development, its education [...] all constitute for the neoliberals as investments which can be measured in time” (Foucault, 2008: 234). Economic analysis is applied to phenomena previously understood more in terms of for example demography and psychology (Foucault, 2008: 245). Dean (2010: 27) argues that in fact without knowledge of economy contemporary states would become unthinkable as the knowledge on issues such as inflation and trade are at heart of their practices of government. Governing through the field of economy is necessary for the wealth and happiness of the population (Dean, 2010: 29) as Foucault also suggests through his interpretation of political economy as the main form of knowledge. In the eyes of neoliberal governmentality subjects, relations and events do not exist unless they can be interpreted from its own economic lexicon (Helén, 2016: 195).

For Foucault (2009: 21) security, a main component of governmentality, is something exercised over a population as opposite to discipline aimed at individual bodies. This frames security also an exercise in biopolitics. Discipline can function through isolating a space in which power can act without any limits whereas security is something that constantly expands and integrates new elements onto itself: ”production, psychology, behavior, the ways of doing things of producers, buyers, consumers, importers, and exporters, and the world market” (Foucault, 2009: 45). Strategies of liberal security are not aimed at capturing and editing things but producing and controlling conditions of freedom and the risks freedom can carry (Koivusalo, 2012: 221).

In the framework of governmentality security functions as an apparatus or a *dispositif*. Foucault describes *dispositif* as a “thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions - in short, the said as much as the unsaid” (Foucault, 1980: 194). Following this explanation a *dispositif* can be understood as a network of almost anything, be the phenomena it comprises of linguistic or non-linguistic in nature (Agamben, 2009: 2-3). It also responds to a specific urgent need and has a strategic imperative which makes it located in a power relation (Foucault, 1980: 195; Agamben, 2009: 3). Furthermore, *dispositif* can be used to conceptualise how networked strategies and the power relations they enact may function as both creators and enablers of certain kind of knowledge (Koivusalo, 2012: 145).

Returning to Foucault’s understanding of security, as something that constantly widens its circuits and attaches new elements to itself (Foucault, 2009: 45), its function as *dispositif* becomes evident. Subjects as diverse as crowd control, CCTV surveillance, Australia’s refugee camps and insurance companies can be analysed through the Foucauldian understanding of apparatuses of security (Wichum, 2013). The way UNRWA’s materials consider different formations of security as the ends and means of development makes it logical to decipher its policies as an apparatus with its own strategic needs and techniques.

What renders a *dispositif* of security biopolitical is, again, the tendency to revolve around spaces of species or population as opposed to geopolitical focus on territory *per se*. What distinguishes this biopolitical space is its contingency, as displayed by sciences such as statistics and probability evolved to understand such phenomena. The *dispositif*’s attention on contingencies that arise from human life is what is at stake in the modern understanding of security and what underpins its strategic function. (Dillon, 2007: 46)

Analysis of governmentality and its practices can take on many different forms and can be applied to a wide variety of events. Ina (2005) distinguishes three different dimensions of governmentality that have been investigated by scholars – reasons, tactics and subjects. The domain of governmentality’s reasons and rationalities can point towards the language of political rule, variable forms of truth, knowledge and expertise authorising governmental

practices (Inda, 2005: 6-7). Tactics of governmentality on the other hand involve various practices of numeration and calculation such as accounting procedures, pedagogic and therapeutic techniques, architecture and material inscriptions (Inda, 2005: 9). Examining subjects of government can invoke questions about what forms of self and identity are presupposed, attributes assumed of both those in authority and those governed, different duties and forms of conduct and ways in which the governed are identified with certain groups (Dean, 2010: 43). For Koivusalo (2012: 217-218) governmentality describes a new strategic field of problems arising from governance rather than a specific governing mentality. Dean (2010: 25) takes on a different approach and addresses governmentality as a form and practice of knowledge, following a more literal understanding of Foucault's neologism.

Governmentality can provide an analytical grid against which specific political phenomena can be understood. In the case of biopolitics and biopower which are both by definition focused on human life and human-as-species, public questions of life and death, neoliberal governmentality defines the apparatus of knowledge and strategies involved. The biopolitics of neoliberal governmentality creates distinctions between forms of life as lives considered valuable are those which can be inserted into the grid of neoliberalism and its underpinning values of entrepreneurship, responsibility, self-governance, security and competition (Mavelli, 2017a: 820). Even if the idea of freedom is central to neoliberal governmentality, the freedom involved is achieved by forms of restriction and regulation owing to knowledge of economy and strategies of security and becoming free inevitably take place through forms of conduct, knowledge and sense of self associated with governmentality.

### 3. UNRWA and development

This chapter introduces the subjects of inquiry in the thesis, UNRWA and human development, in more detail. In order to justify my research position and the subject chosen I find it necessary to discuss how and why UNRWA became the organisation it is today. Understanding the historical conditions and characteristics of its mandate are necessary to lay ground for its position as a governing power over the refugee population. The depth of its power is dependent on its ability to define and label a population that in turn becomes the object of its actions and techniques of government. According to Lui (2004: 131), refugees are not forgotten people: they are subjected to various forms of regulatory and disciplinary practices by the international refugee regime which is also responsible “for social, political and legal constructions that we now recognize as refugeeness” (Malkki, 1995: 506). UNRWA is part of the regime through its role in governing the population of Palestinian refugees.

In the second section of this chapter the origins of human development and academic discussion, relevant to the theoretical framework of the thesis, is discussed. Both UNRWA and human development serve as the subjects of inquiry in my thesis. Human development forms a part of UNRWA’s mission and through human development it aims to help refugees. In my understanding it serves as a principal goal for the agency as officially UNRWA does not have a mandate to politically address refugees’ conditions. Human development includes a distinct way of understanding how human beings should conduct themselves, what they are to value and how they should relate to their surroundings.

#### 3.1 UNRWA as a development agency

UNRWA’s mandate is “to provide assistance and protection to some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight.” (UNRWA, 2016b: ii). UNGA has also acknowledged the so-called protection mandate of UNRWA which is to be realised through the protection of rights of vulnerable refugee groups (UNRWA, 2015b: 4-5). UNRWA is the only UN agency responsible for taking care of a specific refugee situation in a specific geographical area as

other refugee cases are handled by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), including those Palestinian refugees living outside UNRWA's field of operations (Bocco, 2010: 231; Goddard, 2010: 476).

Palestinian refugees are a result of the Arab-Israeli war fought in 1948. As many as 750 000 Palestinians left their homes as a result of the conflict and though there are contesting views whether or not they left voluntarily or not, this displacement without a doubt marks a starting point in their existence as refugees (Pappé, 2015: 87-96). The events in 1948 have since been known for Palestinians as *nakba*, the catastrophe. Already in 1948 the United Nations set up UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) that was to be in charge of finding a political solution to the Palestinian refugee situation. UNGA also instructed the commission to facilitate economic development of the area through arrangements with local governments and authorities as well as take charge of the economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees (UNGA, 1948: paragraphs 10 & 11).

UNCCP then established the Economic Survey Mission (ESM) that was in charge of studying the economic situation in the countries affected by war. In line with UNCCP's instructions, ESM was authorised to make recommendations on how to facilitate the economic and social rehabilitation mentioned above as well as repatriation and resettlement of the refugees. Economic conditions were thought of as an instrument of promoting peace and stability in the area. Reframing the refugee issue and future resettlement as an issue of development was supposed to help raise living standards in host countries. The report outlined a programme where the refugees would become employed in public works, for example building their own infrastructure, and thus become economically productive. (Pappé, 2015: 244-245)

ESM's recommendations were not implemented immediately due to political opposition and their ambitious goal to quit providing refugees with rations by the end of 1950 (Richardson, 1950: 53; UNCCP, 1949) turned out to be only wishful thinking. One recommendation to come true was to set up an agency that would oversee continuing development and assistance efforts, and UNRWA was established by UNGA resolution 302 (IV) in 1949. In its resolution UNGA recognises that "continued assistance for the relief of the Palestine refugees is necessary to prevent conditions of starvation and distress among them and to further

conditions of peace and stability, and that constructive measures should be undertaken at an early date with a view to the termination of international assistance for relief” (UNGA, 1949: paragraph 5).

The purpose of this resolution was to gradually transfer responsibility from relief agencies to local governments. UNRWA was to consult with them about preparatory measures for “the time when international assistance for relief and works projects is no longer available” (UNGA, 1949: paragraph 7b). Following ESM’s recommendations the agency would also “attempt to guide an increasing number of refugees into projects such as well-digging, road-building, clearing, irrigation, and reforestation; it will endeavor to lower the numbers on the relief rolls and to begin the process of re-establishment of fundamental social and economic ties” (Richardson, 1950: 53-54).

Palestinian refugees were situated in the context of development already in the first ESM report detailing their conditions and seeking to find a fundamental solution to region’s social and economic problems:

“The purpose of the proposed programme of relief and public works is four-fold: it will halt the demoralizing effect of pauperization, outcome of a dole prolonged; the opportunity to work will increase the practical alternatives available to refugees, and thereby encourage a more realistic view of the kind of future they want and the kind they can achieve; a works programme properly planned will add to the productive economy of the countries where the refugees are located; the chance to earn a living will reduce the need for relief and bring its cost within the ability of the Near Eastern countries to meet without United Nations Assistance.”

(UNCCP, 1949: 12)

As the responsibility of implementing various programmes and distribution of relief was transferred to UNRWA, this notion persisted. It should be understood that UNRWA has always been a development agency and it has not been granted a role to seek for a political solution to the refugees’ plight. Changes in its policies mirror the changes that have affected development doctrines from the 1950s to present days. In the 1950s “a development

knowledge industry” emerged and in the 1960s agencies such as UNHCR and the World Bank were encouraged to link refugee programmes and developmental efforts as displacement became both an economic and a political issue (Lui, 2004: 128-129). Western authorities also acknowledged that the state of the world could lead to continuous production of refugee crises and movements: when these crises would arise routinely, each would become viewed as a typical refugee crisis instead of an unique problem (Lippert, 1999: 302-303). According to Malkki (1995: 506-507), incorporating development discourse can potentially render other intellectual and political connections inscrutable:

“If nothing else, the development discourse on refugees has sometimes facilitated the continued depoliticization of refugee movements; for instead of foregrounding the political, historical processes that generated a given group of refugees, and that reach far beyond the country of asylum and the refugee camp, development projects tend to see the whole world in a refugee camp.”

(Malkki, 1995: 507)

As displacement situations became more permanent there was a growing need to deal with the issue at hand and development became a tool for “subjection of people who in turn subjected themselves to systematic and comprehensive intervention” (Lui, 2004: 128). The body officially in charge of finding a political solution for the Palestinian refugee situation is still UNCCP (Bocco, 2010: 232), as stated in the original resolution instructing its purposes of operation. Currently UNCCP has no staff and no budget as its efforts at mediating came to halt by the 1960’s – at the moment its annual reports to UNGA just state that there is nothing to report (Irfan, 2017: 17).<sup>5</sup>

There are many local actors that also share a role especially in the government of refugee camps as spatial places. In Syria and Jordan the state controls the camps through selecting camp directors involved in organising political life in the camps whereas in Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territory there is a more complicated power structure in place (Hanafi,

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5 See for example the 71<sup>st</sup> report of the conciliation commission, available at <http://www.undocs.org/A/72/332>: “The Commission recalls its report of 17 August 2016 (A/71/335) and observes that it has nothing new to report since the submission of that report.” Looking back at the past reports one can notice how their wording barely changes from year to year: UNCCP mentions the previous report and states that there is nothing new to report. The commission is still requested to submit these observations annually though they have become essentially meaningless with no content whatsoever.

