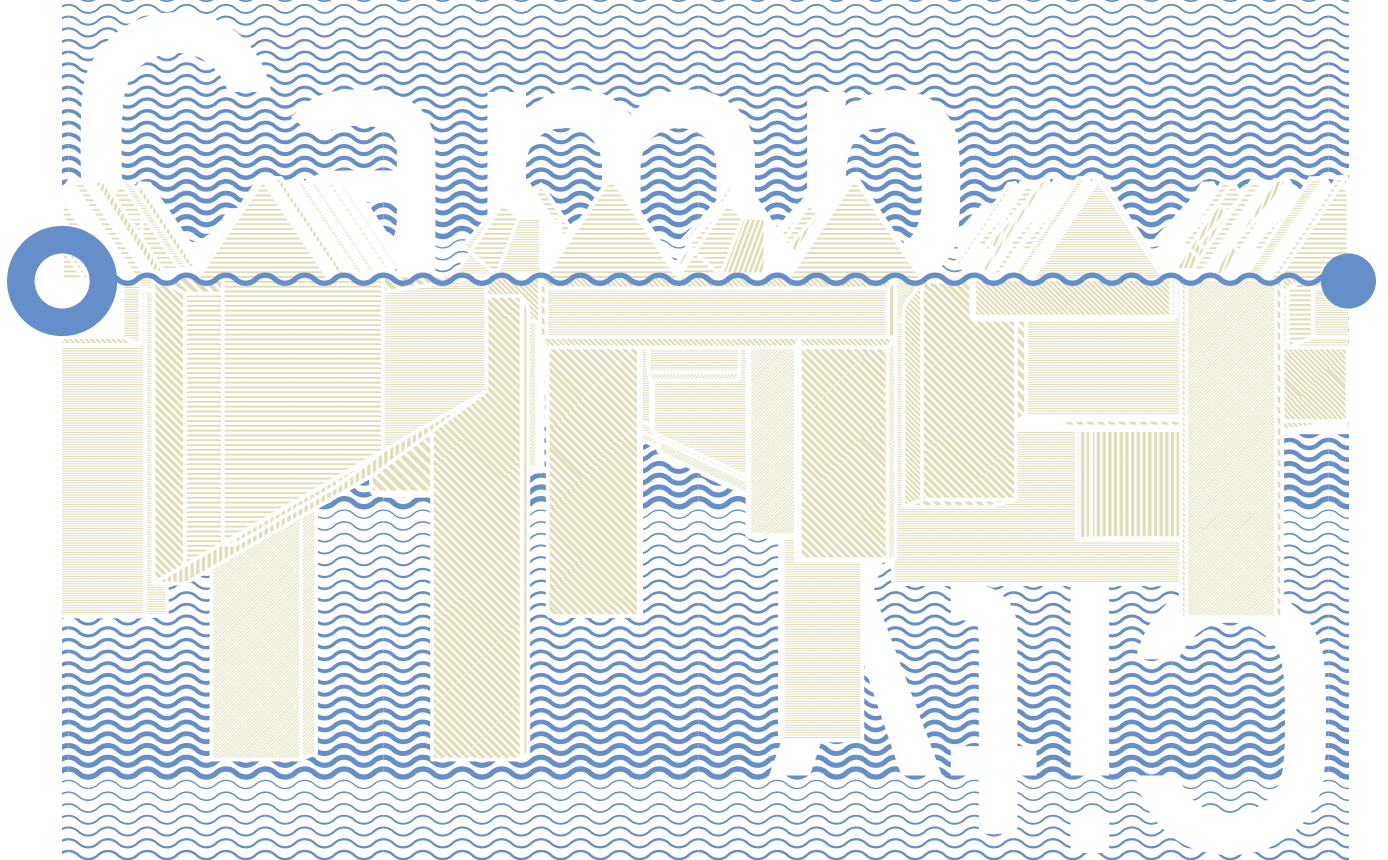


wihdaTopia



62858582

Camp .
Ad

wihdaTopia, if refugee camps are the cities of tomorrow

A manifesto

Seven lessons from

Palestinian refugee

camp Al Wihdat in

Amman, Jordan

42858582



Al Wihdat Palestinian refugee camp, Amman, Jordan

Preface

In contrast to the standard way of defining, examining and describing the spatial manifestation and social context of a refugee crisis, this research concentrates on the urban dimension of refugee camps and the interconnected relationship camp and city can develop, using the tools and vocabulary of an urbanist.

By looking at the urban aspects of Amman New Camp – locally known as Al Wihdat refugee camp – in Jordan and the spaces and structures that are created in the process of exploring and designing an interconnected relationship with the capital city. This manifests outlines the most important lessons learned from the design and research of this urban refugee settlement. By doing so Wihdatopia aims to shift the discussion used in the framework of refugee camps from one which revolves around temporality and technicalities towards one that understands these settlements as permanent and proto-urban living environments.

Bram van Ooijen

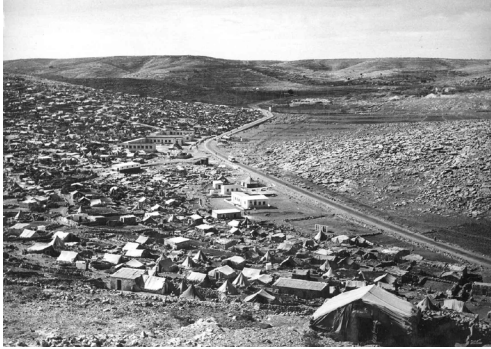
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Fig. Map Jordan



1955*



1961*



1975*



1980*



2003*



2016*



Al Wihdat's historical development



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Inclusive

examples

Colofon

Title: Wihdatopia, if refugeecamps are the cities of
 tomorrow
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Abstract

Al-Wihdat refugee camp in Amman,
A Wihdattopia to get an exception to a standard

Conflict and persecution caused global forced displacement to escalate. Recently statistics reached the highest level ever recorded in history. Today 65.3 million people, or one person in 113, were displaced from their homes. When it comes to refugee shelter there is an important misconception. The traditional image of refugees living in sprawling tents no longer tells the true story of refugee movements in the 21 century. Most refugees now make their ways to cities as refugee camps present extremely poor living and security conditions. Compared to camps, cities present obvious opportunities to build a better future, and that's why millions of refugees now live in and migrate towards urban settings.

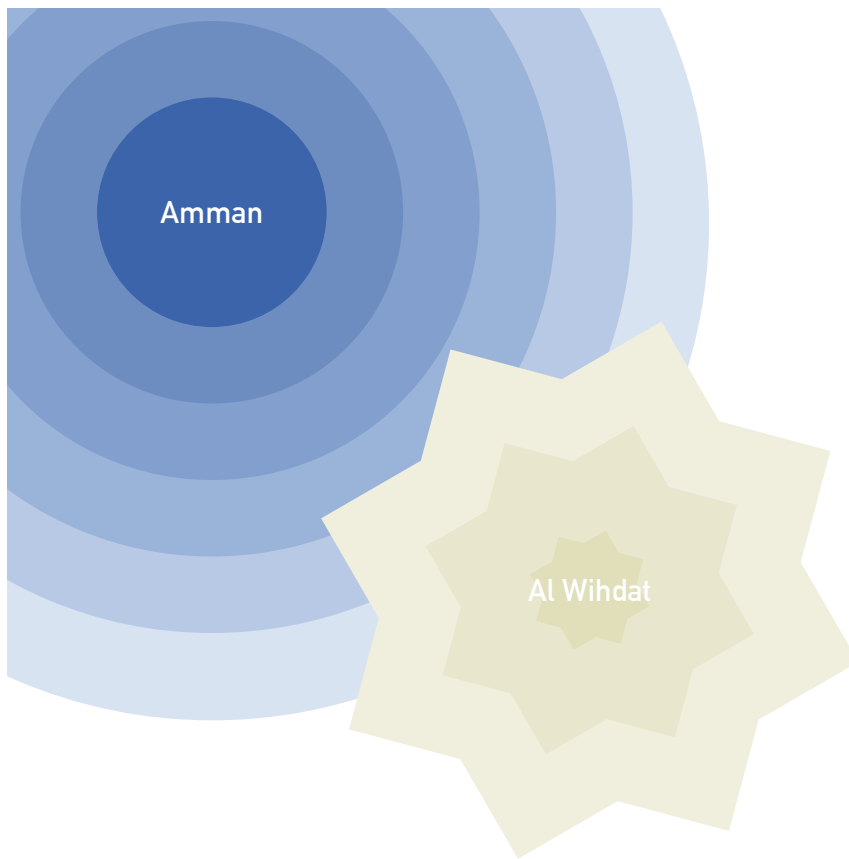
While Europe closes its borders a new phenomenon in other unstable parts of the world is on the rise called refuge cities. Cities that due to regional conflict and crisis grow at unprecedented rates. Urbanized area's that because of forced migration sometimes - in extreme circumstances - double in population numbers annually. Causing humanitarian problems and huge spatial challenges within the boundaries of existing living environments. Wihdattopia wants to raise a voice for this invisible phenomenon.

Drawing on the influential writing of Arendt, Foucault, and Agamben, much of the literature on refugees and refugee camps have generally emphasized the liminality and extraordinariness of the space of the camp. Camps have often been juxtaposed to the city. Whereas the latter has come to represent normality, the camp has been portrayed as the site of hardened national identities and political ideologies or, conversely, as a place of confinement for speechless victims. This approach might result in overlooking

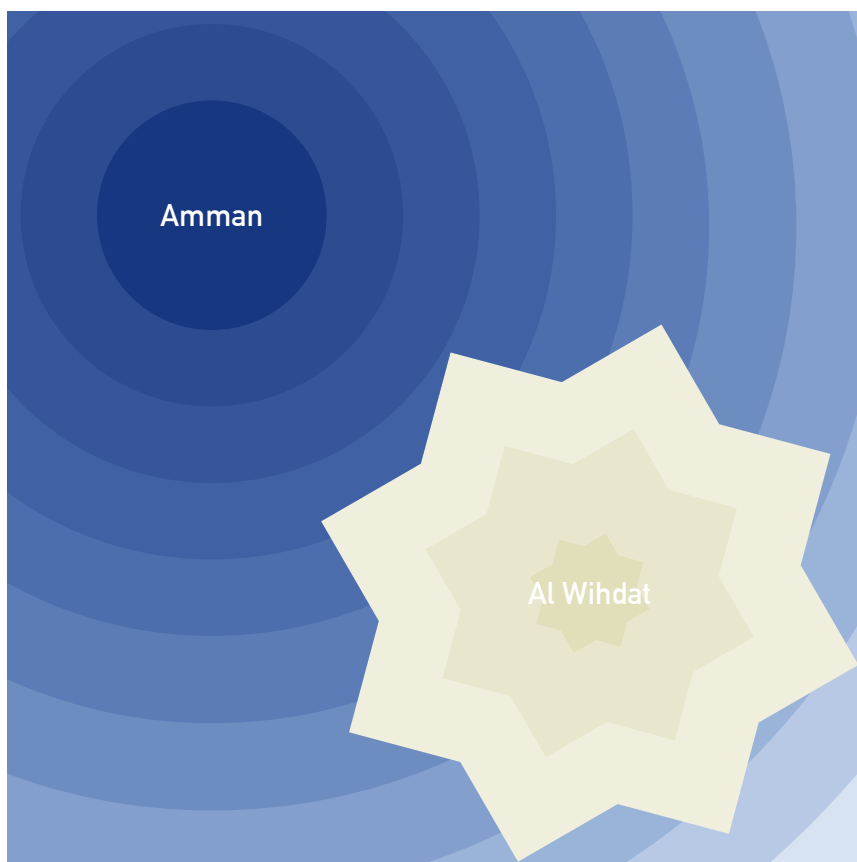
the intricate social relations that refugees can develop with the city, and maintain unchanged biased representations of them. If we want to understand the complexity of refugee camps, we should refrain from contrasting the city to the camp. More than that, we should move beyond the discussion of whether refugee camps are best defined in terms of closeness and openness, and examine how these dimensions are and can be ultimately interconnected.

A good place to explore this ambiguous relationship is al-Wihdat: a refugee camp fully integrated into the urban fabric of Amman, still administered as a temporary space almost sixty years after its establishment, and inhabited by refugees who enjoy full Jordanian citizenship.

Al-Wihdat camp can be seen as a mirror to the hosting state where some aspects of it confirm through its similarity but also unsettle through its rejection of the norms outside the settlement. Which lessons can be learned from this heterotopian space? This research investigates the camps possibility of becoming the norm from a state of exception. This is done by examining its historical development, and designing the interconnected relationship camps and cities can develop. By doing so it gives an example of how refugee camps ultimately can become cities. Reflecting on this practice, the important lessons and recommendations are bundled in this manifest: Wihdatopia, if refugee camps are the cities of tomorrow.



