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Who Labels the Camp? Claiming Ownership through Visibility in Jordan

1 Introduction

"They stole our women's bathroom," a resident of Azraq refugee camp in Jordan told an aid worker and me during an outreach visit in Village 6 in 2017. "Some people came in the night and stole the bathroom."

For every three caravans in the camp, there is one women's and one men's bathroom unit. The units are made from the same white aluminium sheets as the caravans and propped up on a 15-centimetre-tall cement foundation. Each unit contains one squat toilet and a shower on a concrete floor. In this unit in Village 6, the toilet was missing. The stolen toilet was likely intended to be installed in a caravan for private use, as the communal facilities of Azraq are an uncomfortable experience for most residents. Citing issues of safety, hygiene, inaccessibility, and inconvenience, many in the camp have taken to showering inside their residence using a bucket and water.[1]

Prominently stamped on each door of the bathroom units are the blue logos of UNICEF and World Vision (Fig. 1), the sponsors of the facilities that its users have deemed less preferable to a bucket and water. From toilets to backpacks to tents, "humanitarian organizations always sign their works."[2] This is the case in Za'tari and Azraq, the two main camps for Syrian refugees in Jordan run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A colourful mix of logos and flags decorates the beige landscape of each camp. While the Jordanian flag at the entrance and blazoned on the arms of Jordanian military officials throughout both camps asserts Jordan's authority over all, it is greatly outnumbered by the flags of United Nations organisations (UNOs), international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs), and donor states in the Global North and the Gulf. In Za'tari, Saudi Arabia is especially visible, having marked caravans, winter coats, and clothes with its bright green sword and palm tree emblem. These flags and logos establish the camps as pseudo-"surrogate states"[3] of cosmopolitan aid – and increasingly corporatised humanitarianism.

1 See Alshawawreh, 2019: 112.

2 Martinez Mansell, 2016.

3 Slaughter and Crisp, 2009. See also Hoffmann, 2016.

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The flag that does not fly in either camp is the Syrian flag. In Za'tari's first year in 2012, flags and symbols of the Syrian revolution were prominent in the camp. However, when the UNHCR assumed camp management the following year, the agency implemented a strict push for depoliticisation.[4] Syrian revolution flags were taken down, spaces of political discussion such as coffee shops and shisha bars were closed, and youth being photographed in NGO centres were instructed to change peace signs to thumbs up. When Azraq opened the following year, the space was depoliticised before refugees even moved in.

Fearful of security issues and a repeat of the Palestinian case of empowered displaced people, the Jordanian state drives the depoliticisation of its Syrian refugee camps. Aid agencies must adhere to Jordan's mandate in order to operate in the country, and they are also motivated by humanitarian ideals of political neutrality.[5] Liisa Malkki has framed the forced neutralisation of humanitarian space as a "leaching out"[6] of refugees' rich political histories. Recent scholarship points out that depoliticisation in refugee camps actually constitutes a new form of politics,[7] namely, a *humanitarian* politics that shapes the boundaries of the governed within the physical camp borders set by the host state. The camp space is thus neither neutral nor depoliticised, but rather "hyperpoliticised,"[8] "explicitly political, even as humanitarian organizations reject the political contours of the space in which they work."[9] The spirit of humanitarianism in Azraq and Za'tari reinforces a non-state regime under which politics, aid, histories, and regulation converge to shape both camp spaces.

One of the new kinds of politics created through depoliticisation is a politics of visibility. Jordan employs both Azraq and Za'tari as its own "emblems of visibility"[10] that provide evidence of its hospitality, but actually work to contain refugees. Corporatised aid agencies in the camps "rent the essence of [their] particular brand value – trust, respect, ethical motivation"[11] to Jordan in exchange for business in the world's largest refugee crisis. The branding of aid space establishes the organisations operating in the camps as forming a legitimate apparatus with authority over the camp territories. The camps' aid organisations must maintain a regime of visibility to sustain legitimacy in the eyes of the host state and an inter-

4 See UNHCR, 2013.
5 See Audet, 2015; Terry, 2002; Weiss and Barnett, 2008; Yanacopulos, 2015.
6 Malkki, 1996: 378.
7 See Turner, 2016; Stein, 2008.
8 See Turner, 2016: 145.
9 Stein, 2008: 129.
10 Ali, 2021: 9. See also Gatter, 2021; Pasha, 2021; Tsourapas, 2019; Turner, 2015.
11 Hopgood, 2008: 106.