2014: 163). Different actors vary in their importance between camps and power relations between groups are not fixed. These parties include popular committees, political factions, Palestinian Liberation Organisation's (PLO) unions and organisations, community-based and non-governmental organisations (Busse, 2015: 183; Hanafi, 2014: 163-164). The scope of UNRWA's services and their UN mandate however differentiate the agency greatly from these local actors. According to Bocco (2010: 234), it effectively functions as a quasi-state through its vast provision of parallel public services to the refugee population. Most refugees registered by the agency are stateless and UNRWA has a role in providing them with some form of international representation (Irfan, 2017: 12-13).

### 3.2 Human development

Human development seeks to provide an additional way to understanding development that has often been measured mainly in economic terms. United Nations has been advocating the approach since releasing its first Human Development Report in 1990 by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In the context of this thesis human development is understood essentially as a strategy of biopolitical and neoliberal governmentality. It is targeted at human beings at the level of populations and consists in a sense a dispositif of security in itself. It asks for individuals to work on themselves through the capabilities it supposedly provides and renders security to an individualised phenomenon also dependent on these capabilities.

United Nations' conceptualisation of human development has been influenced greatly by writings of economist Amartya Sen and its two main dimensions are expansion of freedom and human capabilities. Freedom and capabilities are interlinked as together they enhance and reinforce each other (Sen, 1999: 40). Both need to be taken into account for the desired level of human development to be realised. In the 1990 report human development is defined as follows:

“Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. In principle, these choice can be infinite and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and

to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. If these essential choices are not available, many other opportunities remain inaccessible.”

(UNDP, 1990: 10)

The goals of healthy life, knowledge and attaining a decent standard of living form the main capabilities that help people to gain the “strength to manage their affairs” (UNDP, 1990: 16). In addition to creating a favourable environment and promoting policies advancing these capabilities human development is also concerned with how people actually make use of these capabilities, be it in their leisure or working time (UNDP, 1990: 10-11). It is then not only about providing specific capabilities but also how these capabilities are utilised. All in all, healthy and educated people “are in a better position than others to take their lives into their own hands” and “more valuable to society and better equipped to help themselves” (UNDP, 1990: 26).

In addition to this expansion of human choices through expansion of their capabilities also freedom, as mentioned earlier, constitutes an integral aspect of United Nations’ understanding of human development:

“People must be free to actively participate in economic and political life – setting developmental priorities, formulating policies, implementing projects and choosing the form of government to influence their cultural environment. Such freedom ensures that social goals do not become mechanical devices in the hands of paternalistic governments. If human development is the outer shell, freedom is its priceless pearl.”

(UNDP, 1990: 84)

This emphasis on freedom has persisted in the reports throughout annual publications. For Sen freedom is both the principal means of development and at the same time also the primary ends of it – therefore the assessment of development has to take into account first and foremost expansion on freedoms such as the freedom of being literate and the freedom of avoiding premature mortality (Sen, 1999: 36). These freedoms are necessary for people to make use of their attained capabilities and enable them to “pursue choices that they value” (UNDP, 2016: 1).

When policies are evaluated from the perspective of capabilities one might ask the following questions: are people healthy and do they have adequate access to healthcare to ensure health itself? Are people well-nourished and is this capability encouraged by for example food entitlements? (Robeyns, 2005: 95-96) Poor health, illiteracy and lack of access to resources hinder a person from achieving full human development and render capacities inadequate (Fukuda-Parr, 2003: 303): like freedom, they also become both ends and means. Human development is then focused on a distinct set of questions that are concerned with how human life is supported and nourished and how its capabilities are supported to obtain optimal well-being. These capabilities are not fixed and the ability to pursue valued goals is, as stated earlier, a process that can constantly expand freedom and make way for further capacity-building.

This people-centred approach can be viewed as more nuanced when contrasted with inspecting development only through income, growth and economy. Goods and services are appreciated for their functional value, not just exchangeable value or material reality (Robeyns, 2005; 98). Measuring issues such as freedom of speech or literacy works differently to calculating for example gross domestic product and the increasing focus on the individual human, his or her capabilities and freedoms intertwined, is exactly what the approach has been meant to achieve. Human development paradigm has been viewed as a countering force to neoliberal tendencies to reduce public spending and roll back welfare as within it people, not profits, become the object of development (Shani, 2012: 100).

David Chandler (2013) however criticises this shift in understanding of development. Although human development approach grants external structures and institutions some part in contributing to freedom, they are not themselves constitutive of it and instead of any universal external measurements human development can be understood simply as an internal process of empowerment (Chandler, 2013: 13). Poverty takes on a new meaning as it is now viewed as absence of choices, not in conventional economic terms (Shani, 2012: 104). Though it is not a new phenomenon that development constructs issues such as employment, hygiene and education as social problems and governs them through knowledge gathered

from populations (Escobar, 1995: 23), the doctrine of human development renders it more of an individual process focused on an individual's inner life.

Although human development has been touted for having a more balanced approach between the goals of economic growth and human well-being (UNDP, 1990; UNDP, 2016) there is still a significant economic apparatus operating within it which places it in the sphere of biopolitical and neoliberal governmentality. As referenced in the previous section, governmentality includes the tendency of taking phenomena not previously understood in economic terms and making them part of economic knowledge and inquiry. Human development shares this neoliberal belief in the markets: choices and capabilities that have become the target of development programmes and interventions are to be used in the market and well-functioning markets are also essential for capacity-building to take place.

Shani (2012: 105-106) argues that for Amartya Sen the freedom to enter the market is a significant part of development and the options that can then be pursued are typical to "social relations under capitalism: trade-based entitlements obtained by 'trading something one owns with a willing party'; production-based entitlements derived from the productive use of 'one's own resources'; entitlements deriving from 'one's own labour power'; and inheritance and transfer entitlements". When human development is viewed as a case of neoliberal governmentality Shani's critique becomes relevant as despite its initial claims human development is not free from economic rationalities. Though its aims include enlarging people's capacities so that they can themselves make choice they individually value, governmentality defines a field in which people are to participate and inscribes its own knowledge in practices concerning improvement of life.

## 4. Conditions for government

In this chapter I will discuss how UNRWA describes the environment in which it operates, both in terms of external realities and refugees' characteristics. Framing the space and the act of labelling refugees illustrate the agency's rationality as a development agency and act as justifications for its operations. UNRWA's power and reach as a development agency is influenced by two key conditions, a prolonged state of emergency and vulnerability of the refugees. These attempts to understand both the population and environment of government name the field in which power is exercised and form an integral part of the political rationality for the agency's endeavours (Inda, 2005: 8; Rose & Miller, 1992: 175). They also help to answer what is to be developed in the first place and why development should take place.

Emergency and vulnerability can be seen as domains which, following Bauman (2007: 42), "assure the permanence of their exclusion". This exclusion together with describing both the refugees' spatial living space and personal conditions as something aleatory and complex act as precursors for government. Though the initial circumstances preceding emergency are at first regarded as exceptional and temporary, over time they can become a permanent arrangement and evolve into a situation of power (Agier, 2008: 43-44). Danger and insecurity are also necessary components for a neoliberal governmentality as the constant fear of insecurity is included in its moral dimension which then paves way for government of human conduct (Lemke, 2014: 65). Emergency and vulnerability are not the end result of development interventions but rather serve as a pretext for them and also constitute part of the governmental knowledge of UNRWA.

### 4.1 State of emergency

State of emergency characterises the space in which UNRWA has to operate. It should not be understood only in spatial terms even though it is shaped by regional conflicts and interests. In this section I will discuss how UNRWA speaks of the reality where both the agency and refugees are situated and how it necessitates the agency's government over refugees. In its current medium-term strategy, UNRWA presents the context for its operations the following way:

“The Middle East is experiencing significant political, social and economic changes. Instability and, in some cases, active conflict are expected to characterize the macro-environment for most, if not all, of the strategic period. Recent events in all fields of UNRWA operations indicate that the coming strategic period could herald even more complexity and uncertainty.”

(UNRWA, 2016b: 10)

The environment in which UNRWA operates is saturated with complexity and widespread insecurity. Conditions for this complexity are not something UNRWA can directly address: situations such as the Gaza blockade, Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the protracted crisis in Syria form the political backdrop for its operations. It has to work in a world characterised by complex emergencies which in turn facilitate the demand for its services and assistance. (UNRWA, 2016b: 5, 11)

UNRWA regularly publishes emergency appeals demanding attention to area-specific issues and urging its donors to take action in order to secure its operations<sup>6</sup>. They are categorised regionally, and for example in 2017 the agency published appeals for all its territories of operation followed with reports on the progress achieved through them. In recent appeals for 2018 the agency states how in the occupied Palestinian territory, consisting of West Bank and Gaza, a “protracted humanitarian emergency” (UNRWA, 2018a: 4) is taking place and in Syria, amidst an internal crisis, acute crises can erupt due to widespread violence and fluctuations in humanitarian access (UNRWA, 2018b: 6).

In the case of occupied Palestinian territories, West Bank and Gaza, the emergency is assumed to continue as Gaza is expected to remain under blockade, restriction of movement will not diminish, no significant economic recovery is likely to take place, Israeli settlements will be further expanded, Bedouin communities are forcibly transferred and Israel’s permit regime will have an effect on how UNRWA is able to carry out its mandate (UNRWA, 2018a: 5). In Gaza UNRWA prioritises ensuring that “crisis-affected Palestine refugee households facing acute shocks have increased economic access to food” through emergency assistance,

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6 UNRWA’s emergency appeals can be found at <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/emergency-appeals>.

providing them with temporary working opportunities and creating income opportunities for self-employed refugee women (UNRWA, 2018a: 8-10).

Refugees should also be able to “enjoy their rights to critical services and assistance” through providing them with emergency health, education, sanitation and shelter services (UNRWA, 2018a: 11-14) as well as be “protected from the effects of the conflict and violence community” which can be achieved by supporting community mental health through students’ life-skills training, mitigating the effect eroding coping strategies have and organising summer fun weeks (UNRWA, 2018a: 15-17). Similar strategic priorities are also assigned to UNRWA’s operations in the West Bank (UNRWA, 2018a: 19-26) with some minor changes such as directing community mental health services to Bedouin communities instead of students, leaving out summer fun weeks and narrowing critical services down to mobile health clinics.