1990



2017

62858582



Public



Private

Content

Lessons learned:

The refugee crisis of the 21st century is a urban issue;	17
Refugee camps and cities should be interconnected;	23
Refugee camps should be embedded in strategies for urban growth and development;	27
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Urban



Urban

The refugee crisis of the
21st century is a urban
issue*

The refugee crisis of the 21st century is a urban issue

Today 60% of all displaced people worldwide live in urbanized areas. According to United Nations predictions, the number of urban refugees will increase in the future. Because urban dwellers of conflict are by nature urban refugees.

Compared to camps, cities present obvious opportunities to build a better future, and that's why millions of refugees now live in and migrate towards urban settings. The consequences of this movement are in some regions already translated into the urban planning environment.

While Europe closes its borders a new phenomenon in unstable parts of the world is on the rise called refuge cities. Cities that due to regional conflict and crisis grow at unprecedented rates. Urbanized area's that because of forced migration sometimes - in extreme circumstances - double in population numbers annually. This forced urbanization movement puts pressure and tension on existing relations and causes huge spatial and humanitarian challenges within the boundaries of existing living environments.

We need to devote far more attention to these places, for they are not just the sites of potential conflict and violence but also the neighborhoods where the transition from poverty occurs where the next middle class is forged, where the next generation's dreams, movements, and governments are created. At a time when the effectiveness and basis purpose of foreign aid have become matters of deep and well-deserved skepticism, I believe that these transitional urban spaces offer a solution.

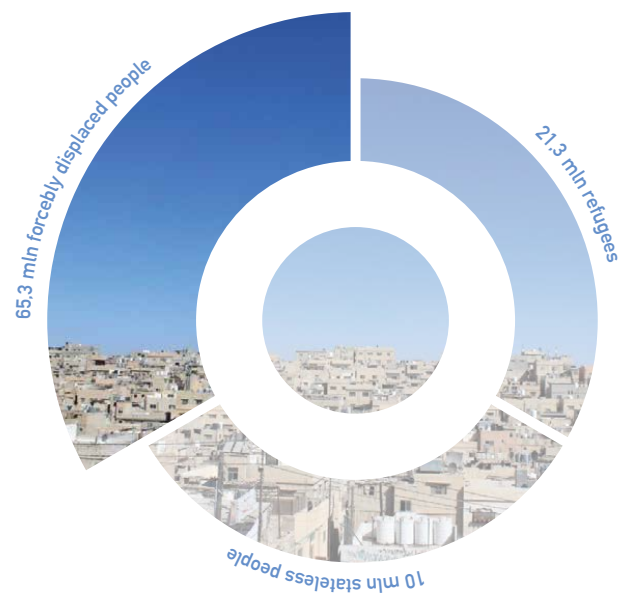


Fig. Refugee statistics

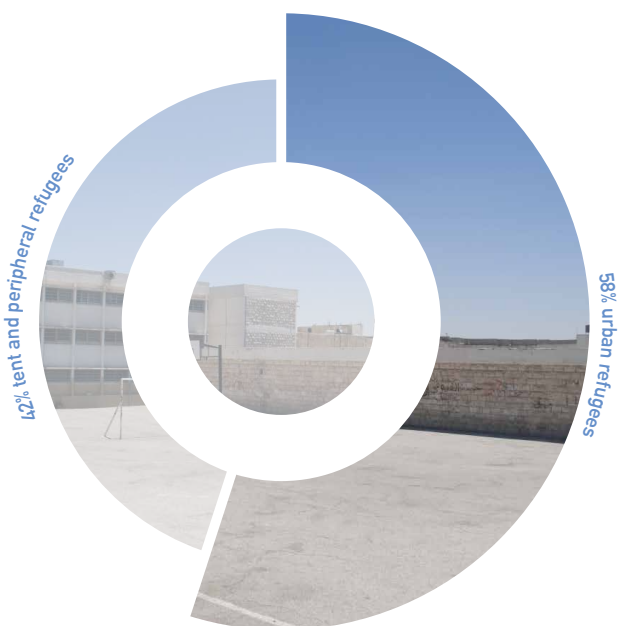
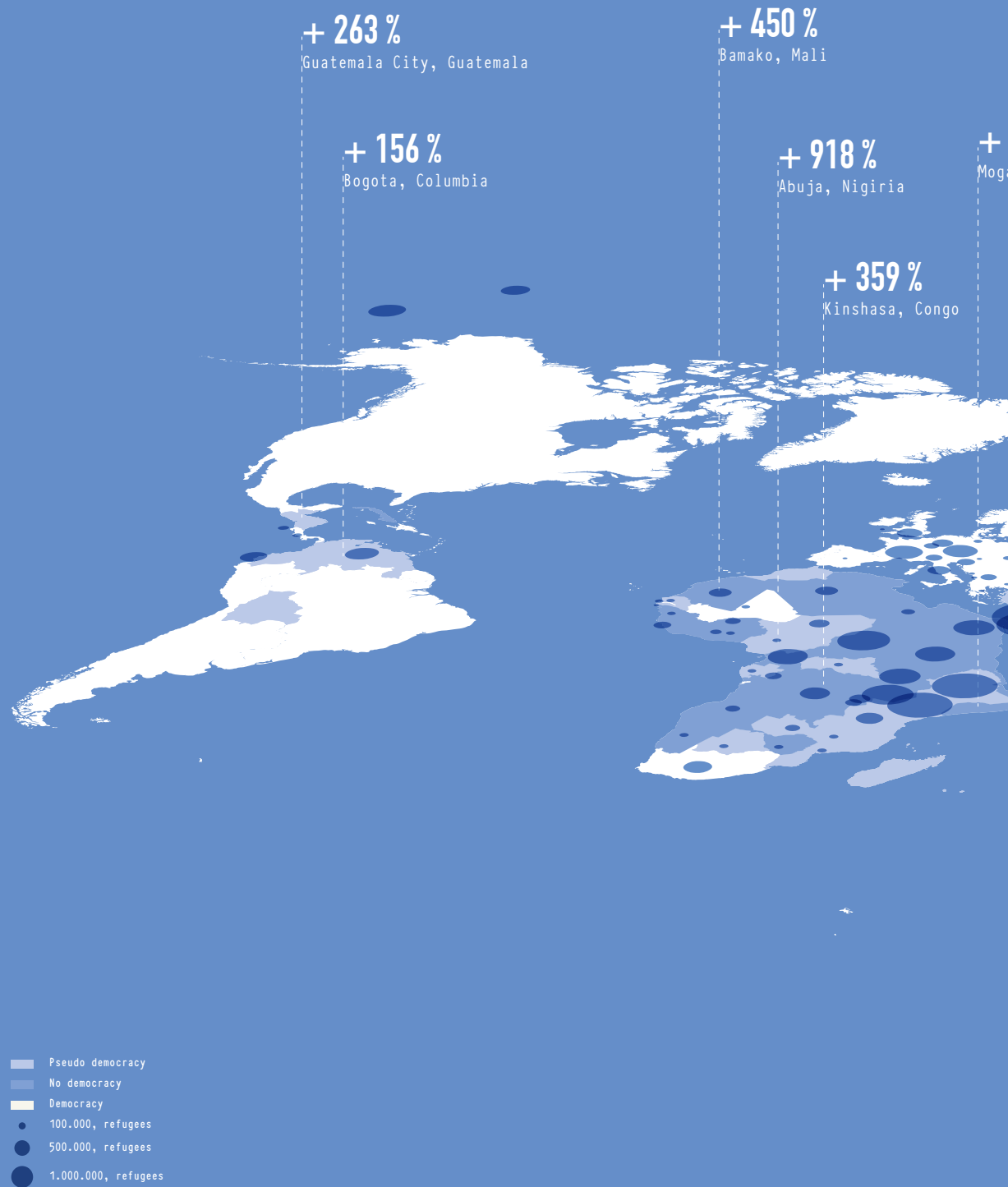


Fig. Urban vs. rural refugees

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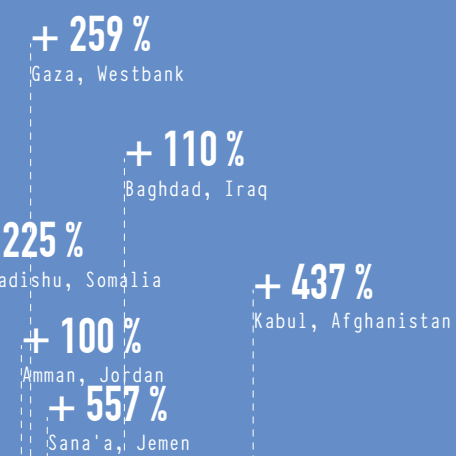


Fig. Division of refugees in the world

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Connected.

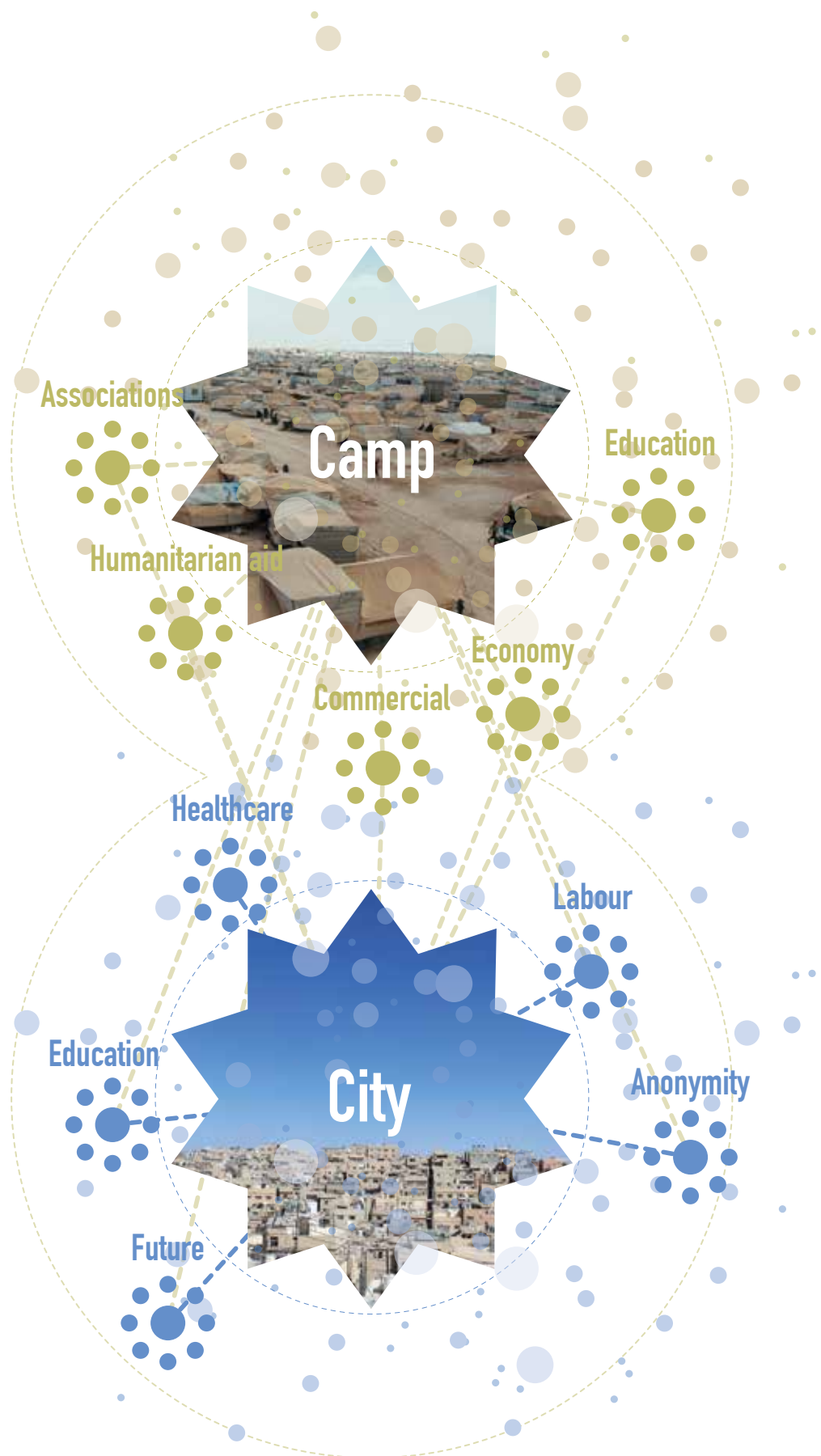
papers!