Fig. 1: The branded toilets of Azraq camp
Photo: Melissa Gatter, 2018, with faces blurred out.

national audience. Thus, the visible insignia of the camps – the flags and logos of humanitarian organisations and donor states – are part and parcel of Azraq's and Za'tari's hyperpoliticised space.

While the literature on refugee camps is replete with studies of space,[12] scarce attention has been paid to the politics of visibility created by humanitarian organisations and donor states *within* camp spaces. With a particular focus on UNOs, (I)NGOs, and donor states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC),[13] this chapter aims to highlight the strikingly visible but often overlooked branding that not only labels the camps, but also shapes their everyday operations. I do not intend to generalise the motivations of humanitarian organisations; rather, the chapter explores how the collective visual presence of logos and flags influences both camp spaces, based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Za'tari in 2016 and

12 See Agier, 2011; Katz, Martin, and Minca, 2018; Malkki, 1992; Ramadan, 2013; Sigona, 2015.
13 The GCC consists of six Gulf countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

in Azraq from 2017 to 2018.[14] It argues that these symbols have marked the camps as belonging not to their residents, but instead to their humanitarian governors. Aid agencies and Gulf donor states use visibility to claim credit and ownership over physical spaces and operations in the camp, and aid workers and refugees become extensions of these brands to a global audience. Furthermore, this chapter challenges the implication that the visibility of branding signifies accountability for action tied to these logos and asks: accountability *to whom?* Just as Jordan uses the camps as "emblems of visibility" for a global audience, aid agencies and Gulf donor states use emblems within the camps as indicators of accountability deferred either onto the individual donor of the Global North, in the case of humanitarian organisations, or onto the host country, in the case of GCC donors.

2 "NGOization" and Gulf Philanthropy

In the last century, aid assistance has transformed from the "pure" altruism of *Médecins Sans Frontières* to a now globalised market of international organisations, INGOs, and NGOs that have relieved states of their obligations to humanitarian response and responsibility. As states withdrew from the aid arena, their focus shifted from carrying out service provision to funding it through donations to humanitarian organisations.[15] This trend led the way for the professionalisation and corporatisation of humanitarian organisations, a phenomenon scholars and activists have referred to as "NGOization."[16] Humanitarian agencies developed "strategies"[17] to maximise competitiveness as donors shifted to project-focused funding. Increasing competition in the market has pushed aid organisations to "copy the structures, interests, and procedures of their for-profit counterparts."[18]

Since 2012, Jordan has witnessed particularly acute NGOisation – driven by more than 450 local and international NGOs[19] – that has "shaped the Jordan response to Syrian refugees."[20] The creation of Azraq and Za'tari, as well as the

14 To access the camps, I joined three reputable INGOs as an aid worker supporting their communications teams. This port of access provided insight into the internal and external communications strategies of aid agencies in the camps, how their implementation shapes refugee lives in the camps, and how residents respond to the visible marking of their space.

15 See Stein, 2008.

16 See Choudry and Kapoor, 2013; Farah, 2020.

17 See Barnett and Snyder, 2008.

18 Cooley and Ron, 2002: 13.

19 See Jordan Times, 2017.

20 Farah, 2020: 133. See also Campbell and Tobin, 2016.

needs of the 80 per cent of Syrian refugees who live in urban settings, brought numerous well-paid employment opportunities for Jordanians in the humanitarian sector. It also brought to Jordan a "specialised cadre of international development professionals who spend the bulk of their working lives on a series of assignments in global metropolises and the capitals of low-income countries";[21] these people are usually referred to as "expats" and are mostly white and from the Global North. These expats occupy management positions and oversee the "local" staff, who are expected to provide a cultural and linguistic bridge between management and refugees.[22] The impact of NGOisation in Jordan can also be seen in the recent introduction of development studies curricula in various Jordanian universities, which will no doubt add to the competitiveness of the local humanitarian job market.