Syrian Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal (UNRWA, 2018b) is concerned with a more extensive geographical area as the crisis has affected not only Syria but also Jordan and Lebanon. UNRWA describes the situation bleakly: “In the absence of a durable political settlement, intense and widespread hostilities persist, resulting in deaths and injuries, increased internal displacement, large-scale movement of refugees to other countries, lost livelihoods, mounting humanitarian needs, and severe humanitarian access restrictions in many areas, including UNRWA areas of operations.” (UNRWA, 2018b). In Syria armed conflict is expected to continue, humanitarian needs will remain high and at the same time accessing humanitarian help can be difficult, refugees will face serious protection risks and the operational context requires a mixed approach of both humanitarian and developmental interventions (UNRWA, 2018b: 5-6). Refugees residing in Lebanon will have to deal with difficulties in maintaining their legal status in the country, humanitarian needs are at a high level, the number of Palestinian refugees from Syria will grow, economic deterioration will continue and there will be ongoing conflicts between displaced refugees and their host communities (UNRWA, 2018b: 20-21). Similar problems are present in Jordan. The refugees from Syria face a risk of forced return because the Jordanian government has denied their entry, the refugees’ conditions are worsened by economic problems and a high number of them are categorised as extremely vulnerable (UNRWA, 2018b: 34).

In the case of the Syrian emergency, UNRWA's strategic priorities include preserving refugees' resilience through provision of humanitarian assistance, maintaining access to basic services as a means of contributing to a protective environment and strengthening humanitarian capacity, coordination and management (UNRWA, 2018b: 22-43). In more detail, these priorities are to be implemented by providing refugees with emergency assistance in the form of food, cash and non-food item provisions and winterisation assistance (UNRWA, 2018b: 7, 22, 35). To maintain a protective environment UNRWA plans on giving out microfinance loans, improving employment opportunities focusing on environmental health and more generally focusing on its core services of healthcare and education (UNRWA, 2018b: 10, 24, 37). Assessing humanitarian capacity, coordination and management is to be achieved by focusing on staff security and training, ensuring cost-effectiveness of the services provided and upgrading agency's facilities (UNRWA, 2018b: 17, 31, 42).

Both emergency appeals, one concerning occupied Palestinian territories and other the regional crisis stemming from war in Syria, portray how emergency necessitates interventions and lays the base for different strategies and policy objectives. Emergency justifies why UNRWA has to intervene and the audience of the appeals are encouraged to contribute to mitigating harmful effects through donations or at least maintain their support amidst an inevitable crisis (UNRWA, 2018a: ii; UNRWA, 2018b: ii). Operating in a state of emergency also calls forth reflexive policies as in addition to provision of direct relief UNRWA has to enhance staff capacities and make an effort to maintain itself as a functioning agency despite occasional financial disruptions. Emergency shapes both UNRWA itself and the refugee population which is expected to continue facing difficult circumstances in all their contingency.

Insecurity, uncertainty and complexity are then seen as the key defining features of the space of operations. UNRWA is not able to work alone but states that it is intent on cooperating with other relevant actors as the agency "is unable to resolve the underlying causes of refugee needs" (UNRWA, 2016b: 24), the wider political situation in the region. There is a constant possibility for a potential emergency, and this uncertainty of external events underpins all UNRWA's programmes. It also becomes a foundation for its trusteeship for the betterment of

the refugee population. Conditions of emergency form a basis for the rationale of governmentality inscribed in UNRWA's actions as a development agency and without them it could not act the way it does. UNRWA does not seek to transform external conditions that have given rise to emergencies in the first place, rather it takes them as they come and go and let them form the reality against which it conducts itself and seeks to conduct the refugees too.

Complex emergency and the state of exception it creates make it possible to enter the world of peoples and invoke the demand for development (Duffield, 2007: 52-53). Emergency necessitates governance through development and becomes a condition for intervention. Emergencies are often seen as temporary events caused by natural disasters and wars and also aid agencies make a difference between immediate relief and the more sustained effort of development (Duffield, 2007: 40). However, as emergency becomes a precursor to a strategy of development, it can also become permanent as the continuing existence of UNRWA demonstrates. The narrative of an unpredictable catastrophe that is generated both internally and externally and threatens constantly evolving complex systems, whether economic or social in nature, can also be seen as a feature of a neoliberal regime (Dean, 2014: 159).

Dillon & Reid (2000: 126) argue that each appearance of a complex emergency “reduces human life to a zone of indistinction in which it becomes mere stuff for the ordering strategies of the hybrid form of sovereign and governmental power that distinguishes the liberal peace of global governance”. In this Agambenian “zone of indistinction” bare life does not resist nor is it involved in the political sphere of life. It becomes immersed in the camp where, as quoted earlier in the section concerning biopolitics, “inhabitants have been stripped of every political status and reduced completely to naked life” in “the most absolute biopolitical space that has ever been realized” (Agamben, 2000: 41). But how does the camp resonate with the environment in which UNRWA operates? Is its scope of power reliant on the exception brought about by the permanent state of emergency?

Refugee camps, spaces where also many of the Palestinian refugees live (UNRWA, 2016b: 14), can be seen as maybe the most concrete example of the camp Agamben defined – a clearly defined space in which residents are devoid of political participation, remain in a state of exception and could be killed on a whim. Following Agier (2008: 62), “refugees are kept in

quarantine as a function of the political inability to conceive their place in society as a whole”. Agamben himself states that "today's democratico-capitalist project of eliminating the poor classes through development not only reproduces within itself the people that is excluded but also transforms the entire population of the Third World into bare life” (Agamben, 1998: 101).

In humanitarian imaginary refugees become a speechless physical mass where instead of being represented as individuals they depict pure suffering and need (Rajaram, 2002: 251). According to Tosa (2009: 423) most of the Palestinians are “placed in outlaw situations” and are regarded as homo sacer. These outlaw situations are also described in UNRWA’s most recent medium-term strategy for 2016-2021: due to circumstances such as military occupation and vague legal status Palestinian refugees can be excluded from aspects of social, economic and political life and in many cases they do not enjoy the same level of human rights as other citizens (UNRWA, 2016b: 20-22).

Tosa’s focus is on the situation in Gaza, whereas Hanafi & Long (2010: 14-15) state that the same is true to Lebanon – there a Palestinian refugee has “no voice in the legal formulation of his or her status and no say in either the Lebanese or Palestinian political processes which affect him or her” and the dire urban conditions refugees have to live in are nothing less than prison-like. Lebanese camps are spaces where Lebanese law enforcement does not enter and though living in them is not mandatory they act as a barrier between refugees and rest of the Lebanese population (Ramadan, 2009: 157-158). In Lebanon Palestinian refugees have to face legal restrictions that limit their right to work and own property and also curtail their access to public services such as education and health (UNRWA, 2015b: 13).

When studied within an Agambenian framework these restrictions and exclusions can be seen as concrete examples of the state of exception he describes. The refugees are not protected by similar judicial institutions as the rest of the population. There is also a threat of violence that can be exerted on them – military incursions, settler attacks, kidnappings, home demolitions, restrictions on movement, forced displacement (UNRWA, 2015b: 14-15). These threats vary between UNRWA’s fields of operations and the external factors fuelling them are also not the same in all regions. All in all the general picture described by the agency seems very grim

indeed and numerous examples of human rights violations and humanitarian emergencies are regularly reported<sup>7</sup>.

This approach is heavily criticised by Tuastad (2017) in his article on the assumed state of exception of Palestinian refugees. He states that UNRWA has actually empowered refugees by providing them with “education, an education that was converted into work, work in which again enabled the Palestinian workers to pay tax to the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]” (Tuastad, 2017: 2167). Concepts of state of exception and bare or sacred life are, according to Tuastad, a part of a discursive hegemony in the academic field and act as gatekeeping concepts that do not take into account political representation of camp residents (Tuastad, 2017: 2166-2167). It can also be said that biopower of the camp is directed towards all life, not only bare life (Oesch, 2017: 118). Moreover, when the blueprint of Agamben’s camp is applied similarly to such a wide variety of situations power seems to become absolute and differences are ignored (Revel, 2013: 22). Concrete refugee camps can act as not only humanitarian but also political spaces and arguments about what the camp is are evidently arguments which address how refugee lives, claims and possibilities are structured (Feldman, 2015: 251).

This neglect of politics and contextual differences question the validity of applying Agamben’s concepts in studying (Palestinian) refugees. Also if one is to discuss the forms of political agency and subjectivity they barely provide relevance as the endgame is viewing a specific population as purely biological life. This act of labelling is not apolitical either. Bare life represents a conventional discourse reserved for refugees whereas they also live a political life of their own experiences (Hanafi & Long, 2010: 2). Furthermore, as the concrete form of refugee camp used to work as a space that suspended politics and could potentially provide a private inner space through creating a barrier between the refugee and the society, refugees are now understood as an integral part of the surrounding environment and setting such barriers as the camp could hinder their assimilation to the market as well as prevent them from exercising freedom and making choices (Duffield, 2019: 64-65). The state of exception

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7 See for example Human Rights Watch’s report of events in Israel and Palestine in 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/israel/palestine>; Amnesty on State of Palestine 2017/2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/palestine-state-of/report-palestine-state-of/>; Amnesty on Lebanon 2017/2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/lebanon/report-lebanon/>; UNRWA’s update on Syria from June 2018, <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/syria-unrwa-humanitarian-snapshot-june-2018>.

and emergency are important aspects in legitimising UNRWA's operations but they serve only as a starting point. They necessitate government but are not the ends of human development and halting any analysis at the level of identifying bare life misses the ways in which conduct of subjects of development is guided. Metaphorical abandonment of the camp allows to grasp the full extent of governmentality exercised on refugees as the catastrophic imagery permeated by constant emergency administers the population through its relationship with the external and necessitates the formation of an adaptive subject.

## 4.2 Vulnerability

As well as framing the spatial reality as something complex, contingent and forever in a state of emergency, UNRWA attributes these same qualities to refugees themselves. This potential emergency stemming from personal attributes and state of life is represented as vulnerability. Both the need for assistance and more vaguely defined vulnerability define what the status of a refugee entails. According to UNRWA, even after seventy years refugees still do not have an opportunity for means of living and their vulnerability is still growing (UNRWA, 2016b: 24) and the agency itself "has not been able to do enough in its programmes to adequately address vulnerability and persons with increased needs" (UNRWA, 2016b: 28).

In addition to discussing how what kind of subjectivities development programmes wish to impose on the refugees, the initial definitions are also important as they reflect why the refugees came under specific governmentality to begin with. Right from the beginning of the agency's operations there seems to have been difficulty in establishing which of the refugees are to be given assistance and the official description of the refugee became inscribed with neediness and victimhood. Instead of giving attention to the whole of the refugee population what came to be governed were, as Foucault (1991: 93) has put it, "men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence". What is problematised when a person is given status as a Palestinian refugee is not his mere existence but the way in which he is able to achieve material means of subsistence.

How does UNRWA then define the population cared for? Does it extend its reach to all of those who fled? Organised state actors, non-governmental organisations and other bureaucratic bodies control the processes by which refugees become socialised with certain identities and the structural impacts these identities bring (Zetter, 1991: 40-41). UNRWA's given definition of a Palestinian refugee is a reflection of that power. It is not as much a legal one but serves as operational guidance and determines who can access UNRWA's services. Officially a Palestinian refugee is a person "whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict" (UNRWA, 2009a: 3).