Refugee camps and
cities should be
interconnected*

Refugee camps and cities should be interconnected

The effects of conflict are in time translated into the urban planning environment. Into borders, walls, and lines of separation and disconnection. There are two main spatial manifestations regarding the consequences of geopolitical conflicts. On one hand the development of privatized land - read cities - where elite gated communities and luxury resorts are fenced off and closed to the public realm. On the other hand, there is the spatial outcome of refugee camps. Temporary and isolated settlements emerge across the region of conflict, built to receive displaced people. Humanitarian spaces in which lives are saved, or spaces of control where refugees can be administered and supervised by other institutions.

By disconnecting both spaces from each other we stimulate a divided and segregated society. The isolation of refugee camps is, in fact, a reflection of post-civil urbanism, representing the disintegration of the state. In attempts of the West to help displaced people through secluded foreign aid development, and at the same time closes its borders to refugees, we encourage this disintegration, creating a timeless and infinite dependency. Instead of disconnecting we should promote a reintegrating environment and interconnected relationship where camp and city co-exist in a symbiotic situation beneficial to both. With a prospect of inclusiveness, self-reliance and full independence as a final goal.



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Permanent

Temporally

Refugee camps should
be embedded in
strategies for urban
growth and
development*

Refugee camps should be embedded in strategies for urban growth and development

Forcibly displaced people migrate in large numbers towards the city and cluster in poor neighborhoods. With this movement, the refugee crisis shifts from rural towards urban, so too its associated problems. Whether we like it or not, existing living environments are the scene of the refugee crisis of the 21st century. Because refugees prefer the open and connected living conditions of urbanized areas instead of remote camps of confinement.

As a matter of fact, there are already cities that co-exist out of more refugees that were forcibly displaced than native inhabitants. If this is the case, should we not anticipate on this new phenomenon? Why don't we start building open refugee camps near or within the boundaries of these urbanized areas to host these people? Why don't we build camps that are connected to these existing urban living environments? If we build refugee camps near cities - and they eventually can become one - why are they not part of future urban growth strategies and development scenarios? In case refugee camps are built near or in urbanized areas and can ultimately become the norm [fully part of the city] and thus have a permanent status - instead of temporary. Refugee camps become by definition location specific. Therefore the camp layout and design should be embedded in local urban planning environment and conditions.

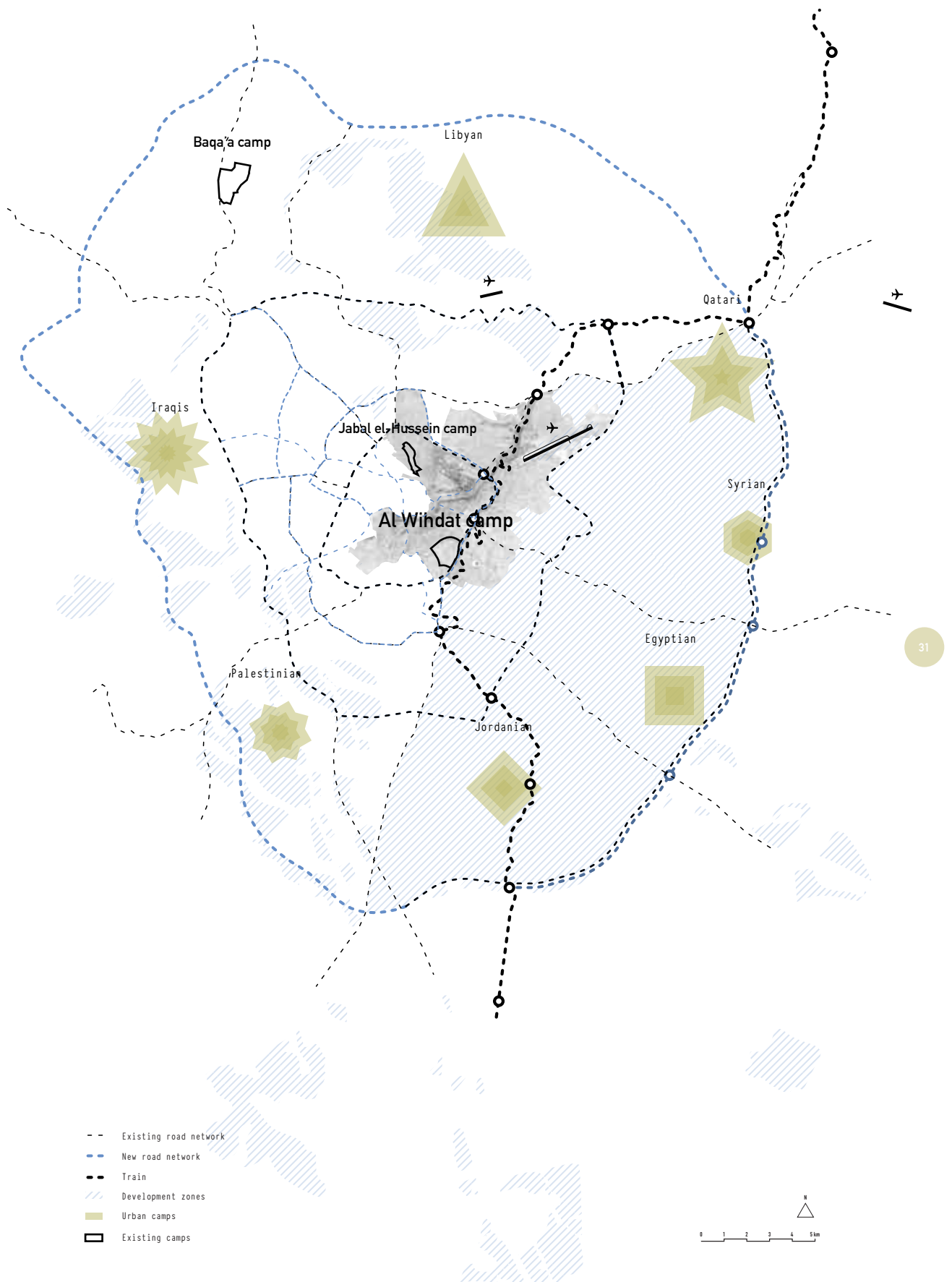


Fig. Amman, refugee camps as new satellite towns

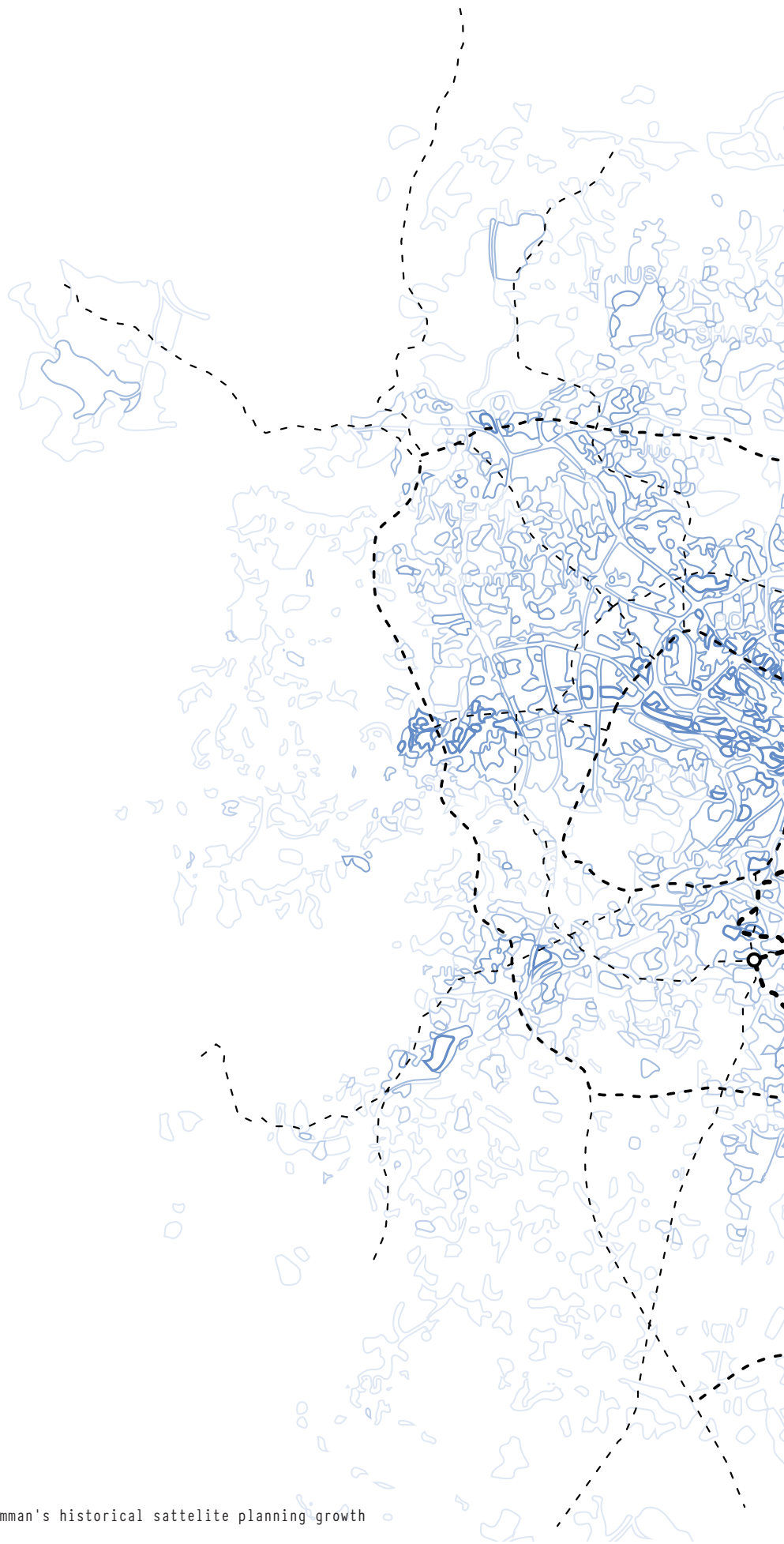
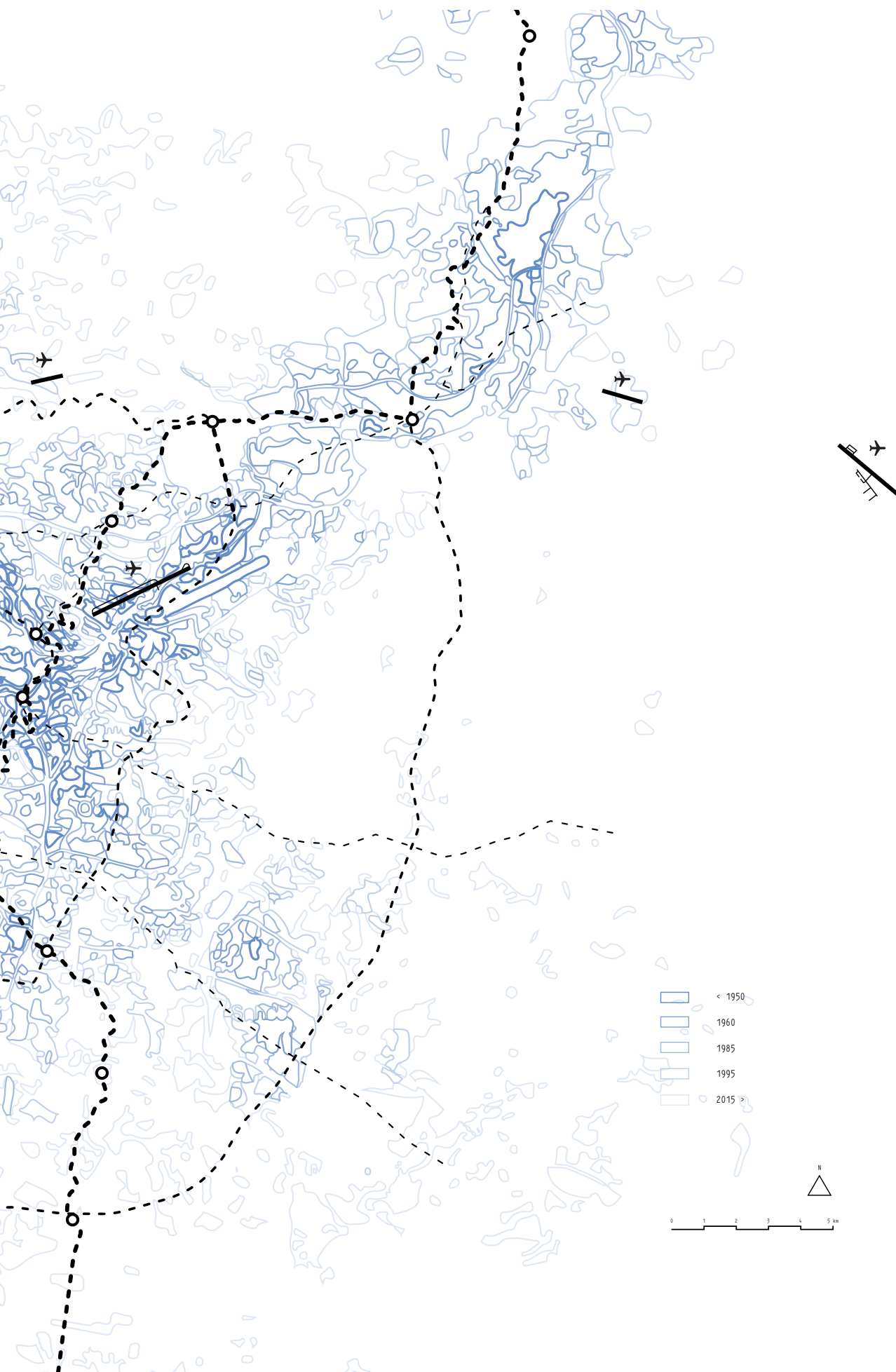