Jordan's neighbours to the south-east, the Gulf states, have made their philanthropic efforts particularly visible in the country's Syrian-refugee response. Together, the members of the GCC have donated billions of dollars to the regional response, including material or financial assistance to the Jordanian government, UNOs, and INGOs, including Islamic charities, operating in the country.[23] This support has focused mainly on funding cash assistance, food, health, education, and caravans in camp and urban settings.[24] The UAE also funds and operates the Emirati Jordanian camp, known as *Mrajeeb al Fhoud*, located just seven kilometres from Azraq camp.[25] Because the Gulf's response has consisted of almost exclusively external aid to refugee-hosting countries, Hitman has argued that the GCC has chosen "charity" over "hospitality," noting that, "in 2015, when Syrians were fleeing to Europe, the Gulf States, trying to respond to criticism for closing their borders to the refugees, recruited their media to highlight the support they provided to the Syrians."[26]

The Gulf states, none of which are signatories of the 1951 Refugee Convention, have admitted Syrian citizens but not recognised them as refugees or granted them the legal rights that the refugee label would afford them.[27] Hitman cites demographic tensions as a main reason Gulf states have kept their doors closed to Syrian refugees, as foreigners in some states already equal or outnumber national

21 Jad, 2007: 627.

22 See Ward, 2020; Farah, 2020.

23 See BBC, 2021; UNHCR, 2014b: 20.

24 See UNHCR, 2014b: 24.

25 Host to around 6,000 Syrian refugees, the camp admits only the most vulnerable, defined as widowed mothers, single women, the elderly, and people with disabilities; see UNHCR, 2021.

26 Hitman, 2019: 92.

27 See Al-Jabri, 2016.

citizens; the regimes consider this a threat to national stability. The UAE – the world's overall largest aid donor – has actively deported Syrians on numerous occasions over the years.[28] Most of the UAE's aid is coordinated through Dubai's International Humanitarian City (IHC), "the largest humanitarian logistics hub in the world."[29] The UAE promotes the IHC as the "future of humanitarian assistance"[30] and situates it favourably within a competitive market, promising humanitarian member organisations advantageous visibility and strategy. Ziadah argues that the UAE's humanitarian endeavours have been a way of projecting regional power, "bolstered by a branding campaign that presents the UAE as a stable commercial hub and 'giving nation.'"[31] In addition to demographic pressures, national security, and political prowess, Jawad adds vanity to the reasons behind the Gulf's inhospitality: keeping its refugee response external allows the Gulf to uphold its reputation as a "consumerist heaven" with "spotless highways, sports cars, [and] massive malls"[32] – refugee camps would only taint this image.

By externalising its aid efforts in Jordan, the Gulf has managed to divert attention from its unwelcoming position towards Syrian refugees. Both the humanitarian sector and GCC states have played into the visibility of Jordan's refugee camps to further their corporatised strategies. The next section explores this in the context of Azraq and Za'tari.

3 A Regime of Visibility

Aid agencies have developed and re-articulated branding strategies and mission statements to maintain their competitiveness in a globalised market and appeal to corporate donors.[33] As Hopgood notes, humanitarian organisations now sell a "product" – "a moral brand with feel-good associations"[34] – to donor institutions and corporations. These "feel-good associations" are captured and communicated most effectively in humanitarian logos and emblems. The classic humanitarian symbology of hands, people, olive branches – the UNHCR logo has all three – has become a tired trope in today's aid branding landscape. However, while humanitarian logos shamelessly play into this cliché, they are effective. For example,

28 See Hitman, 2019.
29 Ziadah, 2019: 1685.
30 UAE Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, 2017: 21.
31 Ziadah, 2019: 1686.
32 Jawad, 2015.
33 See Quelch and Laidler-Kylander, 2005.
34 Hopgood, 2008: 106.

with its trademark red circle and highlighted sans serif text, Save the Children is arguably one of the most recognisable brands in the humanitarian sector.

Both Za'tari and Azraq camps are awash with variations of the stereotypical hand-person-olive branch combination. And yet, little has been written about how this visual politics has played out in displacement and camp settings. In the Lebanese context, Carpi has commented on the "war of logos"[35] among humanitarian actors and Gulf donors in non-camp aid spaces, situating the visuality of branding within a politics of space. Aid-marked spaces in Lebanon, she argued, "become stable hubs of human trust and reciprocity, a normal part of everyday life, inviting dwellers to rethink these spaces of coexistence." In many of these spaces, however, refugees described an "ephemeral" humanitarian presence in which the logos and symbols remain even though aid is not consistently physically available through aid workers. Martinez Mansell has reflected on the visible symbols of militant groups, political factions, and humanitarian organisations in the Palestinian *Bourj Al Shamali* refugee camp in Lebanon. She argued that these symbols "code" the camp as a "paradoxical space" in which "the politics of humanitarianism enable leaders to treat the refugee situation as forever temporary… even as they invest in infrastructure and housing upgrades that make the camp more permanent in real terms."[36] This section considers these themes in light of Azraq and Za'tari's everyday socio-spatial politics.