Right from the establishment of UNRWA the definition for a Palestinian refugee was being formulated according to their need of relief. The agency admitted that by narrowing the definition to those in need of assistance they had to leave out deserving people. From early on distinctions were made between refugees and refugees in need of assistance – only the latter were registered. The agency also made a difference between the type of assistance registered refugees needed: rations and services, services, and medical. (Feldman, 2012: 392-394)

In addition to refugees, also other people can in some cases be eligible to register for UNRWA's services or have been able to do so in the past. These groups include "Jerusalem poor and Gaza poor" who were resident in either East Jerusalem or Gaza City until 15 May 1948, frontier villagers who lived along 1949 armistice lines in the West Bank and for example lost farming properties because of the conflict, persons of Lebanese origin who were temporarily working in Palestine and "who suffered loss of livelihood and hardship as a result of the 1948 conflict" (UNRWA, 2009: 31). In many cases these groups of people were kept on UNRWA's relief rolls even though they did not fully meet the criteria to be registered as refugees (UNRWA, 2009: 31). Also spouses of registered refugees and children "receiving parental care from Registered Refugees and Other Registered Persons under the Islamic Kafalah system and residing in the household of the Kafalah patron till the age of 18 years" are eligible for UNRWA's services (UNRWA, 2009: 32).

Leaving out actual refugees from registration rolls and including those who many times were not refugees per se but suffered damage to their livelihoods highlights how definitive

neediness is in determining who has access to services provided by UNRWA. UNRWA also singles out Social Safety Net Cases (SSNC) which include families enrolled in the agency's Social Safety Net Programme (SSNP) meant to deliver services to the poorest aid recipients (UNRWA, 2009: 33). Families who have been enrolled to SSNP have general priority for all agency services (UNRWA, 2009: 19). Shelter rehabilitation, cash assistance and food rations are provisions only available to social safety net cases and other groups are entitled to these forms of aid on an ad hoc basis in case of emergencies (UNRWA, 2009: 20-21). This shift from providing universal services to more targeted help has been evident within the agency from the 1980s onwards and UNRWA's relief and social services "have moved from status-based approach to a poverty-based approach" (de Jong & Aced, 2014: 71-72).

To fit the definition of a refugee it is not enough to flee, but one has to also experience impact on the general source of living. This draws a line between categories of refugees and makes a judgment of an adequate level of deprivation. Hanafi (2014: 163) argues that UNRWA has always understood refugees as needy victims. This assessment is reasonable as UNRWA has paired certain type of deprivation and the state of being a refugee together. There cannot be one without the other and in the end UNRWA has no other choice but to equal the refugee with the needy, the vulnerable and the insecure. This has also led to the inclusion of other registered groups to UNRWA's programmes and highlights the way in which insecurity has become to underpin the agency's working logic. Further differentiations under the Social Safety Net Programme follow the same path.

This performance of labelling gives a glimpse of UNRWA's field of control, regulation and management (Wood, 1985: 343). Drawing distinctions through labels determines who gets aid and recognition (Feldman, 2012: 388) but in the other hand it also shapes the demands made by those labelled as (Palestinian) refugees and further structures political interests (Zetter, 1991: 45). Labelling also identifies what makes up the population to be governed and it is a necessary condition for the formation of development as a practice in governmentality. Defining Palestinian refugees necessitated their government and made this new population a part of a new, extensive welfare and policing system (Feldman, 2012: 394). This ability to decide who is to be helped and who is to be left behind is what defines the sovereignty of an

aid organisation (Duffield, 2007: 56): through its various programmes aimed at various groups within the refugees UNRWA exercises a concrete power over their lives.

In contemporary discussions on development the one-way relationship on neediness has transformed into assuming vulnerability. Vulnerability can stem from being a member of groups such as youth, women, poor, elderly, disabled (UNRWA, 2016b: 7, 20, 21). These groups can be divided even further – into women nursing or pregnant, certain sub-groups of youth such as ex-Gazans in Jordan (UNRWA, 2016b: 16, 20). By being divided into these sub-groups refugees have to face a reality in which they move from one potentially dangerous stage of life to another. Each is heralded with its own problems that require policy intervention.

Neither UNRWA's or UNDP's accounts of human development provide the reader with a coherent description of vulnerability. Often it is not a measurable quality in itself but instead comprises all the potentially negative consequences stemming directly from the potentially negative attributes a person can have and the unfavourable position in life and society a person finds himself or herself in. It is a negotiable condition that is not necessarily a product of war and displacement as such (Agier, 2011: 150). As Evans & Reid (2014: 45) put it, "the subject of vulnerability [...] appears to be both an unending problem to be solved and a condition of possibility for modes of living once denied by the regimentation of social states".

One specific group of that has gained significant attention in UNRWA's programmes and appeals are Palestinian refugees who have resided in Syria and have had to flee again because of the ongoing conflict in the country. According to UNRWA's recent estimates, around 120 000 of the 560 000 refugees registered in Syria have fled to Jordan, Lebanon and other destinations and within Syrian borders 254 000 have been internally displaced (UNRWA, 2018b: ii). The agency has assessed the vulnerability of refugees now residing in Lebanon by profiling the population according to different sectors: economy, education, food security, health, non-food items, protection, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene (UNRWA, 2015a: 6).

The questionnaire used to conduct the survey includes a wide range of questions aimed at evaluating refugees' living conditions and levels of human development. It takes into account

for example the type of toilet facilities families have, the number of times they have had to borrow food or rely on another form of help from friends and relatives in the last seven days, whether or not any of the family members suffer from chronic diseases such as cancer or diabetes and whether they have goods such as kitchen utensils, beds and winter clothes. (UNRWA, 2015a: 38-42)

Based on the results both an overall vulnerability score and a sector-specific score were calculated and vulnerability was rated as either low, mild, moderate or severe (UNRWA, 2015a: 3). Similar assessments have also been done concerning the refugees who have fled to Jordan instead of Lebanon (UNRWA, 2018b: 33). In both cases UNRWA emphasises how its humanitarian assistance remains crucial to mitigate the effects of external shocks and keep more people from moving to a harsher category of vulnerability (UNRWA, 2015a: 36; UNRWA, 2018b: 33). Assessing vulnerability seems to imply assessing such a wide variety of material possessions, social relations and personal attributes that pinpointing any single origin of the condition becomes impossible. Instead vulnerability becomes a continuum – a person can move from one place on the continuum to another depending on what one owns or how one interacts with friends and relatives. It breaks down the category of a refugee and produces “a hierarchy of misfortune” (Agier, 2011: 213).

As stated, these accounts of vulnerability underpin how UNRWA understands not only those refugees now displaced due to the war in Syria but also everyone else. Statements on vulnerability assume certain characteristics of the objects of knowledge or, following Rabinow & Rose (2006: 197), form a “truth discourses about the ‘vital’ character of living human beings”. The ever-changing nature of vulnerability and the possibility of dividing it further into the most minor categories are not obstacles for operationalising it as a main designator of the refugee condition. In his study on Lesotho Ferguson (1994: 255-256) argues that poverty acts as a point of entry for efforts in development and though various programmes may not in the end have an effect on poverty itself, they can end up increasing state power and render poverty as an issue that can be solved by technological rather than political means. In a similar manner vulnerability serves as a leading principle for intervention and due to its vague nature vulnerability effectively labels a whole population.

## 5. Governmental rationalities

In this chapter I will discuss the concepts of human capital and homo economicus. The discourse of human development includes elements of both concepts and they can act as an alternative way of discussing governmentality in development. The concepts also help in answering how development should be undertaken and what are its expected results. Ove (2013: 318) argues that there exists a “gap in the governmentality literature between studies of personal development in the North and studies of international development in the South” and indeed, especially the concept of homo economicus is more commonly applied in literature on contemporary work and consumption<sup>8</sup>. Human capital has a more traditional place in the field of development as it can be seen as precursor for economic growth and foreign investment<sup>9</sup>.

The reason why I have decided to trace these concepts in UNRWA’s papers is that they offer a good perspective for analysing (human) development as an oeuvre in neoliberal governmentality. They attach economic knowledge to individual attributes despite human development’s claims of focusing not only on economic growth and make capabilities a problem of becoming involved in value-creation and investment. It can be argued that they also are, following Rose’s (1999: 43) terminology, the ways in which people are individuated by their governing practices and the relationship to self that is urged to be taken up within the practices that set the limits of self-government.

Evans & Reid (2014: 68-70) discuss demands made within the discourse of sustainable development that call for subjects to “adapt to their enabling conditions via the embrace of neoliberalism” by becoming resilient, economic subjects. Human capital and homo economicus, when analysed within the framework of human development, mirror the functioning of resilience in sustainable development as means of affirming neoliberal

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8 See for example Fleming, P. (2014). *Resisting work: The corporatization of life and its discontents*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press; McMahon, J. (2015). Behavioral economics as neoliberalism: Producing and governing homo economicus. *Contemporary Political Theory*, 14(2), 137-158; Weidner, J. R. (2009). Governmentality, Capitalism, and Subjectivity. *Global Society*, 23(4), 387-411.

9 For discussion on human development from an economic perspective see for example Hanushek, E. A. (2013). Economic growth in developing countries: The role of human capital. *Economics of Education Review*, 37, 204–212; Huay, C. S. & Bani, Y. (2018). Remittances, poverty and human capital: Evidence from developing countries. *Journal of Social Economics*, 45(8), 1227-1235; Vollrath, D. (2014). The efficiency of human capital allocations in developing countries. *Journal of Development Economics*, 108, 106-118.

governmentality. If emergency and vulnerability are contingencies in human development, something that might but does not need to happen, human capital and homo economicus form its potentiality: something that will or should come to being (Alt, 2016: 119).

## 5.1 Human capital

As neoliberalism entails a massive expansion of the field of economics and attaches economic rationality to phenomena ranging from migration to marriage, its reformulations lead to new ways in which human beings are made into subjects (Foucault, 2008: 243; Read, 2009: 28). One of the outcomes of this governmental rationality is the composition of human capital. In this section I will give examples of how UNRWA discusses two of its main service areas, health and education, and how they are connected to the discussion on human capital. UNRWA operates in an environment where human development goals are constantly threatened and stalled, but despite external conflicts it takes on a task of internally resolving many of the issues at hand.

This focus on investing in human capital forms a key component in the knowledge of political economy embedded in neoliberal governmentality. Theory of human capital extends economy once again to a previously unexplored territory, human life, and now dictates it in purely economic terms whereas it was previously thought to be non-economic in nature (Foucault, 2008: 219). Even though classical political economy had understood that the production of goods was depended on land, labour, and capital, labour had previously not attracted specific attention and was only evaluated in quantitative terms such as time, not according to its qualitative properties (Foucault, 2008: 219-221). By bringing labour back into economic analysis neoliberal economics focuses its interest not in the price of labour, what is technically produced or how to calculate the value labour adds (Foucault, 2008: 223). What is studied instead is “work as economic conduct practiced, implemented, rationalized, and calculated by the person who works” (Foucault, 2008: 223). Personal attributes and qualities become discussed in economical terms as capital and furthermore both adding the prefix ‘human’ and placing many measures aimed at improving the capital in question to the level of populations show human capital’s ultimately biopolitical character. Genetics, education, hygiene and healthcare can be used to influence the formation of human capital which is to be preserved

and employed for as long as possible (Foucault, 2008: 227-230). Instead of differentiating between wage-earning and reproduction or manual and mental labour, reproduction is now part of economy and differences between forms of labour become blurred as the only division remaining is that between “the precariously employed and the precariously unemployed” (Balibar, 2016: 19).