Fig. Amman's historical satellite planning growth



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The norm

voidox

Refugee camps should
have the opportunity
and development
perspective to
ultimately become city*

Refugee camps should have the opportunity and development perspective to ultimately become city

Time plays an important role in relation to refugee camps. The time aspect becomes of great importance as a starting point, the camp can be traced back historically and yet there is no foreseen endpoint. Instead, these spaces accumulate the passing of time, never knowing if or when the time will come the camp is destroyed, terminated, or reincarnated. Life in a refugee camp revolves around the temporality that refugees maintain in their hope to return to the spaces from which they have come. Yet although temporary, once tents have been set up it results in the permanence of temporality. In time the camps isolated space enters into an intersection of timelessness and placelessness: waiting. The lives of camp residents are lives of waiting. The aspect of waiting, waiting for a job, waiting for a meal, waiting to use the toilet, waiting for water, waiting for medical services, waiting. And yet with every passing day, the spaces become more permanent, so too does the hope that the camp will be disbanded and that there will be a return home. As time passes, physical improvements and upgrades to provide humanitarian aid and better living conditions confirm its permanent status. Many generations of refugees while maintaining the temporality of their residency have seen the growing permanence of the physical space through the years. The very concept of upgrading is acknowledging the permanence of something that is not permanent. In this way, the initial purpose of the camps space has changed from one of the temporary services to permanent institutions.

As the clock keeps ticking, the process of upgrading and institutionalizing has three possible outcomes. The first and most common one is true an ad-hoc construction of improvements maintain the subjective environment of timelessness. By doing so camp refugee lives are forever trapped in space and time. Secondly, demolish the camps settlement to build state-sponsored housing.

This type of upgrading not only transforms the function of the settlement but physically destroys one heterotopia to build a new one. This creates a space of palimpsest, one heterotopia erased and another designed on its spatial and non-spatial memory. The last and preferred option [in my personal belief] is to consolidate and formalize these spaces. If viewed from the lives of there inhabitants. The way they live and dwell, on how they work, move around, and enjoy themselves, and look at the spaces and structures that are created in the process these settlements are proto-cities in itself and therefore should have the perspective to ultimately become part of the urban project.

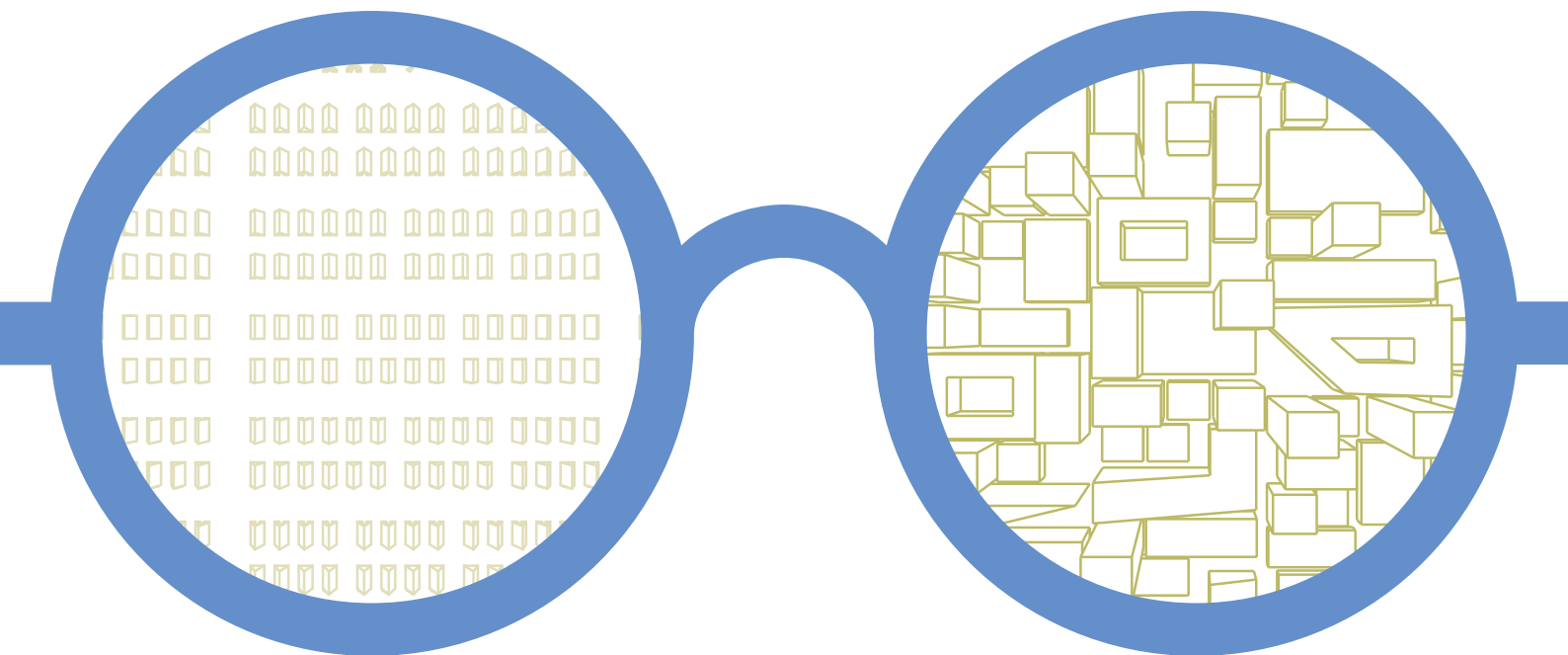


Fig. perspective from camp towards city

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Heterotopia

pidon

The transition of a
refugee camp towards
city consists out of
three stages of
development*

The transition of a refugee camp towards city consists out of three stages of development

In the current discourse and debate about the spatial manifestation of a refugee crisis, the discussion juxtaposes the camp opposite the utopia. The refugee camp as an imagined community with an ideal living environment. A perfect society that suddenly co-exists next to or [normal] habitat. These places, however, do not just fall from the sky. If refugee camps can become ideal living environments – for so far possible, this research prefers the standard of the norm as an alternative – there is a special purpose vehicle. In the camp's developments cycle of becoming the norm, there is an important reflective role for the heterotopian space, mirroring both the state of exception and the norming stage of development. In contrast to utopias that are unreal spaces, heterotopia's are real and co-exist next to living environments that we refer to as the norm.

State of exception

Political conflict causes immediate massive displacement, raging violence, and dire food shortages. The way in which humanitarian aid responds to these emergency and crisis situations is based on the same speed an need they occur. In the first stage of development, there is only a short window of opportunity to catch and steer the large waves of refugees and channel the humanitarian emergency response. As a result a marked off space is set up with short-term perspective assistance, providing a temporary solution. A space in which the ordinary law – for a fixed moment in time – does not apply. The camp thereby defined not as an extension of the law, instead: as a space that is extraterritorial to the law. A space where the law is suspended. In other words, the situation in which the division between private and public is provisionally suspended. However, this approach is only temporary as long-term development goals are envisioned.

Heterotopian

In the second stage of development [after refugees have settled down] the camp enters a Heterotopian stadium. Heterotopia means literally other places. Mirrors are often used as a metaphor for Heterotopias due to its ability to reflect and disrupt. When considered in such way the camp can be seen as a mirror to the hosting state where some aspects of it confirm through its similarity but also unsettle through its rejection of the norms outside the settlement. Through its rejection of the norms, refugee camps offer exceptional conditions. Conditions that have a specific function in relation to the hosting city, a function that can be related to the characteristics of an arrival city neighborhood. The heterotopian space presupposes a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. This ambiguous environment leads to unusual patterns and mechanisms of social-economic and spatial-programmatic characteristics.

As space develops and evolves, the values associated with specific assumptions also adapt and transform. A marginalized and institutionalized space starts to develop into a proto-urban living environment. The adaptations and evolutions of this development are controlled or stimulated by urban planned rules and interventions.

The Norm

In the last stage of development, the settlement becomes the norm. Its rejective norms are lifted by formalizing institutions and exclude humanitarian aid organizations. Local authorities take over responsibilities for governance and administration, the camp is now freed from its refugee stigma. By disconnecting the camp from humanitarian relief and transferring responsibility to local authorities the final step in building an interconnected relationship with the city is created. In addition, residents have entitled ownership over the lands they have occupied. By

implementing a land tenure policy refugees finally become officially registered residents of the settlement.

Years of exclusion have created distinctive urban conditions. Patterns of urbanization that are - admittedly - in a bad shape but have true its isolation, urban characteristics and values that are unique and unparalleled. By becoming the norm the settlement creates, in fact, a new norm that is so distinctive to common living standards that we can speak of a new urban prototype. To preserve and unlock the potential of this extraordinary environment the implementation of an inclusive masterplan is essential.

The newly created norm mirrors not only the state of exception and heterotopian stage of development, it juxtaposes also the new opposite the existing norm. An living environment that suffers from a lack of urban cohesion, human scale, and an undefined cultural identity. The representation of the new norm of living could offer an answer to the urban quest for nationhood and identity. The new urban prototype can generate a new more human settlement and urban system. It might also demonstrate that the new norm approach is also a smart business investment, offering long-term profits and documenting a new set of iconic images of greater relevance and substance.