3.1 The Semi-Public Humanitarian Spaces of Azraq and Za'tari

In January 2012, thousands fleeing escalating violence in the southern Syrian province of Dar'a set up a camp near the northern Jordanian city of Mafraq, where they were met by the UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies providing tents and basic provisions. In a matter of weeks, this aid space developed into Za'tari camp, which would reach 200,000 residents by mid-2013. Today, 80,000 residents live in twelve districts within five square kilometres and have appropriated much of the camp space, with an estimated 50 per cent of the camp "effectively re-made by refugees themselves."[37] Most notable is the emergence of a micro-economy in Za'tari generated through a refugee-run market along two main streets of humanitarian services.[38] Refugee spatial appropriation prompted the UNHCR to negotiate with residents about space, electricity use, and commercial activity.[39]

35 Carpi, 2020.
36 Martinez Mansell, 2016.
37 Paszkiewicz and Fosas, 2019: 4.
38 See Al Nassir, 2020.

Political demonstrations against the Assad regime in Syria and against the camp management were frequent during Za'tari's first years.[40] The UNHCR framed demonstrations and spatial appropriation as justification for implementing intense security measures in the camp as well as in Azraq, which was being constructed at that time in 2013 and officially opened in 2014.[41] Covering 15 square kilometres in the middle of the desert east of Amman, Azraq's four villages host 40,000 residents from across Syria. The expanse of space has been used to prevent social mobilisation. Caravans are cemented into the ground, rendering their movement or expansion impossible. Azraq's micro-economy is muted in comparison to Za'tari's, as marketplaces are owned by aid agencies. As a result of the camp's securitised humanitarianism, Azraq lacks Za'tari's lived-in feel.

Both camps are managed by the UNHCR and the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate, the Jordanian government agency in charge of camp coordination. Security is enforced by the Jordanian military. The military operates entrance checkpoints for both camps, where aid workers must show official badges and all other visitors are required to carry permits obtained via the Ministry of the Interior. Around 24 INGOs and NGOs are active in Za'tari[42] and 22 in Azraq,[43] many of which are the implementing partners of UNOs and other international organisations. While the two camps are very different spaces, one aspect that remains consistent is their branding landscape. NGO centres throughout the camps feature logos and flags of NGOs and their UN partners. The caravans in these centres are decorated in the NGO's brand colours and aid workers don t-shirts, vests, or badges displaying their affiliation. While almost all the camp's humanitarian staff are employed at the national grade level in NGO country offices, the logos do not represent to visitors and outsiders the local teams, but rather the international corporatised brand itself.

These logos mark a network of semi-public, humanitarian-run spaces in both camps. The centres can be envisaged as exclusive gated publics, requiring registration for specific programmes with limited capacity. Some NGO centres are accessible only to certain groups in the community; for example, kindergarten spaces permit only three- to five-year-old "students" on the premises, and parents and unregistered children are not allowed entrance. One NGO working with youth allows either only boys or girls in their centres at scheduled times of the day. NGO centres also follow set hours of operation. For example, the community centres at

39 See Beehner, 2015; Dalal, 2015.

40 See Clarke, 2018.

41 See UNHCR, 2014a. See also Gatter, 2018, 2021; Hoffmann, 2017; Pasha, 2021.

42 See UNHCR, 2020a.

43 See UNHCR, 2020b.

Azraq camp – spaces open to all – admit residents between 8 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Sunday through Thursday. These spatial and temporal boundaries are enforced by camp residents employed by the NGOs as security guards. While traditionally symbols of protection and defence, the guards simultaneously serve as links between the enclosed NGO spaces and their residential surroundings within the camps. In this way, the semi-public spaces of the centres extend into the public space outside of official NGO territory.

Just as the logos that mark these territories communicate to an international audience the presence of aid agencies in the Syrian refugee response, the logos also communicate to a refugee audience the humanitarian ownership of designated spaces within the camps. In other words, the centres are branded as belonging to the aid agencies that operate them more than to the residents who visit these spaces. The logos remind their beneficiaries of the NGO's rules and norms to be followed within the space. Especially for Azraq, where there is almost no refugee-run or unregulated public space, the overt labelling of space by humanitarian actors has left little room for recognised refugee ownership of the physical terrain.