For Foucault, the invention of human capital provides a whole new framework of growth which is now not simply a matter of physical capital or the number of workers, but directed towards something that can be transformed more easily than material realities: “And in fact we are seeing the economic policies of all the developed countries, but also their social policies, as well as their cultural and educational policies, being orientated in these terms. In the same way, the problems of the economy of the Third World can also be rethought on the basis of human capital.” (Foucault, 2008: 232). The shift towards improving human capital also echoes Duffield’s (2007) criticism of the way in which (human) development has become the paradigm it is today although the concept is far from non-economic. Though Foucault’s original genealogy was that of the so-called West, concepts developed have been exported elsewhere in the name of development.

The concept of human capital is integral to human development. It is linked to the capabilities approach discussed earlier within the more general theoretical framework of human development. Sen (1999: 295) argues that the difference between human capital and human capabilities is a valuational one: “The acknowledgement of the role of human qualities in promoting and sustaining economic growth - momentous as it is - tells us nothing about why economic growth is sought in the first place.” As humans are both the means and ends of development, the role of economic growth is linked to expanding freedoms and in a circular gesture it has to be integrated into this “foundational understanding of the process of development as the expansion of human capability to lead more worthwhile and more free lives” (Sen, 1999: 295).

According to UNDP, “[i]nvesting in human priorities is intended to reach those who lack basic social services such as education and health care that are essential for enhancing human capital so that these people can not only be part of inclusive growth, but also enhance their

capabilities, which are intrinsically valuable” (UNDP, 2016: 108). In short, human capital is not only about economic growth but also widening freedoms. It can have an economic effect but its impacts are thought to go beyond commodity production and adding to the value of economy (Sen, 1999: 294).

Building of human capital as according to UNRWA is not far from the logic Foucault describes. The investment in human capital is at the heart of UNRWA’s human development policies and its main operating areas of education and healthcare are some of the classical examples of human capital’s building materials. Protecting refugee health and reducing their disease burden, enrolling children in quality, equitable and inclusive basic education, strengthening refugee capabilities to achieve sustainable livelihoods and ensuring they are able to meet their most basic needs are key strategic outcomes for UNRWA (UNRWA, 2016b). UNRWA, devoid of national policy tools and faced with the assumed vulnerability of the refugee population, “must sustain its investment in the human capital of the refugees through continued delivery of core services” (UNRWA, 2016b: 5).

Health, one of the main components of UNRWA’s human development approach, is described by the agency as a fundamental right and “[i]n addition to the widely recognized link between health and economic growth, achievements in health are instrumental to education outcomes, cognitive development, employment opportunities and income-earning potential” (UNRWA, 2016b: 34). Reduction in health can lead to reduction in other capabilities, sometimes in an irreversible manner (UNRWA, 2016b: 34). Challenges include general difficulties in service provision due to changing realities in the field but also refugees’ own behaviour: their unhealthy lifestyles such as smoking, improper diet and lack of exercise undermine development (UNRWA, 2016b: 36). As the refugee population is ageing the rate of non-communicable diseases such as cancer, diabetes, asthma and cardiovascular diseases is also growing (UNRWA, 2016b: 36).

Education has a central role “in helping individuals live more fulfilled lives, perform better in the labour market, improve health, enjoy psychosocial well-being, overcome inequalities, and promote active citizenship and peaceful living” (UNRWA, 2016b: 39). In 2011 UNRWA began reforming its education program too as it was feared that “students were not developing

the types of skills necessary to achieve their full potential and contribute positively to the development of their society and the global community” (UNRWA, 2016b: 40). Children are nudged to achieve their full potential and students are to become empowered by participating in school parliaments (UNRWA, 2016b: 41).

In conceptualising human capital and its relation to the knowledge of economics, Foucault states that with the introduction of human capital its composition and augmentation become the measure of real growth (Foucault, 2008: 232). This point of view resonates with the way in which human development has tried to distance itself from focusing purely on economic growth though in a sense it has only expanded the field of how different phenomena are explained in the grid of economics. For UNRWA health and education are once again both ends and means in a circle linking development, capabilities, growth and security. As a conceptual tool human capital generalises economic knowledge as the foundation for governmentality by locating it at the level of the human subject.

This is illustrated by how UNRWA’s strategic outcome aimed at strengthening capabilities and providing the refugees with livelihood opportunities is directly related to health and education: “Sustainable livelihoods emphasize strengths rather than needs, recognizing the inherent potential of every person. Health and education as described above are essential dimensions of human development and central to increased livelihood opportunities.” (UNRWA, 2016b: 44). By direct interventions through its core programmes, indirectly by jobs created by the agency’s operations and by advocating refugees’ rights to economic opportunities UNRWA seeks to contribute to refugee livelihoods (UNRWA, 2016b: 44).

Closely related to strengthening capabilities and focusing on livelihood opportunities is also the strategic outcome of refugees being able to meet their basic needs of food, shelter and environmental health which are all also related to objectives of health and education: “Safeguarding [access to food] and improving the nutritional status of individuals and families help to ensure the absence of malnutrition and child stunting and enables human productive capacities to be expended on development needs such as education and livelihoods.” (UNRWA, 2016b: 49). Shelters provide refugees a home and “safe drinking water, sanitation, drainage, natural lighting, washing facilities, means of food storage, refuse

disposal and emergency services” are also essential for ensuring human dignity (UNRWA, 2016b: 49). Without these resources human capital and capabilities are not effectively realised and lack of access to basic utilities hinders refugees from fully realising their potential. Human capital thus becomes an all-encompassing goal and similarly to vulnerability, everything in human life and its relations to the environment ranging from shelter to waste disposal can be utilised as targets of intervention.

Probably one the most formidable effects of integrating investment in human capital to development is how in order to improve and mould this capital “the problem of the control, screening and improvement” (Foucault, 2008: 228) arise. It necessitates an extensive apparatus that is in charge of fostering the capital in question. UNRWA also monitors itself vastly based on how well it performs in improving the human capital of the refugee population. Prevalence of diabetes, maternal mortality rate, average daily consultations by doctors, percentage of patients with non-communicable diseases who regularly visit a doctor, antibiotic prescription rate and hospitalisation rates are some of the health-related issues the agency seeks to monitor in its medium-term strategy (UNRWA, 2016b: 64-66). Drop-out rates at different levels of education, mean score of students taking part in learning assessments, repetition rate in basic education and gaps in student performance levels are in turn assessed in education (UNRWA, 2016b: 67-70).

Although UNRWA states it has managed to provide Palestinian refugees with strong human capital, it does not guarantee Palestinian refugees an access to assets required to further improve them through gaining necessary coping strategies and resilience (UNRWA, 2016b: 46). Here again the agency seems to be in a deadlock as it is left without further tools to impact refugee lives. Especially those refugees residing in camps are faced with dismal circumstances: “Due to poverty, unemployment, increased population density and a deteriorating built environment, there is a shortage of adequate housing in camps. This is coupled with a lack of regulatory frameworks and planning, which is resulting in a fast rate of haphazard urbanization. Services are lacking and social infrastructure is deteriorating. Private and common spaces are not differentiated any more, which results in the abuse of privacy. Social problems are increasing. Isolation and social segregation are serious problems facing refugees living in many camps.” (UNRWA, 2016b: 46).

This assessment shows how human capital according to UNRWA is not enough to ensure complete development amongst the refugees and how it is produced in a constant state of potential emergency. As external political constraints always have an effect on how the agency is able to execute its programmes and what kind of circumstances Palestinian refugees themselves live in the investment in human capital fails to put in motion the kind of positive effects its proponents anticipate. Duffield (2007: 188; 2010: 57) speaks of containing global surplus population or the global poor. This notion of containment can also be applied to the way in which UNRWA currently has to take action as despite its significant influence on Palestinian refugees its political impact is limited by its mandate and expectations from its donors. The formation of human capital is a desirable result of human development and as such one of the fundamental principles of UNRWA but the capacities this capital should foster cannot, at least in the Palestinian case, be fully implemented in practice.

## 5.2 Homo economicus

Homo economicus is an essential figure to understand the goals of UNRWA's human development goals. The more commonly applied characterisation of Agamben's homo sacer does not capture the essence of governmentality in development. Homo economicus in the other hand can be used as a general guidance in order to understand what kind of subjects are to be produced and how agency is to be constructed in contemporary human development approaches. In UNRWA's case it offers a more comprehensive outlook on how the refugee is understood, not only as a victim but a economic agent amenable through development interventions. Following Alt (2016: 132), subjects of neoliberal governmentality can be described as "subjects with as of yet unfulfilled capabilities that need to be realised in order for them to be able to live valuable lives".

Homo economicus can be seen as the rational ends of investing in human capital. Adequate human capital is understood to equip the subject with capabilities that will further enlarge the subject's freedom. If governmentality is understood also as a technique of the self, the question of the subject championed by human development is an essential figure to discuss. What emerges from proper human capital is the subject of homo economicus:

“Homo oeconomicus is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself. This is true to the extent that, in practice, the stake in all neoliberal analyses is the replacement every time of homo oeconomicus as partner of exchange with a homo oeconomicus as entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings.”

(Foucault, 2008: 226)

Foucault makes a difference between the liberal subject of exchange and this neoliberal subject of competition who, through consumption, participates in an entrepreneurial activity on the basis of acquired capital and in the end produces something for his own satisfaction (Foucault, 2008: 226). This entrepreneurship or competition can be understood in a broader sense than something related to purely economic activity or something located between individuals and their surroundings. It has become necessary to the inner life of the individual and adoption of this kind of entrepreneurship is a part of the process of creating subjects of governmentality. Dardot & Laval (2017: 256-260) argue that the subject emerging as a result of neoliberal governmentality is unitary as opposed to the previous modern subject who was able to inhabit several regimes and registers: the spheres of religion, political sovereignty and commodity exchange. Neoliberalism is however “characterized by a homogenization of the discourse of man around the figure of the enterprise” (Dardot & Laval, 2017: 259).

Returning to an earlier assessment by Dean (2010: 43), governmentality incites certain forms of identity and assigns various duties and forms of conducts for its subjects. Human development, as a “process of increasing the ability of people to make decisions affecting their own lives” (UNRWA, 2016b: 13), acts as a framework in which these identities are imagined and duties consigned. A population that is well-educated, healthy and is comprised of individuals who are capable of becoming autonomous, calculative and reflexive is able to generate development in itself and provides an adequate workforce (Shani, 2012: 108). This approach is visible in UNRWA’s medium-term strategy. Desired outcomes in health and education are directly linked with opportunities for employment and refugees’ ability to sustain their own lives amidst challenging circumstances.

One of UNRWA's strategic outcomes is, as mentioned also earlier, strengthening refugee capabilities for increased livelihood opportunities (UNRWA, 2016b: 44). Livelihood can be described as a means of securing basic necessities of life, be it employment or other possible coping strategies. Furthermore, livelihoods are to be sustainable which entails a livelihood to be able to "cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future" (UNRWA, 2016b: 44). Unemployment is however a persistent issue for the agency: "With unemployment rising, economic engagement of Palestine refugees is of concern across all fields. In particular, high rates of youth unemployment, especially affecting female youth, and low labour force participation rates for women, ranging between 10 and 18 per cent across UNRWA fields, will remain the most significant livelihood challenges for Palestine refugees." (UNRWA, 2016b: 45). As discussed in the section concerning human capital, refugees have not been able to become employed in large numbers as other forms of capital, social, natural, physical, and financial, are inadequately available (UNRWA, 2016b: 46).