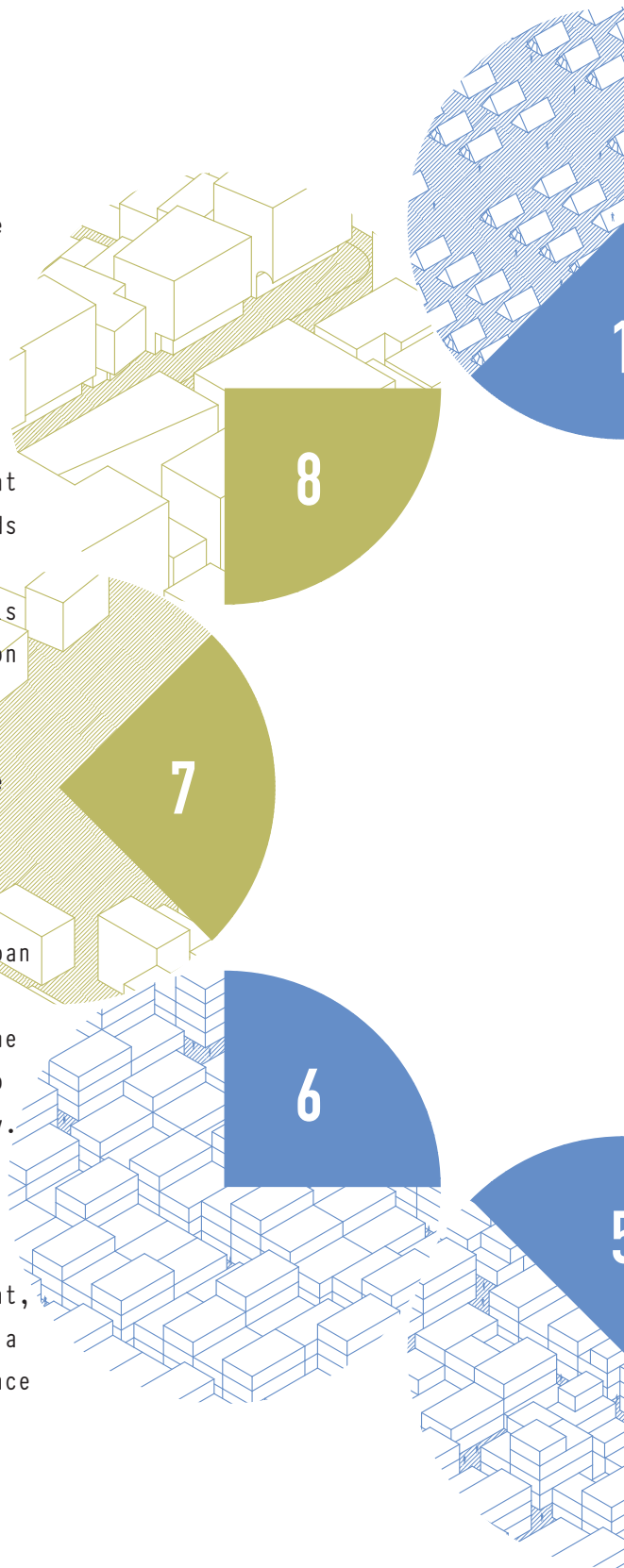
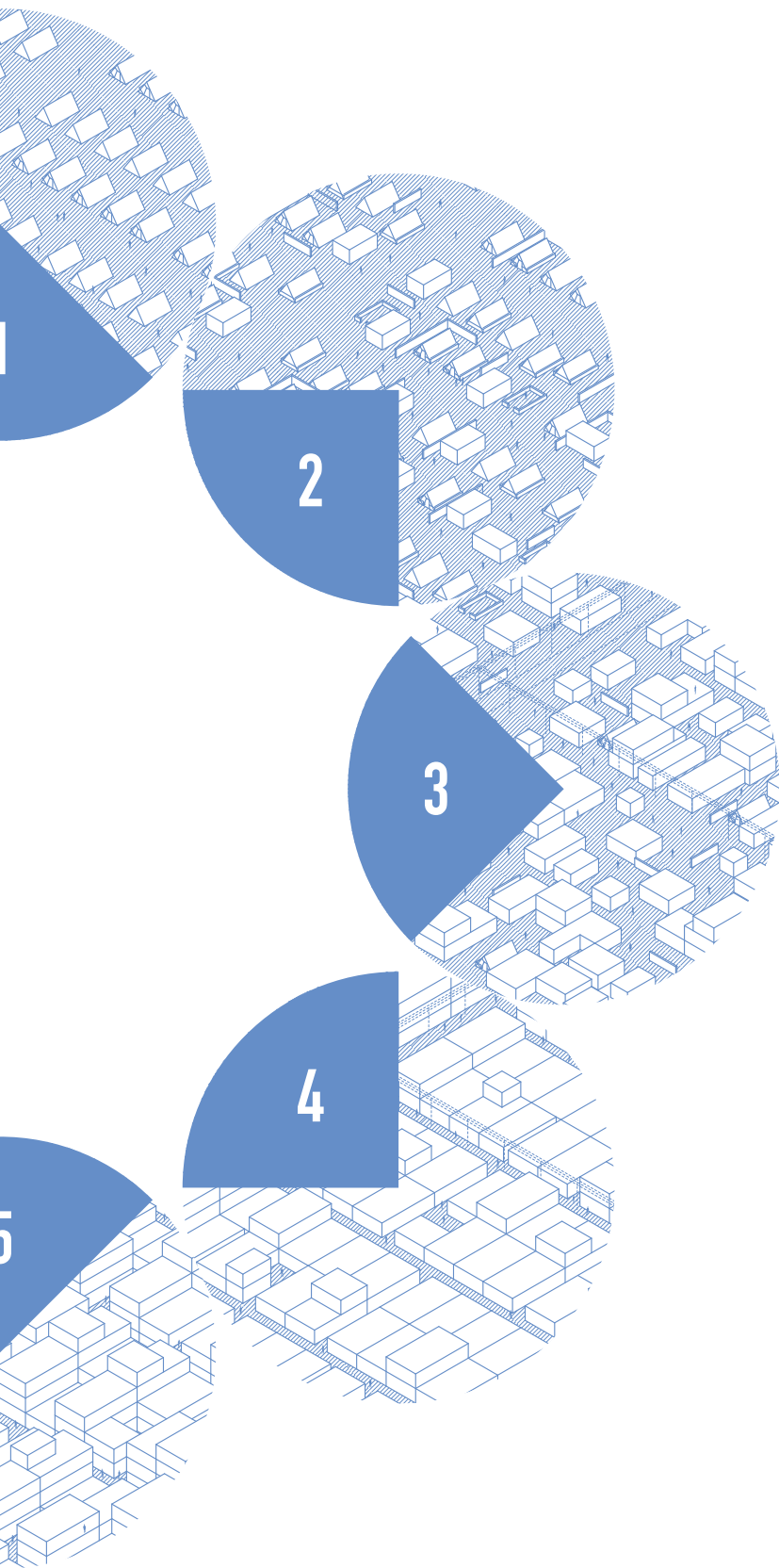
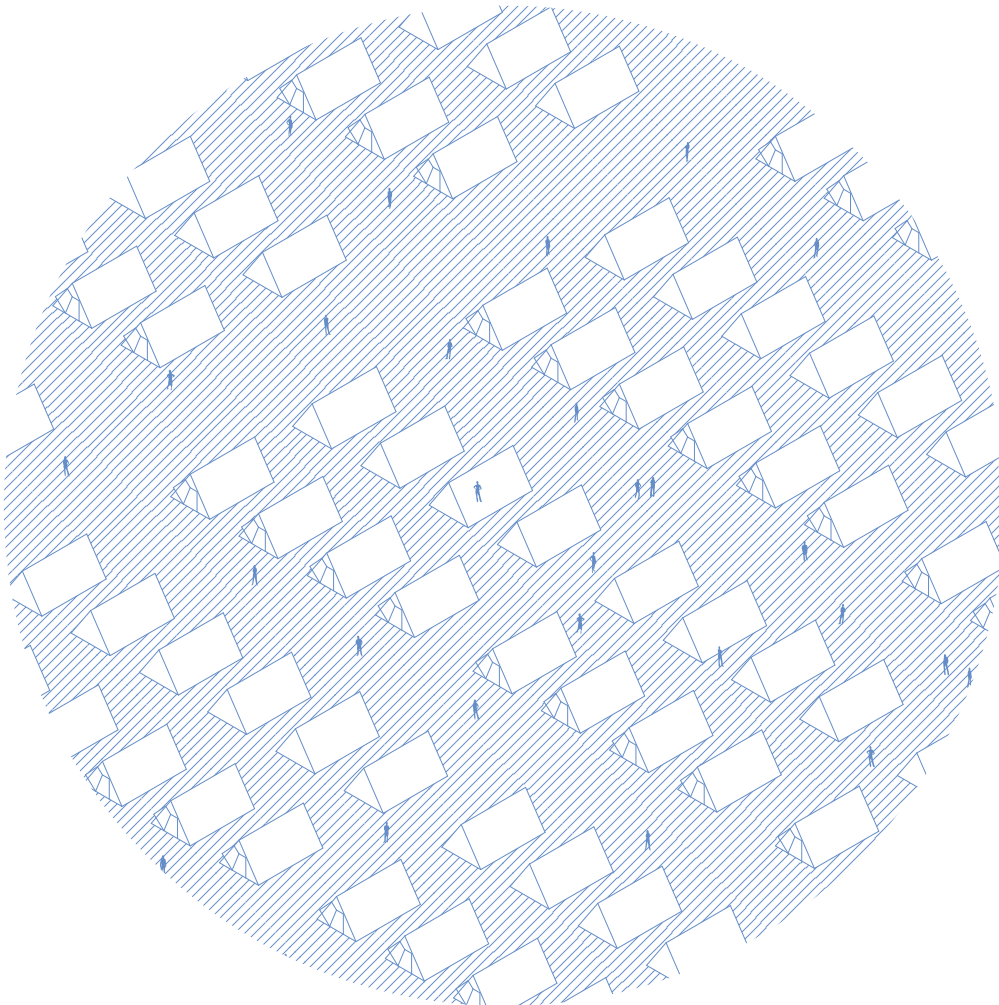


Fig. Diagram development cyclus Al Wihdat camp towards city



State of exception

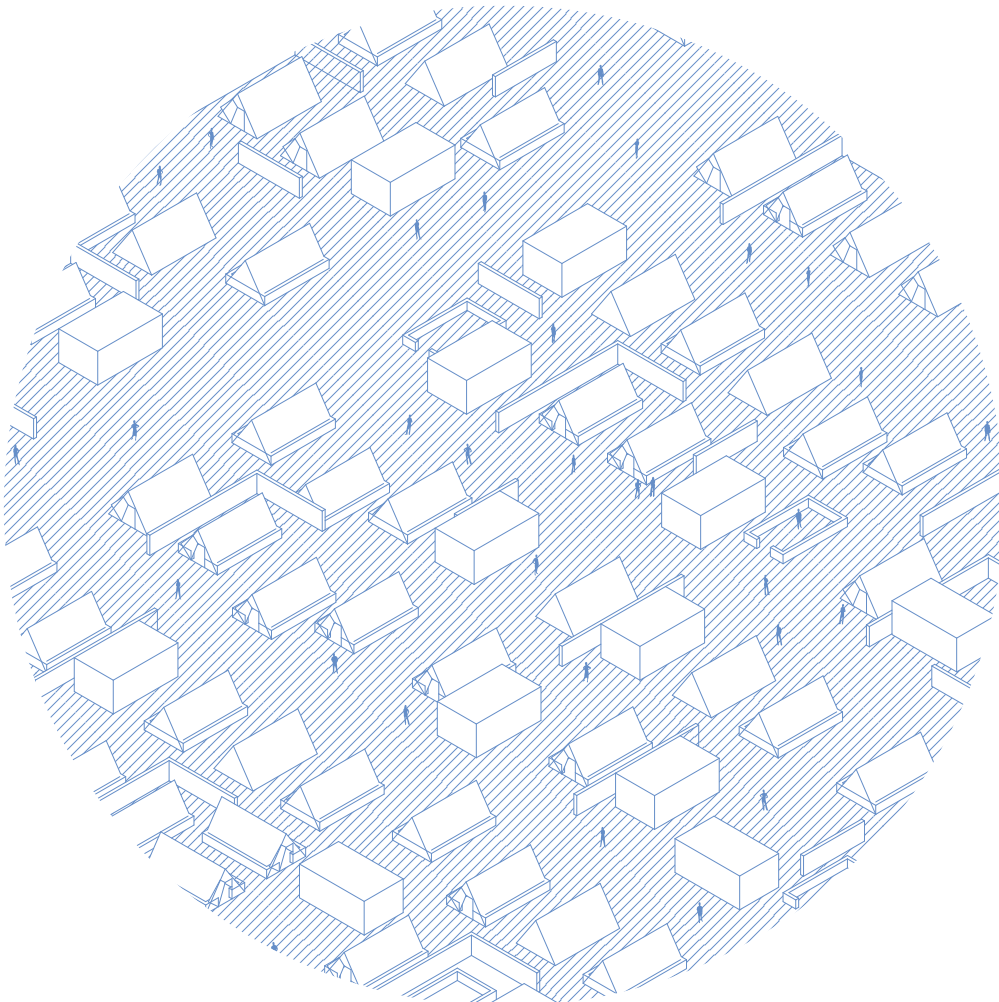


1. Birth of Al Wihdat refugee camp

The resettlement of scattered groups of refugees to well-organized camps makes it possible to improve the channelling of humanitarian relief and trim operational costs. In order to facilitate the transportation of goods and services, the camps need to

be established near mayor cities with rapid access to main roads, public transport, education, healthcare and labour markets.