3.2 The Brand-Refugee Relationship

Most humanitarian organisations operating in these camps adhere to a branding strategy designed in Northern headquarters. These communications strategies, updated every few years, include colour palettes, font styles, photography, social media hashtags, and tone of voice to be used in all visible materials to cultivate a consistent brand identity across numerous humanitarian contexts. The main objectives of communications teams working in the camps are to keep donors happy and to increase brand visibility. Logo placement in photographs is a key aspect of this: "A photo of a beneficiary is good, but a photo of a beneficiary with our logo somewhere in the background is always better," a communications aid worker instructed me.

I observed this in action when a small crew of filmmakers joined Jordan's communications team at Save the Children in Za'tari to film an advertisement for the organisation's new global campaign.[44] The objective was to exhibit aid workers helping children in one-second shots. As the crew visited numerous Save the Children centres around the camp, the communications team handed out red t-shirts with the organisation's logo to any aid workers who were to be filmed. All filming was done behind the shoulder of an aid worker physically as-

44 See Save the Children, 2016.

sisting a vulnerable-looking child – picking up a crying child, extending a hand, or providing one with a football for play. The camera crew calculated each shot so as to film only the back of the shirt, which displays the logo, literally juxtaposed onto the act of aiding a child in need. The ad focuses on the face of the child while the aid workers become faceless t-shirts. In the ad, the NGO was thus not composed of individual aid workers, as is the reality for camp residents, but was rather an omnipresence in a generic vulnerable community. This branding strategy fits within a corporatised humanitarianism that produces images that bring global attention to the "state of emergency more than they depict particular places."[45] The faces of refugee beneficiaries are portrayed, but their stories are decontextualised.[46] "Inexplicably clean T-shirts"[47] are paired with nameless "victims."

Fig. 2: Malek's favourite photograph, showing the Save the Children centre's signpost
Photo: Malek, 2016. Courtesy of the photographer.

The logos that illustrate the presence of aid to a global audience hold a more complex significance for camp residents. Refugees come to associate meaning with brands throughout the camp, as these symbols mark their everyday spaces. Returning to the case of Save the Children in Za'tari, I observed that many children reacted positively to seeing the logo on aid workers' uniforms or around the centres, often volunteering to pose in front of the logos for pictures. When provided with a camera for a day, a young boy named Malek photographed every logo in the NGO's centre from multiple angles, even squeezing between the fence and sign-

45 Calhoun, 2010: 33.
46 See Brun, 2016.
47 Malkki, 2015: 26.

post to capture the large sign that listed Save the Children and its donor country partners (Fig. 2). Malek picked this photo of the signpost as his favourite, saying, "It's a large sign, so I can see it from my house. Whenever I see it, I feel calm." Malek associated positive emotions with the humanitarian brand, but the meanings camp residents ascribe to aid emblems are not always positive. An aid worker noted that the Gulf emblems and flags stamped on the exterior and interior of caravans in Za'tari were unpopular among residents, who are fully aware of the problematic role Gulf politics has played in the Syrian conflict.[48]

Furthermore, the meanings residents associate with humanitarian and Gulf emblems can "migrate"[49] with brands from centre to centre. For example, while Malek frequents Save the Children's centre in his neighbourhood, he could identify a familiar space in the NGO's centres in any other district through its branding. But this is not always the case. In Azraq, where physical isolation is integral to everyday lived experience, meanings associated with brands do not necessarily migrate from one area of the camp to another. Noor, a youth attendee of an NGO centre in the locked-down Village 5, struggled to find social networks when her family was transferred to a different village. While the Village 5 centre had assisted Noor in feeling socially grounded, the branding of the same NGO in an adjacent village's centre did not feel familiar to her. For Noor, it was the individual aid workers and attendees of the Village 5 centre who gave the NGO logo its meaning. The positive associations she held with the NGO's brand in Village 5 simply did not apply to other instances of the logo elsewhere in the camp.

Moreover, just as aid workers are branded by their employer, beneficiaries also represent their "benefactors." Young residents attending schools in the camps are provided with backpacks displaying Saudi or NGO logos. The winter market thoroughfare in Za'tari is noticeably greener than usual, as many wear the bright green winter jackets provided by Saudi Arabia. Youth attendees of a World Refugee Day carnival in Azraq were given balloons with the sponsoring NGO's logo on it.

Hence, the relationship between aid emblems and their beneficiaries is much more complicated than that between aid emblems and their intended global audience. But regardless of the relationship camp residents have with various humanitarian and philanthropic brands, the main significance of these items lies in their visibility to an external audience, who will see the logos prominently displayed in pamphlets and ads like the one described at the beginning of this section. The or-

48 Estella Carpi, 2020, reported a similar sentiment among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, who told her, "We're using the plates with the Saudi logo to show you we are given this stuff… but we normally don't like using them as we don't think Saudi politics helped Syrians in any way."
49 Hopgood, 2008: 107.

ganisations become their logos, a symbol of both the agencies' good will and their need for donor backing to ensure their continued operation, and aid workers and camp residents become visual representations of these brands to a global audience via logos and other branded merchandise. The following section discusses the implications of this ownership-through-branding.