Just as in every other area of UNRWA's operations, refugee livelihoods are affected by local and regional conflicts but even during conflicts the agency "will give particular focus to promoting employment and income-generating opportunities for refugees" (UNRWA, 2016b: 46). Employment and the ability to earn a living are regarded as important factors in to surviving and recovering from conflicts, both at the level of the individual and the surrounding community (UNRWA, 2016b: 44). It should be noted that UNRWA is itself a significant employer. It has 30 000 full-time employees that are refugees and though the agency states that providing employment opportunities directly is not its main objective (as opposed to the works programme in place earlier), the salaries paid "represent an injection of income into refugee and other local communities" (UNRWA, 2016b: 45).

The focus on employability serves as an example of how UNRWA's human development approach is not free from economic calculations. Both education and health are framed in terms of employment prospects and the capabilities achieved through them become attributes of homo economicus. There is again a cyclical connection between human development and employability: employment is necessary for human development to take place as loss of jobs can have a negative impact on health and education indicators (UNRWA, 2016b: 19). At the

same time health is necessary for refugees to gain employment and “income-earning potential” (UNRWA, 2016b: 34) while also education is needed to perform better in the labour market and gain paid employment (UNRWA, 2016b: 39). Separating these desired outcomes from each other becomes impossible as they are dependent on each other and work in a similar manner of focusing on economic activity. Human development goals become valuable through their potential economic operationalisation and they are not necessarily prescribed objective value without this connection.

As employment is not easily realised and refugees have to face a hostile environment, they can also be viewed as trapped in precarity. It “denotes a condition in which the casualization, informalization or unpredictability of work coexists with economic vulnerability, environmental uncertainty and an openness to surprise and shocks” (Duffield, 2019: 115). According to Duffield, in the South growing precarity and changing forms of work are focused on the informal sector that could potentially promote new forms of economic action and be integrated to the global market as such, without transitioning through guarantees of stable employment, housing and jobs that were previously enjoyed by the global North but have now declined (Duffield, 2019: 121-126). If precarity is accepted as the guiding principle regarding prospects of employment and the way of existing in the labour market to begin with, it requires a specific set of abilities and refining potentials to become able to embrace itself. It is the economic reality *homo economicus* has to face and be able to perform in.

*Homo economicus* of human development is a figure who shares a personal responsibility in building human capital as opposed to leaving its formation solely in the hands of external institutions. Accumulation of human capital then creates an abilities-machine capable of producing income through investment (Foucault, 2008: 229). Duffield (2010; 2007) criticises development policies as according to him, people living in less-developed countries have often been viewed as traditionally self-reliant and at least self-reliance is something they are nudged to achieve through development interventions. It does not however mean that the goal of development programmes or agencies would be to keep their distance from the population governed. On the contrary, constant interventions are needed as the emergency never seems to cease and maintaining human capital requires certain service structures. *Homo economicus* is a subject who, despite the requirement of internalising governmentality, also needs to be

screened and monitored just as the components necessary to maintain his condition. In the case of refugees, whose status is defined by various contingencies, their exclusion as vulnerable and temporary “commands a cure and musters a therapy; they clearly need to be helped ‘back in’ as soon as possible” (Bauman, 2007: 31).

Still, it would be incorrect to state that self-sufficiency plays no part in human development as already the drive towards employment is one illustration of it as a goal. But to construct the homo economicus it requires, once again, active capacity-building also from the refugee. Even if the goal of getting back in might be distant or even impossible, be it for the literal absence of employment or other opportunities for income, under conditions of precarity one should at least be actively unemployed (Duffield, 2019: 118) and remain productive despite being part of the non-labouring surplus population (Rajaram, 2018: 633). Passivity is an undesired quality that should be replaced with constant work on the self in order to retain some level of self-sufficiency and save valued human capital from deterioration.

In addition to providing necessary services, UNRWA also anticipates certain forms of conduct. Capabilities mean that the refugees themselves take advantage of the opportunities provided (UNRWA, 2016b: 7) and actually exercise the capacities build (UNRWA, 2016b: 13). In an environment which is constantly under threat homo economicus assumes a certain responsibility over his own life through various calculations. Through guidance and counselling, children are prepared to answer “one of the more important choices in life: what to do after school” (UNRWA, 2016b: 44). Refugees should aspire for higher education and be encouraged towards voluntarism (UNRWA, 2016b: 45). Through education and promotion they can also strive for behavioural change that enhances both their mental well-being (UNRWA, 2016b: 36) and physical health (UNRWA, 2016b: 37). Psychosocial intervention could also “strengthen their ability to protect themselves” (UNRWA, 2015b: 8).

It is not the capacities alone that constitute homo economicus but the ability to use these capacities in a way that is deemed desirable and that fits within the framework of neoliberal governmentality. In this context human development becomes also an internal project. David Chandler criticises this approach heavily by referring to the texts of Amartya Sen:

“Sen is essentially seeking to measure the internal or moral life of the subject and arguing that this should be the actual object of policy making and also the indirect means of measuring the extent of ‘freedom’. The internal capacities of individuals are revealed only in relation to the choices which they make, in their own understandings of their own needs and interests. Subjects which lack the capacities for adequate choice-making therefore reveal their lack of ‘freedom’.”

(Chandler, 2013: 17)

It could be added that through the internalisation of development the subject can learn what choices to make as in the end not all choices are valued equally. This is evident in UNRWA’s texts as one of its motives is to educate people in making and valuing the correct ones which are seen as ingredients of further development and self-sufficient freedom. The subjects emerging from human development are able “to adapt and to become resilient as agents of their own development” (Chandler, 2013: 18). Entrepreneurial action, risk management and individual responsibility are necessary for people to gain abilities to cope with risks and insecurities (Lemke, 2014: 65).

Returning to Foucault, elements of homo economicus are not everything that constitute a subject but they make the subject governmentalizable and provide “the surface of contact between the individual and the power exercised on him” (Foucault, 2008: 252-253). Homo economicus responds to artificial changes in environment in a systematic manner and becomes correlative to governmentality which modifies the environment and its variables (Foucault, 2008: 270-271). Under neoliberalism this subject of development can realise maximal utility by acquiring capacities that benefit him or her over others who also compete in the same market (Alt, 2016: 124). Homo economicus is by no means a passive subject as the constant state of emergency does not allow that: instead, one can always strive to reach a new potentiality and change adjusting to the environment without questioning why the environment is changing to begin with (Alt, 2016: 125).

This notion of not striving to change the environment or addressing root causes of an infinite emergency can be interpreted as a practice that forbids other forms of political agency than those realised under neoliberal governmentality. The freedom a subject can practice is the

freedom of exposing itself “to danger on behalf of itself and that population to which it contributes” (Evans & Reid, 2014: 64). Even though the mode of governmentality at stake is heavily depended on the idea of mainstreaming economics throughout both the social and individual body, the form of economics in human development is not – as its theories suggest themselves – only economics of employment rates, measurable productivity and financial calculations. As Evans & Reid (2014: 66) phrase it, “the concept of economy is merely one powerful and important discourse within which liberal understandings of the nature of life, as such, operates [sic]”. When homo economicus is understood in its Foucauldian sense as something that marks how and where power, the cluster of mutual relationships between various actors, is exercised it forms the site for negotiations characterised by a certain knowledge of how life is to be conducted.

## 6. Risk and dissent

In this chapter I will discuss a different way of understanding refugee positions and identities, both by UNRWA and refugees themselves. As noted earlier, governmentality can be described “the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security” (Foucault, 1991: 102). It can be argued that development is closely connected to security (Chandler, 2007; Duffield, 2007, 2010; Reid, 2013) and following Dillon’s (2007: 46) understanding of a biopolitical dispositif of security as something focused on population and concerned with contingencies arising from human life, human development can be viewed as a biopolitical dispositif of security in itself.

The concern with human contingencies and potentialities are at the heart of UNRWA’s human development strategy and in order to navigate in this landscape the refugee is to be governed and self-governed as *homo economicus* capable of improvement and economic rationality. Refugees are however also a potential source of danger and always marked with an inherent risk of turning to undesired behaviour. This understanding of refugees as a risk then acts as one of the objectives for UNRWA’s interventions and intertwines with the conditions of emergency and vulnerability. In many cases undesired behaviour has been realised in the form of demonstrations and other protests which can be interpreted as an alternative subjectivity to the conduct promoted by neoliberal governmentality. These events mark a rupture from the role of a vulnerable victim and include political dimensions not present when the refugee is rendered to a subject of development and humanitarianism (Agier, 2016: 153-154).

### 6.1 Dangerous refugees

UNRWA’s documents include various references to potential risks, how they might be avoided and how they could be realised. In the chapter concerning conditions for UNRWA’s government the notion of bare life or *homo sacer* was presented as one way of understanding refugees’ biopolitical existence. Addressing UNRWA and human development from the angle

of governmentality however allows to investigate another mechanism at stake through which also vulnerability acts: refugees present a risk that is contained through agency efforts. As Foucault (2009: 61) notes, “risks are not the same for all individuals, all ages, or in every condition, place or milieu. There are therefore differential risks that reveal, as it were, zones of higher risk and, on the other hand, zones of less or lower risk”. UNRWA carries out its own risk assessments by identifying various potential dangers that characterise refugee lives and implementing various human development efforts to halt these risks from being realised. Many techniques of human development can be understood as attempts in risk management. What becomes the source of risk is human life in itself – all ages, levels of health and family formations can be placed on a continuum of vulnerability and therefore they also carry potential for danger.

Risky and dangerous behaviour are unwanted attributes that oppose the desired refugee figure. UNRWA admits that it is alone unable to solve many of the underlying political issues that present obstacles to human development and human rights:

“If the underlying problems are not addressed, the consequences will be manifold: a continuation of reduced livelihood opportunities and dashed hopes for another generation of Palestine refugee children and youth. Without change, the population – susceptible to impoverishment, embitterment and isolation – may resort to actions with implications for host communities and countries in the region.”

(UNRWA, 2016b: 24)

Risks related to the agency’s underfunding, also an issue that is not only in the hands of the agency, are likewise seen as potential causes for undesired behaviour amongst the refugees through impacts of underfunding on all areas of UNRWA’s services. Underfunding could lead to increased class-sizes and lesser teaching materials, shortage of essential medicine provision, reduction of doctor-patient consultation times, fewer shelter rehabilitation projects, less emergency assistance and poorer water quality control. These outcomes could then halt improvements in all areas ranging from education to shelter improvement, hazardous infrastructure that can pose life-threatening situations, decline in the numbers of abject poor that are able to benefit from emergency assistance and hospitalisation support. Eventually the

agency fears that further down the line life-expectancy, school years, employment rates and food security levels could then reduce and risks for dangerous behaviour amongst the refugees could rise. (UNRWA, 2016b: 56)

The above summary illustrates the variety of components that are involved in managing risks. Effectively all the elements that are needed to achieve an adequate level of human development, be it teaching materials, vaccinations or house improvement, can be utilised to reduce risks. Education, health, material living standards and more general economic conditions are all now attached to security. As Foucault describes security: “New elements are constantly being integrated: production, psychology, behavior, the ways of doing things of producers, buyers, consumers, importers, and exporters, and the world market. Security therefore involves organizing, or anyway allowing the development of ever-wider circuits.” (Foucault, 2009: 45).