Heterotopia



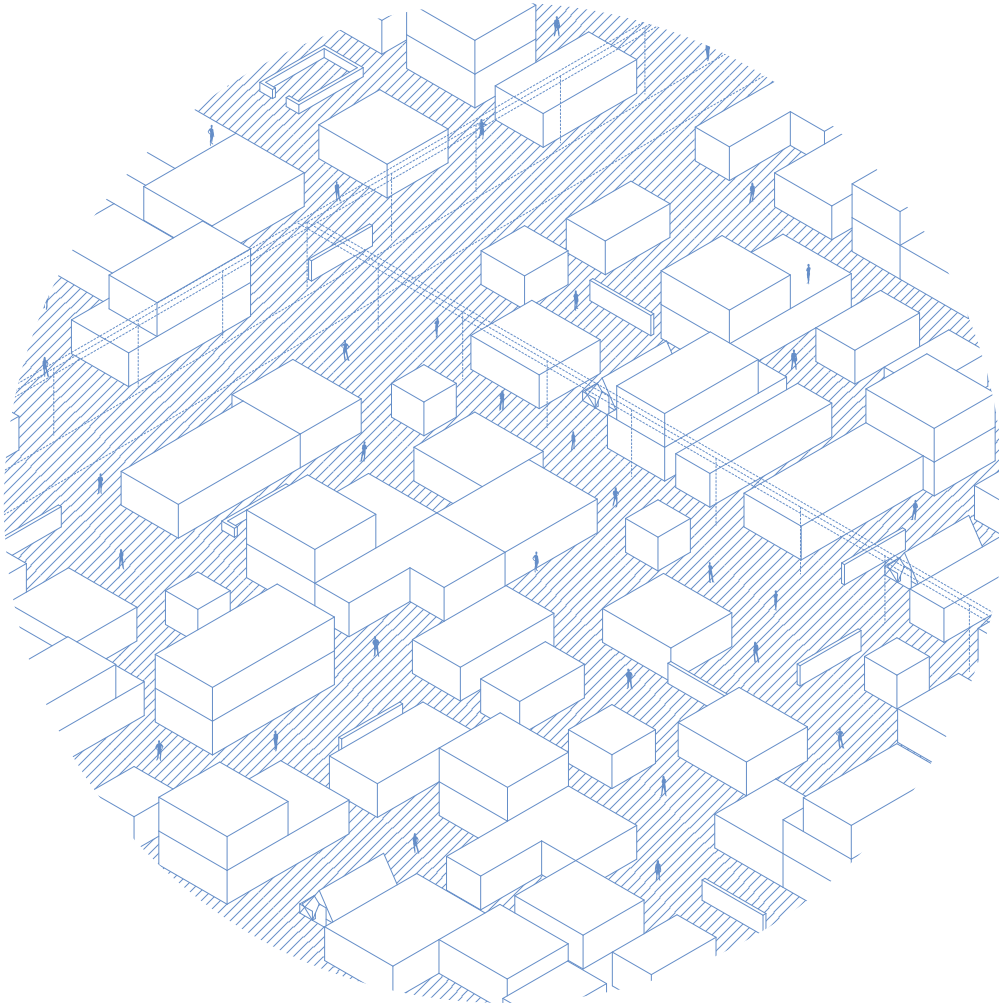
45

2. First camp upgrade

It took host authorities and UNRWA countless numbers of persuasion campaigns, to replace tents with more durable shelters made of more permanent materials such as mud, concrete, stone, iron, zinc and asbestos.

Refugees are in principle allowed to construct additional rooms beside the original core shelter in order to accommodate new family members, any vertical extension of the shelters was prohibited.

Heterotopia

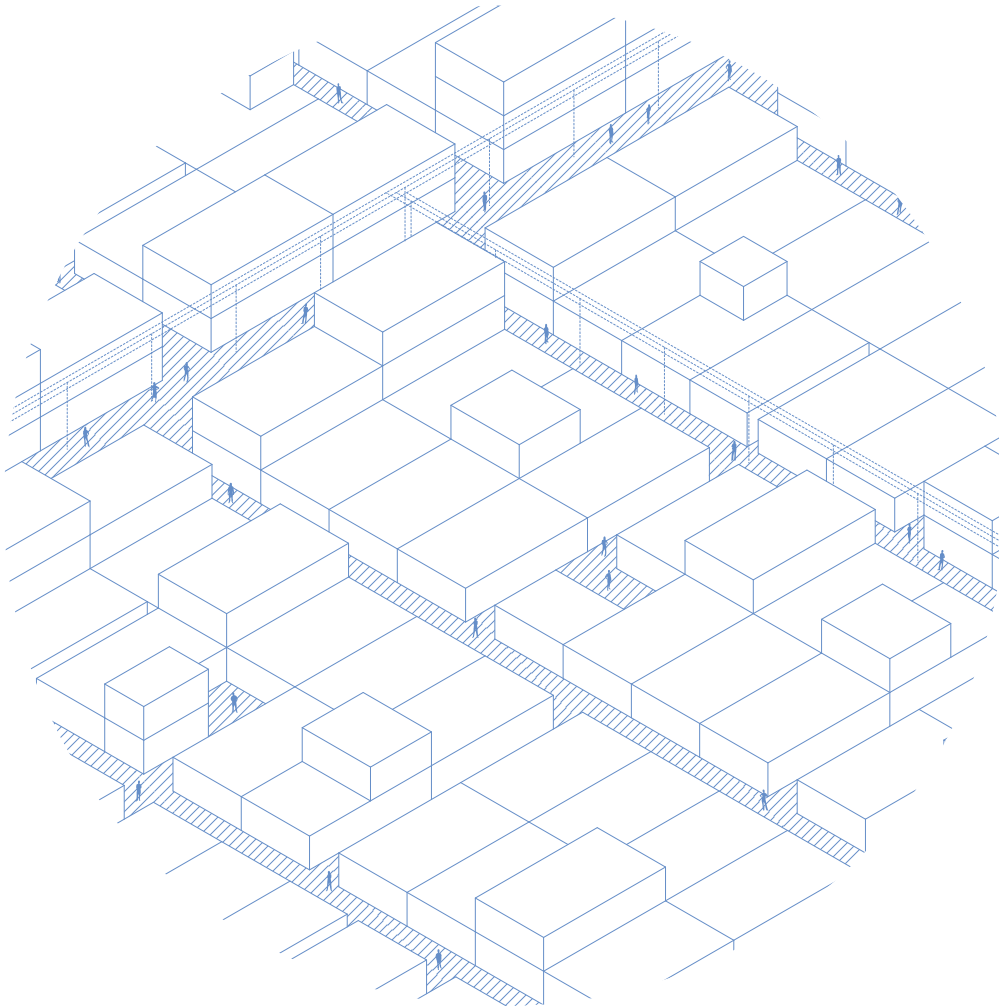


3. Utility infrastructure

In the first decade of their existence, camp shelters were not connected to municipal services. In 1975 local authorities took over maintenance and the rehabilitation of the camps housing and physical infrastructure. Electricity,

telephone, road networks and waste-water lines were installed. The informal expansion of shelters were restricted and controlled.

Heterotopia



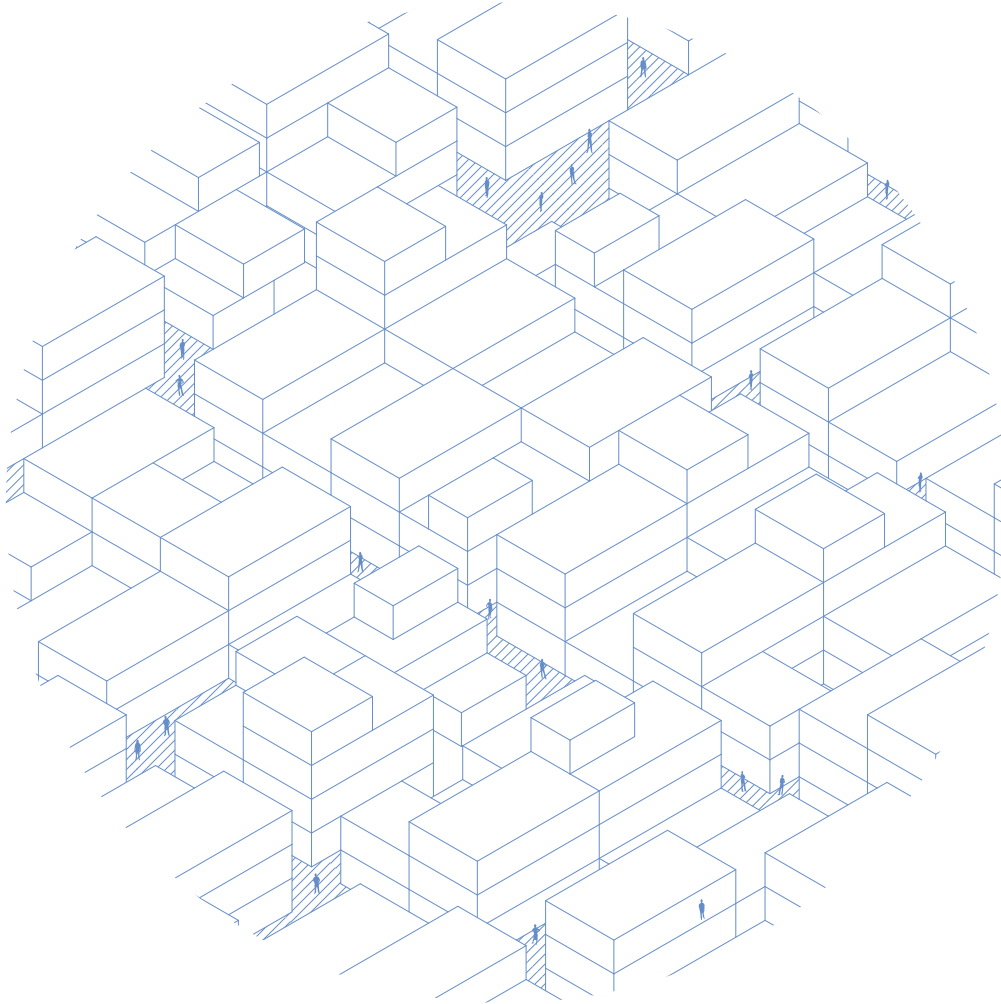
47

4. Construction boom

Although camp inhabitants were not entitled to ownership - or rental - rights to the plot of land a housing reconstruction boom began in the early 1980s due to the introduction of new regulations for permanent cement roof. As horizontal space was

soon exhausted, refugees started to expand their shelters vertically.

Heterotopia

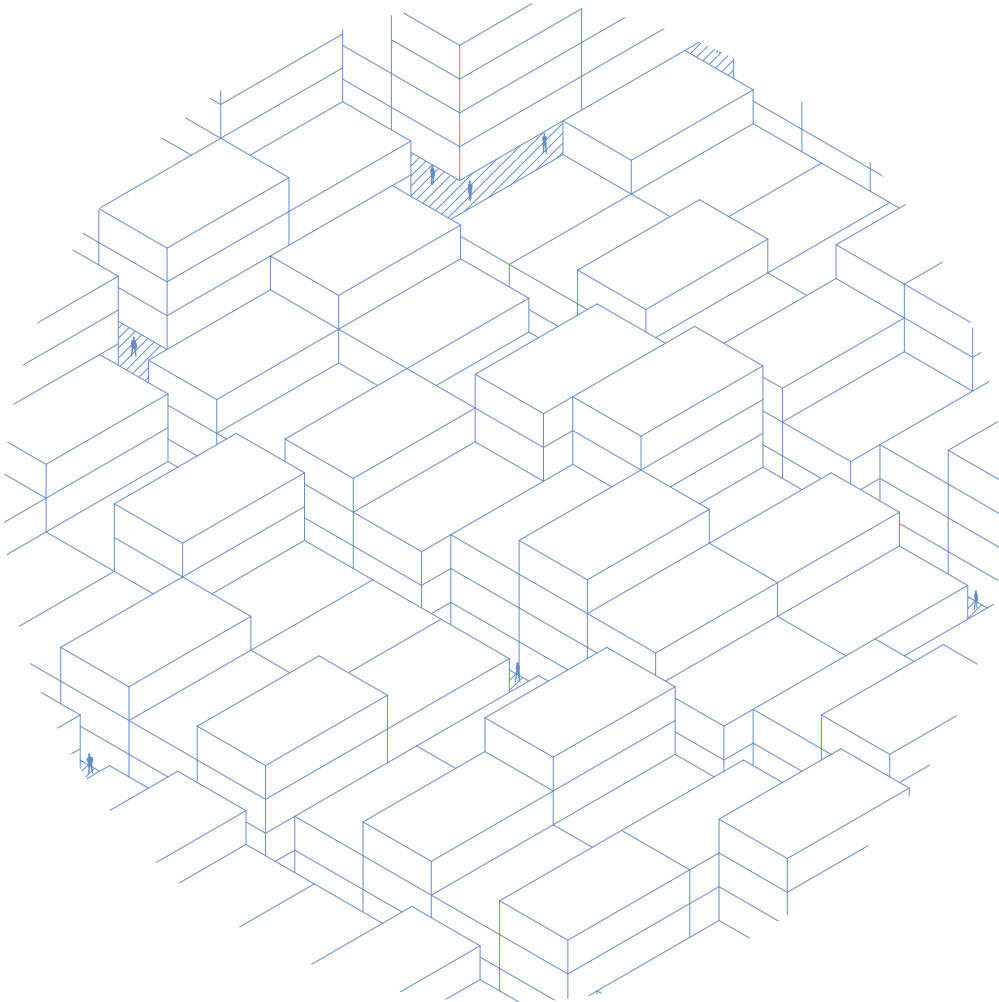


5. New influx of residents

A second wave of refugees settled in Al Wihdat because of cheap real estate prices as well as the intensive urbanization to the south of Amman. They caused a boom in the commerce and construction sector and attracted numerous of small businesses.