4 Ownership, But Not Accountability

An aid worker recounted the story of a family from one of the camps who had begun the journey to Europe but did not survive crossing the Mediterranean: "Their child drowned wearing our NGO's t-shirt," he told me. This image drastically contrasts with those circulated by NGOs in which they are "'doing good,' unencumbered, and untainted."[50] It is a sobering reminder that brand visibility does not necessarily signify accountability towards refugee beneficiaries.

The corporatisation of humanitarianism generated not only branding strategies, but also a rise in monitoring and evaluation, prompting an "emergence of a language of accountability."[51] But, as scholars have shown, NGOisation "produces upward rather than downward accountability"[52] – that is, accountability towards donors or the states that fund agencies, but rarely to the beneficiaries themselves.[53] Aid workers regularly collect "success stories" (*qiṣaṣ al-najāḥ*) – profiles of beneficiaries who have benefitted from their organisation – to include in reports to the programme's donors. In some instances, aid workers must find a positive spin to a beneficiary's story to fulfil the requested number of success stories. This was the case in the previous example of Noor, who had been transferred out of Village 5 and missed the NGO centre there. Even though Noor did not feel comfortable enough to attend the same NGO's centre in neighbouring Village 3, the NGO's communications team focused instead on her attachment to their centre in Village 5. The resulting success story emphasised to the donor the need for continued financial support to be able to aid Noor's transition to her new village. For the success story interview, aid workers brought Noor to their Village 3 centre to take her photograph; the final report featured a photo of Noor smiling in front of the NGO's logo at the centre she had no desire to attend.

50 Fisher, 1997: 442.
51 Stein, 2008: 128.
52 Jad, 2007: 625.
53 See Slim, 2002; Cunningham, 2012.

This meticulous shaping of optics reflects donor-driven prioritisation of programmatic performance and outcome over the lived experiences of programme beneficiaries. This results in a system in which refugees are spoken "for" or "about," but rarely "with."[54] For example, while Noor was quoted in her success story, her words were used to communicate the *NGO's* message to the donor. In the camps, humanitarian and philanthropic branding focuses on the emergency, rendering aid agencies visible at the expense of refugee histories.

This regime of visibility in the camps works to deflect responsibility either onto donors in the Global North, in the case of aid agencies, or onto the host country itself, in the case of Gulf donor states. By directing beneficiary messages set against humanitarian branding to external audiences, aid agencies communicate a dire need for the international community to step up and assume individual responsibility where states and transnational structures have failed. By externalising their aid efforts – and visibly branding each of these efforts – in the Jordanian host country, Gulf donor states have managed to avoid having to take in Syrian refugees or assume responsibility for Syrians already in their own countries.

5 Conclusion

Branding strategies of humanitarian organisations have increasingly mirrored corporate branding strategies in recent decades, and these strategies have extended into the two main camps for Syrian refugees in Jordan. While refugees form their own associations with the logos in their everyday spaces, as seen in the examples of Malek and Noor above, they also become extensions of these brands through branded provisions and strategic brand placement. Such visibility works to claim spatial ownership in the camp on behalf of aid agencies and donor states, but it does not indicate accountability towards camp residents. Still, this chapter does not intend to negate the important work that humanitarianism and philanthropy have done in the camps, but rather to understand the influence of this politics of visibility on spaces in the camps and those who use them.

To be sure, camp residents have also used symbols and other insignia to reclaim their space. In Za'tari, residents have painted street signs onto the sides of caravans, and artists in Azraq have painted murals. Caravan interiors are often decorated with Islamic calligraphy. Subtle signs of ongoing support for the Syrian revolution exist in small or deconstructed forms: a bracelet with the Syrian colours (red, white, black, and green), a small flag hand-painted on a child's hand at a car-

54 See Stein, 2008: 131.

nival, a graffitied message on the side of a restroom in an NGO centre reading, "*rāji'īn yā waṭan* [we're returning, oh homeland]," soon to be erased. These are signs not just of refugee agency but of their histories, and for this reason, their marking of the space is deemed political. In the same vein, how can branded toilets be considered any less political?

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