One of the internal risks UNRWA discusses in its reports are potential protests and demonstrations carried out by refugees. Not only are the refugees able to resort to actions that could impact countries in the region, their actions can target the agency itself too. In its emergency appeals UNRWA outlines different risks specific to certain regions as well as instructs how to cope with them if the risks are realised. Many of the risks are linked to the adequacy of services provided to the refugees and the refugees’ own perceptions of how UNRWA is assisting them. In Syria, risks include “higher expectation from refugees than UNRWA capacity and mandate allows for” which could lead to increased complaints as well as demonstrations and “unfavourable social media coverage” (UNRWA, 2018b: 49). A similar scenario is mentioned in the Occupied Palestinian Territory Emergency Appeal 2018: if “beneficiary expectations go unmet due to perceived (or actual) decrease in humanitarian assistance” the consequences could include damage to UNRWA’s reputation within its donors as well as “mistrust towards UNRWA among Palestine refugees who do not receive the expected support” (UNRWA, 2018a: 31-32). Cutbacks in agency’s services could also lead to dissatisfaction amongst UNRWA’s employees who might then misuse materials and assets as well as take “industrial action” (UNRWA, 2018a: 31). Unfavourable community relationships might begin to take form (UNRWA, 2018a: 32), market volatilities could force the agency to “reduce the scope of activities or adjust the number of beneficiaries” (UNRWA, 2018a: 33),

and operational difficulties could lead to generally both a constant feeling of insecurity and a generally low morale (UNRWA, 2018b: 49).

These scenarios are not purely imaginary as changes in UNRWA's policies and implementing new programs have often been met with criticism from the refugees themselves and have sometimes sparked even violent reactions. UNRWA's annual reports are littered with mentions of various strikes and protests: for example in 2013 agency vehicles were blocked by PLO's camp services committees in the West Bank to protest changes in agency programming (UNRWA, 2014: 19) and as many as 94 protests were organised in the Gaza Strip because of cuts in assistance (UNRWA, 2014: 21). In 2014 the number of protests in Gaza climbed to 184 (UNRWA, 2015c: 22) and during the same year UNRWA installations in Lebanon were closed for 150 days because of civil unrest and demonstrations held by "discontented beneficiaries" (UNRWA, 2015c: 24).

These reactions are not new. The quote below depicts "the morale of the refugee" just a few years after the initial displacement:

"This sense of injustice, frustration and disappointment has made the refugee irritable and unstable. There are occasional strikes, demonstrations and small riots. There have been demonstrations over the census operation, strikes against the medical and welfare services, strikes for cash payments instead of relief, strikes against making any improvements, such as school buildings, in camps in case this might mean permanent resettlement; experimental houses to replace tents, erected by the Agency, have been torn down; and for many months, in Syria and Lebanon, there was widespread refusal to work on agency road-building and afforestation schemes. This then is rich and tempting soil for exploitation by those with other motives than the welfare of the refugee."

(UNRWA, 1951: 5)

In many cases the motivations for protests seem to be connected to problems arising from the refugee status itself. UNRWA has in some cases been accused of denying the refugees' demands for their right of return and possible reimbursements. The reason for refusal to

participate in the works program in the 1950s was for example driven by this fear (UNRWA, 1951: 6). A more contemporary reflection of these fears is the opposition against UNRWA's camp improvement programme established in 2006. Structural improvements in refugee camps have often been opposed as they also are seen as a sign of permanent resettlement (Al Hussein & Bocco, 2010: 263). Misselwitz & Hanafi (2010) write extensively on attitudes towards the improvement programme that include both the fear of "normalisation" of the refugee situation as well as more pragmatic approaches that view the issue not so much as a political problem but a developmental one. As one camp resident explains in the article: "There are some in the camp who seek to politicize everything for their own benefit, to show how important they are. We should be careful not to reject those projects that will help our women and children live in better conditions." (Misselwitz & Hanafi, 2010: 366).

Assistance cuts in Gaza in 2013, briefly mentioned in an earlier paragraph, exemplify a different side of the issue of refugee status and rights. In 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2013 demonstrators broke into UNRWA compounds after their cash assistances had been suspended due to budget shortage (UNRWA, 2013). Protestors held banners demanding a "dignified life" and the chief of the local refugee committee stated that the protestors would keep on advocating "for the rights of the refugees" (UNRWA, 2013). Because of the break-in UNRWA decided to close all of its relief and distribution centres and demanded that all factions behind the event "to immediately stop inciting crowds at these demonstrations and to conduct themselves in a responsible manner" (Omer, 2013).

In a similar manner, a reduction in aid led to tensions in Lebanon in 2016. In the beginning of the year the agency made changes to its healthcare policies in order to achieve "greater efficiency" due to challenges in high prices of hospitalisations (UNRWA, 2013). In practice this meant that UNRWA decided to abandon free secondary healthcare and instead refugees would have to pay a certain percentage, ranging from five to 20 percent, of their hospital costs (Ashly, 2016). This led to wide demonstrations that lasted for months. All of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon were affected and the protests took on many forms: UNRWA offices were blockaded, a man called Omar Khudeir set himself on fire outside an agency-run healthcare clinic, another man Haitham al-Gazi declared a hunger strike and many of

UNRWA's premises were effectively closed for four months (Ashly, 2016; UNRWA, 2016a: 6).

Eventually the new policies were revised. The agency's own coverage of secondary healthcare costs were adjusted to 90-100% and a Medical Hardship Fund became operational to subsidise healthcare costs of refugees living in abject poverty (UNRWA, 2016c). This is in line with the agency's current medium-term strategy which states that "in its hospitalization subprogramme, UNRWA will direct focus and accord highest priority to those refugees with life-threatening illnesses requiring life-saving/life-supporting medical care, but who lack the necessary financial assets or insurance coverage to attain such treatment" (UNRWA, 2016c). This statement follows the logic of distributing aid to those most in need and generating a division of sub-groups amongst refugees themselves. It is not being a refugee in itself that necessarily grants access to services but rather the level of vulnerability and lack of self-sufficiency of each individual.

These demonstrations and risk assessments highlight the ambivalent and mutual relationship between the agency and the population it is mandated to take care of. UNRWA seeks to protect the refugees from external chaos and their own dangerous behaviour. At the same time refugees present a risk to the agency itself as discontent is feared to have a negative impact on the general public image of the agency. They also signal that in many ways the stand-offs between UNRWA and refugees seem to revolve around a struggle on definitions. What is the state of being a refugee like? Is it a temporary condition, what are the refugees entitled to, how are they to express their concerns?

## 6.2 Alternative subjectivities

For UNRWA the refugee condition is unsustainable and urgent solutions are needed (UNRWA, 2016b: 7). In the meantime the agency continues its actions in development, reforms various fields of assistance, updates policies, widens its mandate and still remains in operation after decades. Demonstrations and other actions towards the agency discussed in the previous section show that the relationship between UNRWA and refugees is not straightforward and many of the recent confrontations have been a result of different views on

development efforts. Attitudes towards developmental programmes and aid are linked to the ways in which refugee condition itself is understood and what claims can be made from that position.

When discussing Palestinian history and events preceding the war in 1967 Edward Said (1992: 132) defines refugee sentiments towards UNRWA in the following manner: “UNRWA stood for nonpolitical paternalism represented by doled-out food, clothing, as well as medical and educational facilities. UNRWA’s charitable concern for the Palestinians’ political disaster seemed reducible to sterile figures – how many mouths to feed, how many bodies to clothe and treat, etc.” The agency was not set up to provide a political alternative for Palestinian refugees in exile, a role which was undertaken by actors such as PLO that seemed to provide a better way to channel national and refugee concerns (Said, 1992: 131-136). UNRWA has also been accused of focusing its attention on a politically neutralised approach of empowerment through social development and turning attention away from refugees' current political crises and their condition's historical origins (Allan, 2014: 14). From the perspective of humanitarian and development agencies the right way of being a refugee is preparing for not being a refugee and to work towards resettlement, self-reliance and becoming an object of development (Feldman, 2015: 245).

During its long existence UNRWA and aid provided have also taken a somewhat different role. As illustrated by the demonstrations that have taken place during planned cuts in assistance, aid is not an apolitical issue. In her ethnographic study on Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon Peteet (2005: 76-81) argues that education, housing and rations have become a symbol of refugees’ difficult relationship with UN institutions and a constant reminder of their situation embodied by economic marginality, landlessness, absence of citizenship – put shortly, refugeeness. Persisting as a refugee until return can serve as a symbol for national claims and anticipate future liberation (Feldman, 2015: 245). In this light it is understandable why reductions in services have received strong opposition. Through its operations UNRWA serves as a legitimation for refugees’ claims and grants them a space in international politics.

Instead of focusing on potential depoliticisation of human development, it can also be said that UNRWA plays an important role as a way of legitimising the right of return and validating the identity of the refugees through its claims for a just solution to the ongoing situation (Al Hussein & Bocco, 2010: 276-278; Bocco, 2010: 237). In their survey Al Hussein and Bocco (2010: 278) found out that registering with the UNRWA was important mostly because it guarantees a proof of refugee status, not only because it allows access to the agency's services. As discussed earlier, right after its establishment UNRWA did not register Palestinians who had been forced to leave their homes during the war in 1948 but lacked the characteristics of material vulnerability. Relief provided by UNRWA was regarded as a right and according to the agency therefore seen as inadequate despite attempts to explain the situation: “the refugee will listen politely but in the end remains convinced both of the bitter injustice done to him, and the fact that little or nothing is being done to rectify it” (UNRWA, 1951: 51). Refugee status can serve as a position from which one can make political claims and as those claims are not met, one is left only with attempts of mitigation that do not address political problems.

How should one understand these contradictions and dissatisfactions? The recipients of UNRWA's services have not developed a depoliticised and ahistorical mentality (Al Hussein, 2010: 9; Al Hussein & Bocco, 2010: 268). As the agency's medium-term strategy states, it is “a living reminder of what happens when no political solutions are found to address the underlying causes of a situation of historic injustice” (UNRWA, 2016b: 21). The refugee status administered by UNRWA and aid received as a registered refugee can themselves be politically important. If aid, be it in the form of food rations or cash assistance, is seen as a validator of refugees' claims reducing them could also disqualify Palestinian refugees a specific political category.

This way of conceiving UNRWA and the implications of its services is contrary to the approach analysed through the figure of homo economicus. Instead of seeing refugee status as a precursor to developmental attempts of endless capacity-building, adaptation to emergency and maximisation of entrepreneurial human capital, it could also become as a starting point for another set of actions. Following Lemke (2014: 64) who states that under liberalism “freedom is not the (negative) right of individuals to confront power, but the positive effect of

governmental action” it could be stated that similarly in government through human development the priced goal of freedom is not open ended but rather should be conducted in a limited manner following the inner rationales of neoliberal governmentality. Demonstrations, strikes and other forms of dissent are clearly not the kind of behaviour that the agency would expect from the refugees especially if they are targeted against UNRWA itself and as such they stand as a stark contrast to the endless adaptability of the ideal subject of human development.