Besides grocers and jewelers, new commercial ventures comprising banks, electronics shops, taxi agencies, fast food outlets and pharmacies have opened in the past two decades, turning the camp into a commercial hub.

Heterotopia

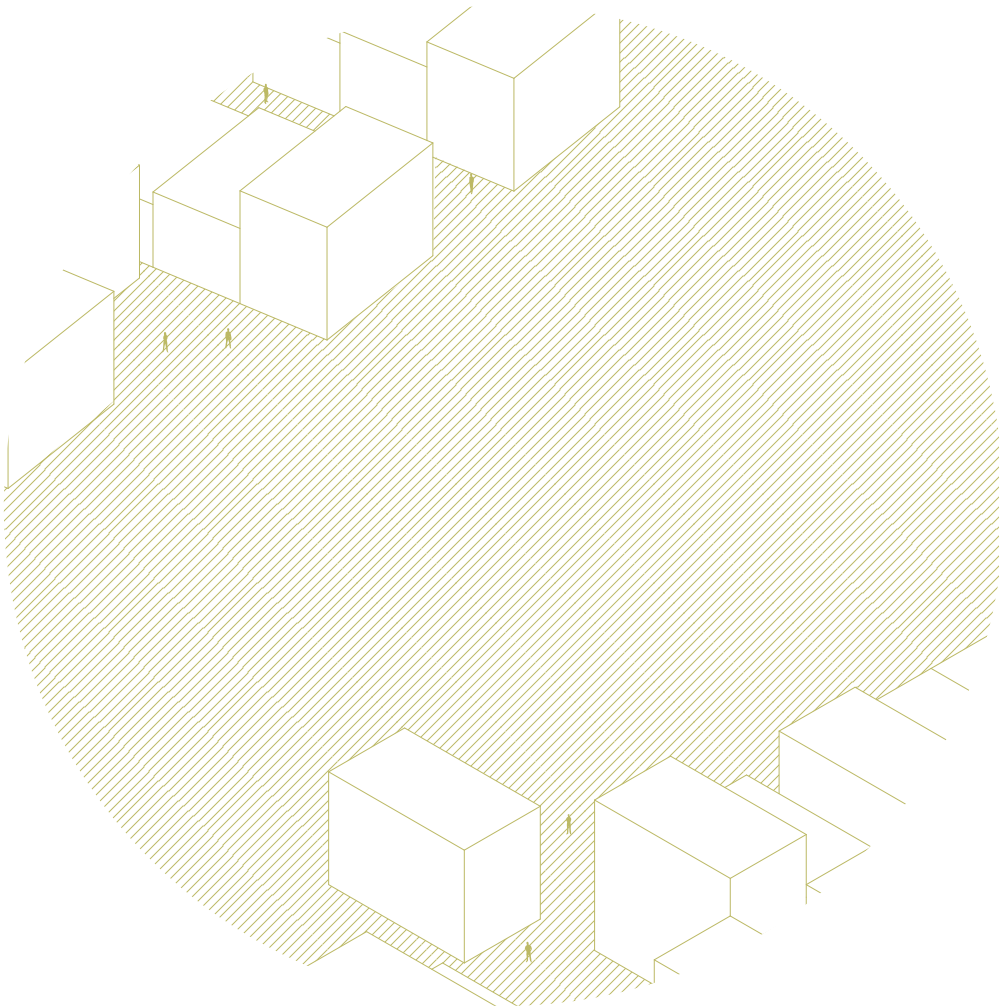


6. A neighborhood in decay

Years of exclusion from local development plans has entailed a lack of decent urban planning and living conditions. Unguided adaptation to the expansion of households has resulted in the narrowing of pathways, the virtual absence of recreational

areas and unsatisfactory environmental conditions in terms of ventilation, sunlight, humidity, temperature, storage, and privacy.

The norm



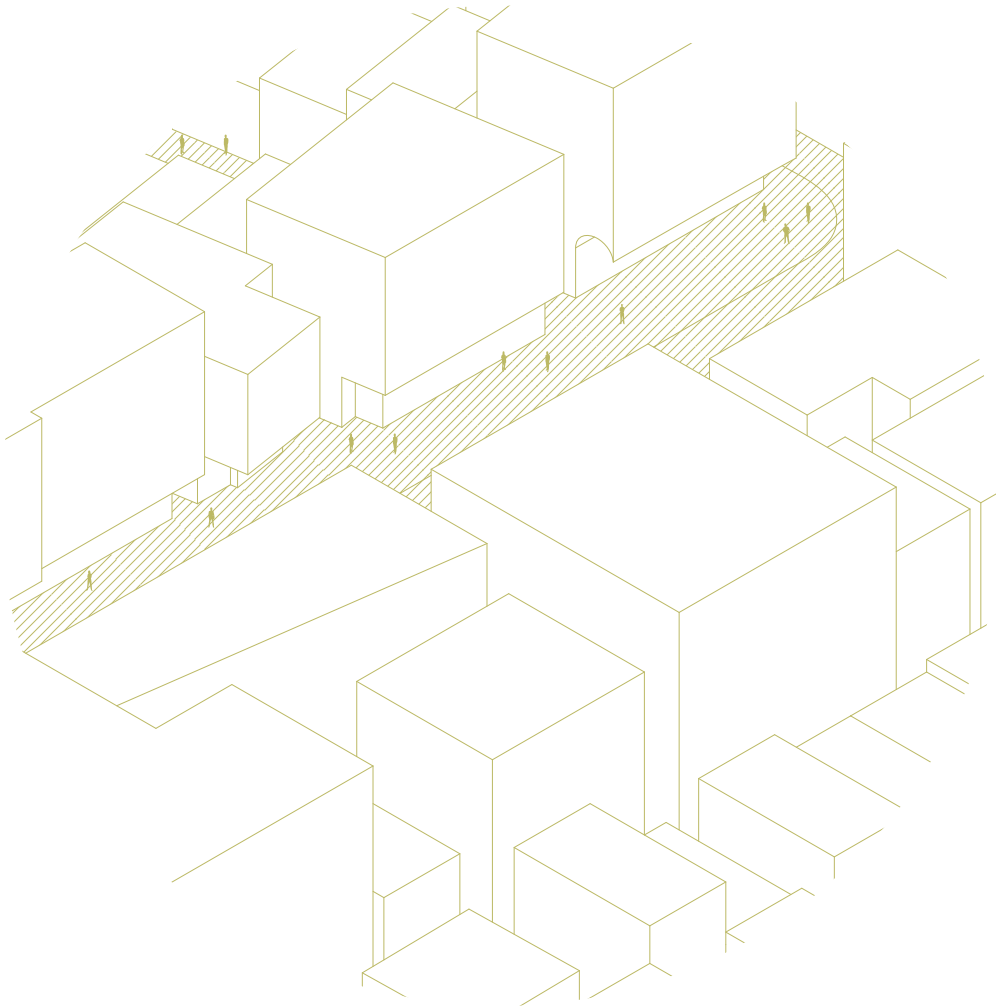
50

7. Of the drip

After years of decay and exclusion local authorities decided to step in. Humanitarian aid organizations were banned. The municipality started to formalize the area by tanking over aid services and transform them into public facilities. To

improve the inhumane environmental conditions an new preserving and inclusive masterplan was implemented. In addition, refugees were entitled ownership over the lands they have been occupying. Refugees finally became official registered residents of the settlement.

The norm



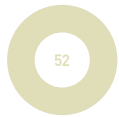
51

8. Becoming the norm

After its spatial, economic and programmatic injection the settlement started to develop from the bottom-up. The space now fully part of local urban planning policies and the urban mechanisms turned out to be a smart business investment, offering

long-term profits.

A new norm with distinctive urban conditions and architecture, documents a new set of iconic images of greater relevance and substance.



Hetrotopia

The ne

Fig. Juxtaposition Amman's living standards, projection of new and current norm on Al Wihdat camp



New norm



Current norm



Abu Dhabi, UEA



Amman, Jordan



Musqat, Oman



Domiz camp, Iraq



Mekka, Saudi Arabia



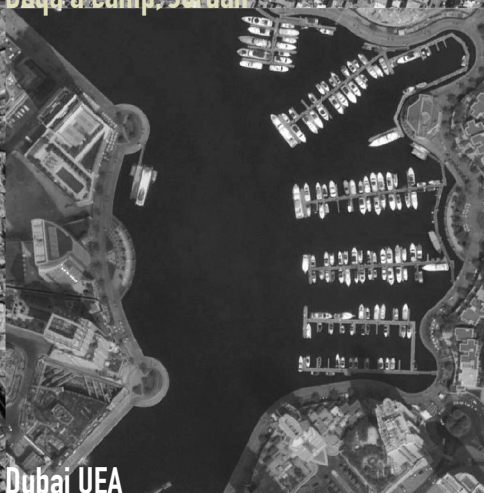
Baqa'a camp, Jordan



Cairo, Egypt



Al Wihdat camp, Jordan



Dubai UEA



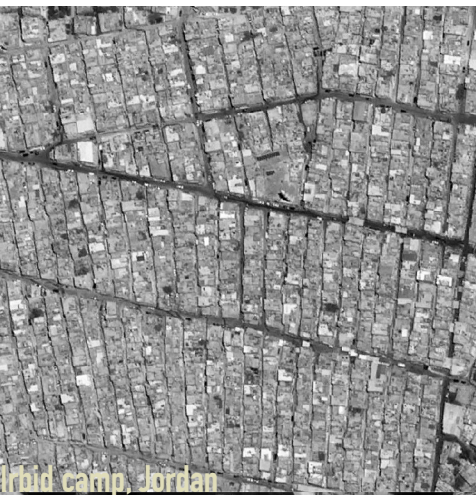
Sanaa, Jemen



Riyad, Saudi Arabia



Beadawi camp, Libanon



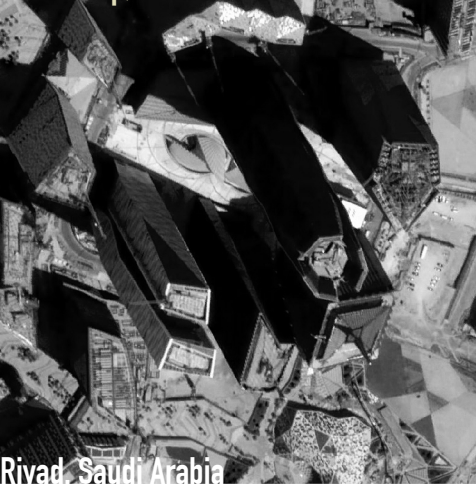
Irbid camp, Jordan



Cairo, Egypt



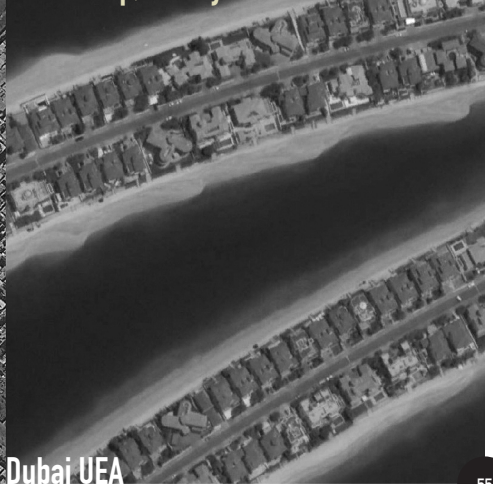
Kilis camp, Turkey



Riyadh, Saudi Arabia



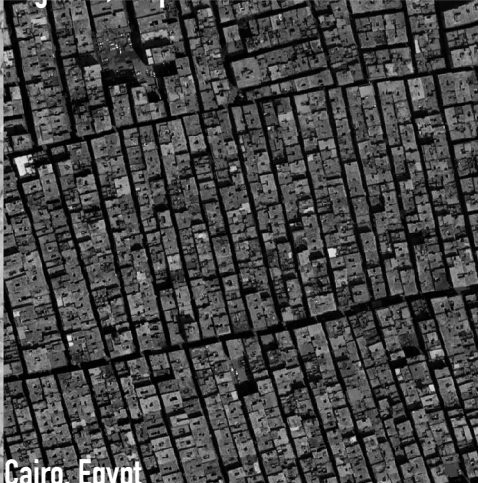
Baghdad, Iraq



Dubai UEA



Za'atari camp, Jordan



Cairo, Egypt



Jerusalem, Israel



Dubai, UEA



Gaza Strip, Palestine



Jeddah, Saudi Arabia



Qualitative

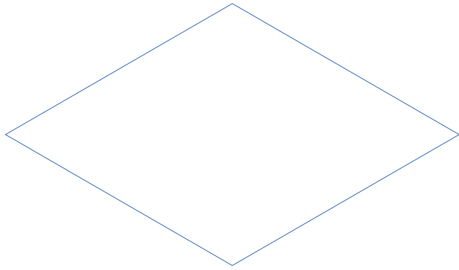
empirismo

Refugee camp design, from quantitative guidelines towards a qualitative approach*

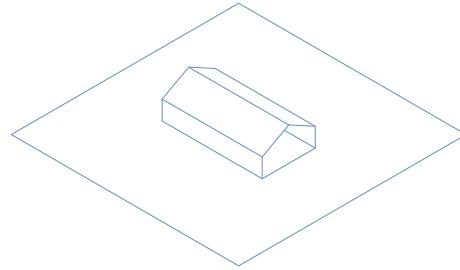
Refugee camp design, from quantitative guidelines towards a qualitative approach

The UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies is the main guideline for responding to refugee situations. It deals with questions of organization, resource management and registration among others. One chapter within the 600-page book, called Site Selection, Planning and Shelter, deals with the planning and construction of refugee camps. Most of the several hundred UNHCR run refugee camps worldwide whether in Africa, the Middle East, or Asia, can be traced back to these twenty pages.