As established earlier, UNRWA’s government is based on the inescapability of emergency and vulnerability. Due to this environment and the nature of being a refugee, being situated in a prolonged temporality, expressions of disagreement and demands are exercised in a peculiar sphere of humanitarianism – as if they were questions of citizenship but forever locked in a reality that knows the body of the vulnerable and not that of a citizen (Agier, 2016: 152). Following this trail of analysis human development knows both vulnerability and the economic man who exists within the limits prescribed by neoliberal governmentality instead of striving to alter his or her conditions or ask for anything else than the role assigned. Dissent creates a political momentum that that acts beyond the temporality of refugeeness. Agier (2016: 152-153) differentiates between the short time of the subject, the here and now of refugee camps that can also be stretched beyond the spatial borders of a camp, and the long time of the subject which takes into account political meanings and historical contexts.

According to Agamben, the refugee marks the distinction between the human and the citizen. In a modern nation-state there is no space for bare life and therefore the refugee status is also considered to be only temporary: sooner or later the refugee will be either repatriated, integrated or resettled (Agamben, 1998: 77-78; Malkki, 1995: 505). Agamben (2000: 19–22) suggests that the refugee can be viewed as a limit concept that calls into question the current divisions and categories of the nation-state – yet in the case of Palestinian refugees even acquiring citizenship does not make them lose their refugee status (Khalil, 2011: 687; Oesch, 2017: 110-111). This is also how biopolitics and governmentality become entangled: life as such requires a site for government to become incorporated into a relationship of power.

When discussing the figure of the refugee, one could also flip the questioning of temporality around and ask what it means “to be, or to remain, emplaced” (Malkki, 1995): 515). Despite UNRWA’s statements on finding a durable solution for the refugees it targets only the short, individualised time whereas refugee claims on aid and dignity could be interpreted as working on a completely different scale. They constitute aid as something else than a tool for biopolitical subjectification and human development. Following both Malkki (1995) and Agier (2016), actions undertaken to oppose UNRWA bring the politics back in to its operations by contemplating refugee agency in different terms and departing from the rationalities embedded in neoliberal governmentality which does not have the vocabulary to comprehend such agency beyond its own apparatus.

## 7. Conclusions

In the final chapter of my thesis I want to both recap earlier analysis and discuss its general utility. During the process of analysing sources and selecting literature I have constantly been intrigued by the multiple ways UNRWA can be addressed. Even if its programmes can be analysed from the theoretical framework chosen in this thesis, it does not fall neatly into any predestined category or allow for straightforward analysis. As UNRWA is an exception in the refugee regime similar rules do not apply for Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA and other people facing displacement (Goddard, 2010; Khalil, 2011). Questions of citizenship for example then have a different effect on Palestinian refugees. As the agency has been working for decades and changed its policies from emergency humanitarian relief to human development it cannot be compared only from the perspective of managing refugees either – this is where various accounts on development also have to be addressed. And as accounts on biopolitics can vary greatly depending on whether the subject of study is understood as refugeeness encompassed by an immediate emergency or long-term development of populations, fusing both can create even more ambivalences.

Instead of an immediate emergency necessitating short-term disaster relief and humanitarian aid UNRWA's operations can now be said to be depended on a constant emergency. As comprehensive resolutions on how Palestinian refugees should be resettled and reimbursed and whether or not they have an undivided right of return to the areas left in the aftermath of wars in 1948 and 1967 are still missing, the temporality of refugee experience has become permanent. Regional politics, for example the ongoing crisis in Syria, have meant that UNRWA sees itself as operating under a constant threat to itself and the population it is mandated to take care of. Because UNRWA lacks a political mandate it has no choice but to constantly adapt to external conditions and similar survival skills are also expected from the refugees.

UNRWA acknowledges this also itself and states that even its best efforts are not enough to guarantee Palestinian refugees access to certain services or enable them to acquire certain skills and abilities. Despite, or because of, this constant contingency the agency is determined in its focus on human development. The constant emergency refugees have to face also makes

them forever vulnerable. Vulnerability itself can be attached to a myriad of conditions, social, physical or mental. Vulnerability works as a factor against which refugees are measured and divides them into numerous sub-categories. Every form of life and every mode of existence can have its own inherent vulnerability. Youth, elderly, nursing mothers, children traumatised by conflicts and those facing multiple displacements are all vulnerable in their own way. It is a condition that can never be escaped. Together emergency and vulnerability necessitate constant interventions that are carried out through UNRWA's services of healthcare, education, social safety net programmes and employment schemes.

Human development's central goal is to help refugees build their capacities which can then help them enlarge their freedom and make choices that they themselves value. Neoliberal governmentality works by directing the form of subjectivity that is required by this capacity-building. Literacy, health and favourable social relations – human capital – become attributes of personal investment that can give an individual a competitive advantage and the subject becomes reformed as homo economicus. Human capital and homo economicus are both concepts that Michel Foucault uses to discuss origins and developments of neoliberalism (Foucault, 2008). Neoliberalism and governmentality, by definition, generalise economic knowledge throughout both the individual and social body. Human capital as a concept discussed by economic theorists focuses economic analysis on human life as such: instead of focusing on human labour as a quantitative element, its qualities also gain attention and economics enters a new domain. Regulation, management and screening of this capital in question thus become important. UNRWA's goals of education and health leading to autonomous and calculative individuals can, as noted in the analysis, help generate even more development and create a capable workforce (Shani, 2012; Rajaram, 2018). As Foucault suggests:

“That is to say, there will be a population which, from the point of view of the economic baseline, will be constantly moving between, on the one hand, assistance provided in certain eventualities when it falls below the threshold and, on the other, both its use and its availability for use according to economic needs and possibilities. It will therefore be a kind of infra- and supra-liminal floating population, a liminal population which, for an economy that has abandoned the objective of full

employment, will be a constant reserve of manpower which can be drawn on if need be, but which can also be returned to its assisted status if necessary.”

(Foucault, 2008: 206)

This focus on concepts guided by economic knowledge has its own limits. Critical writings on the economy of biopolitics can themselves become immersed in the exact form of knowledge they seek to critique and in the end fail to address the phenomena at hand without leaning on certain limiting terminology (Evans & Reid, 2014: 66). It can be a symptom of the inability to utilise governmentality analysis outside traditional state formations as critique often traces its appearance through relying on interpretations of shifts away from the social state (Helén, 2016: 188). In the context of human development I do however believe that pointing out forms of economic knowledge does serve a certain purpose as human development itself has been claimed to offer an alternative to measuring welfare only in monetary terms (Fukuda-Parr, 2003; Robeyns, 2005; Sen, 1999). However, the point on critique should not be economics itself but the forms of freedom and subjectivity inscribed in the language of human development.

Despite human development's tenets on freedom not all choices are equally valued and freedom actually becomes the ability to make right kinds of choices. When homo economicus expands its capabilities in a right way it is better equipped to adapt to an environment of emergency and accepts, same way as UNRWA also seems to have done, that its external conditions are not something to change. As Alt (2016) has stated, this does not mean becoming passive as emergency does not allow that to happen. Instead, it necessitates constant development that has to become internalised by the individual in addition to being carried out by devoted organisations. The notion of precarity discussed briefly by Balibar (2016) and in more detail by Duffield (2019) who links it to current humanitarianism, or post-humanitarianism according to him, could also serve as an alternative start for analysis on human development. Though precarity can be used to assess structures of political economy it has also a biopolitical dimension that links contemporary existence and experience in both the global North and South.

Because of the way in which human development can be understood as requiring its internalisation by those who are being developed and a creator of specific subjectivities I have analysed it as a form of governmentality. It allows to move beyond merely pointing out components of neoliberalism as an economic doctrine and also for a better understanding of how issues concerning refugees and development become biopolitical. Instead of concluding that refugees are vulnerable, vulnerability can be addressed as a rationality for government. Instead of contemplating features of an emergency, emergency can be seen as a condition for power. Returning to Foucault's understanding of power as something present in all relationships between people and always existing together with resistance (1978: 93, 95; 1982: 789), an analysis that does not take these interactions into account remains one-sided. An analysis of biopolitics at stake in government of refugees necessitates considering a multiplicity of power relations and forms of life, both because situations can vary from one situation of refugeeness to another with different actors being present and also because the endeavour of locating bare, apolitical life should only be seen as a starting point for further investigation.

One-sidedness is evidently an issue also when only the knowledge of a single party is taken into account. This is the main limitation in this thesis, too. Although my research question has been intentionally limited to concentrate on the subjectivities that arise from UNRWA's operations, analysing the form of governmentality present could be widened by a comparative approach. Anthropology has researched the refugee perspective extensively (Agier, 2008; Agier, 2011; Agier, 2016; Allan, 2014; Peteet, 2005) though there is also a danger of seeking for an essential refugee experience without being content with special social and historical reasons that make states of refugeeness different from each other (Malkki, 1995: 511). Still, as an alternative to analysing only institutional actors such as UN agencies and national governments, other partakers in power need to be considered too. Why not trace the 'ungovernmentality' present? If analytics of governmentality does not take into account the potential of tensions and frictions embedded in it fails to see its biopolitical implications (Helén, 2016: 189).

In the section concerning alternative subjectivities I have attempted to give examples on some of the ways Palestinian refugees have stood in opposition to UNRWA practices. It is apparent

that the refugee status UNRWA administers can be interpreted in several ways and differing views on the subject as well as contesting ideas on the nature of aid and UNRWA's role in general can generate friction. Here again mainly UNRWA's own publications are used as sources. Even though this approach can lack dimension regarding the material used, it helps shed light what UNRWA sees as as the counter side of human development and acceptable refugee conduct. As refugees might potentially take measures against the agency itself and their host countries efforts in human development become a safety measure that contains the population. Here security, an aspect of governmentality, becomes evident and UNRWA is framed a dispositif of security in itself. This aspect of governmentality could be analysed more extensively as security is closely connected to development. UNRWA's tendency to see refugees as a source of danger is merely one side of the issue at stake and analysing how the agency has defined its recently proclaimed protection mandate and how it strives to utilise it would possibly reveal a more complete understanding of its governmentality. It is also an aspect that differentiates UNRWA from other refugee operations carried out by UN as protection is not provided by UNHCR to Palestinian refugees residing in UNRWA's areas of operation.

As I acknowledge the shortfalls stemming from the format of my thesis, sources chosen for analysis and utilisation of the theoretical framework, I believe that critical assessments of biopolitics and governmentality can point out also alternative ways in which biopolitics and power are able to function. According to Alt (2016: 242), "to the extent that contemporary colonising practices are neoliberal, biopolitical practices, politics has to involve challenging the limited ways in which these practices allow subjectivity and social existence to find their expression." As biopower acts as a productive power that can direct how the conditions for existence, experience, desire and action are created (Helén, 2016: 281) there is no need for it to become reduced solely to the form of neoliberal governmentality. Locating the analysis of biopolitics outside conventional sources of power could facilitate the understanding of how life can take shape in alternative settings and how politics could be directed to changing not only the individualised subject itself.

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