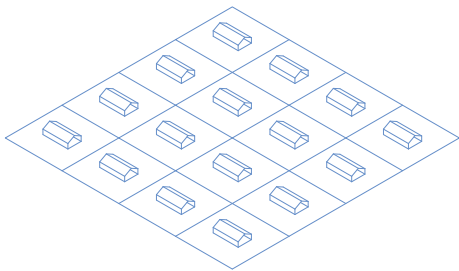
The main principle of these planning guidelines is its modularity. Starting from the smallest unit of the refugee family, with an average of four to six members, the guidelines structure the camp into a community, a camp block, a sector, and the complete camp, which 'ideally' houses 20.000 refugees. Each scale is related to certain service installations, such as latrines, water taps, schools, markets, or health centers. In this way, a quantitative, hierarchical and almost modernistic planning culture emerges. The downside of these universal and modular guidelines are that local cultural traditions and planning principles are ignored. The lack of human scale and the awareness how people live, make use of public space, occupy and establish an allotment and social habits like privacy matters are aspects that remain unanswered. While it is precisely the spatial translation of these norms and values into the built environment that contributes to the quality of life and defines one space of another. That's why the social organization, cultural background, and family structure are some of the main factors that should influence the physical layout and plot of a campsite. Only when location-specific qualitative norms and values are embedded in the design approach, a subsequent planning culture, for a self-reliance, inclusive and durable solutions can be realized.



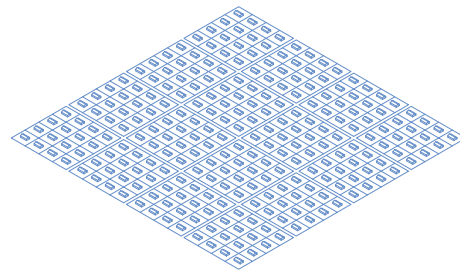
1 Person, 45 m²



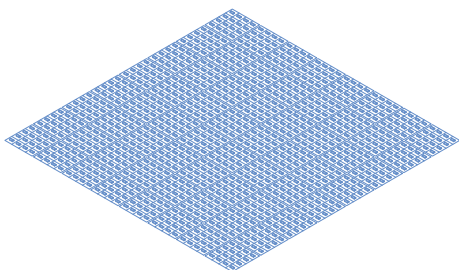
Family, 4/6 persons



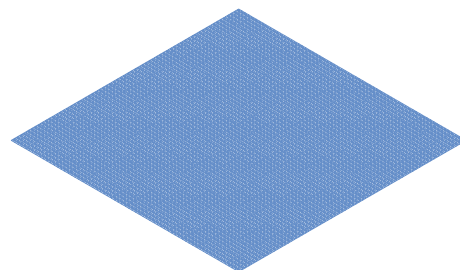
Community, 16 families



Block, 16 communities

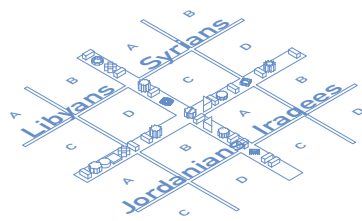


Sector, 4 blocks

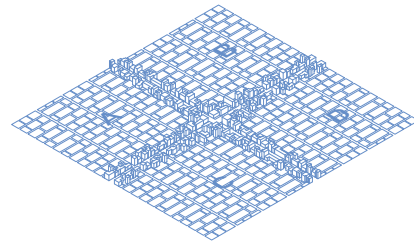


Camp Module, 4 sectors

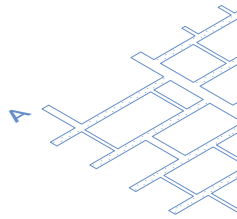
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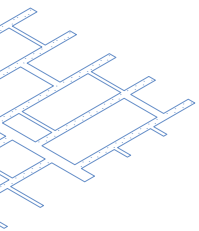
Nationalities



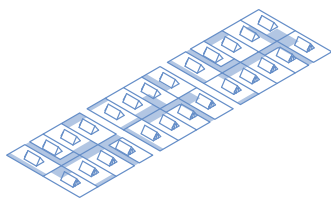
Blood relatives



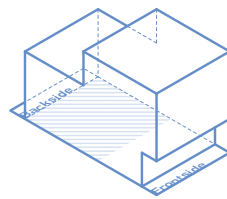
Mirrored e



Entrances



Semi-public space, transition zone



Domain woman

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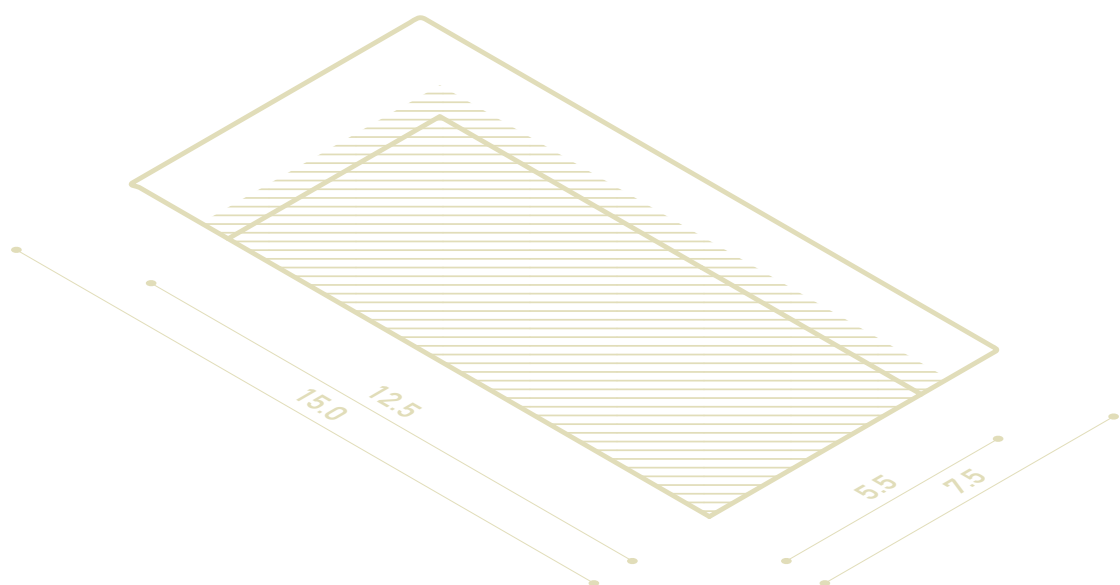
Permanent

Temporally

Refugee camp
guidelines must take
into account the
conditions of
an unresolved
development narrative *

Refugee camp guidelines must take into account the conditions of an unresolved development narrative

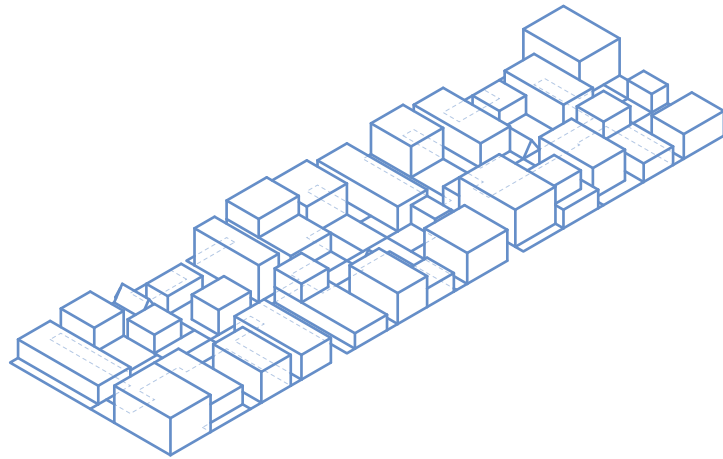
A refugee camp is a space in constant motion. Think of the influx and outflow of residents, the build-up of a new existence and you can imagine a place in endless transition. A refugee settlement continuously needs to adapt and respond to the challenges and opportunities that it faces now and into the future. On average the lifespan of a displaced person in a camp is 17 years, some camps are already more than 60 years old, host multiple generations and have adopted forms of high-density urban living. If we take into consideration that refugee camps are the cities of tomorrow. We must take into account the evolution of a temporary place of confinement towards a permanent open and urban settlement. If we look true these eyes its current appearance of sprawling tents resembles only a fragment in time and is always left unfinished. Given the camps mutating character, the layout plan or grid need to respond to the continuous evolution nature of urban development. In the course of habitation changes the grid structure needs to be able to adapt and reinvent itself. Architectural gestures and urban planning principles can influence and steer these adaptations of development. From a linear perspective we intent to envision a design process with a clear end result. The design and planning of a refugee settlement need to embrace a non- linear form of sequence and should take into account future urban development true an unresolved narrative. For example, the grid structure should be able to provide opportunities for future growth in horizontal and vertical direction creating a dense and diverse neighborhood without the expense of the use and presence of public and semi-public space. At the same time, it needs to include subsequent policies for daylight penetration and ventilation, issues that will occur in time as habitation needs change and density numbers grow in the camps transition towards an urban settlement.



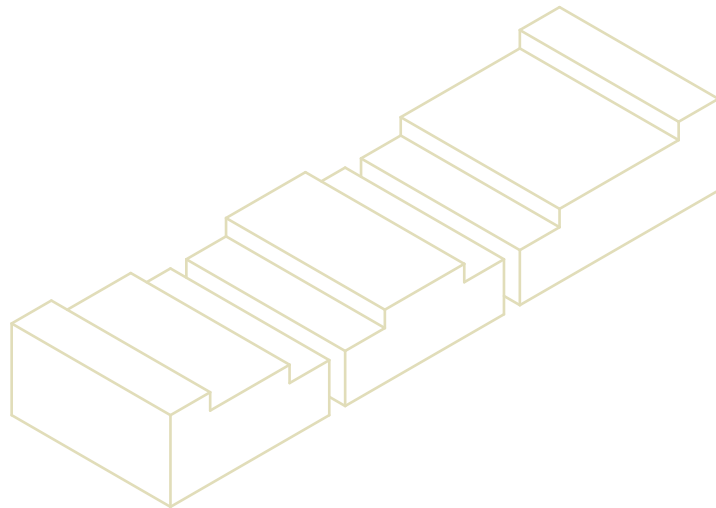
65



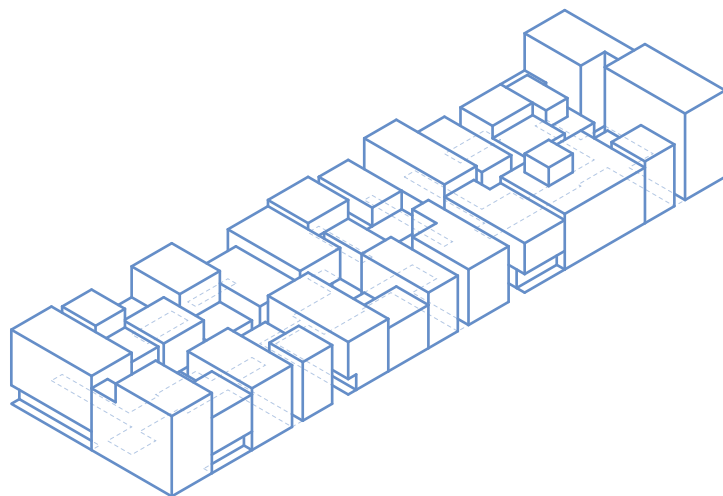
Max. 80% total plot area built



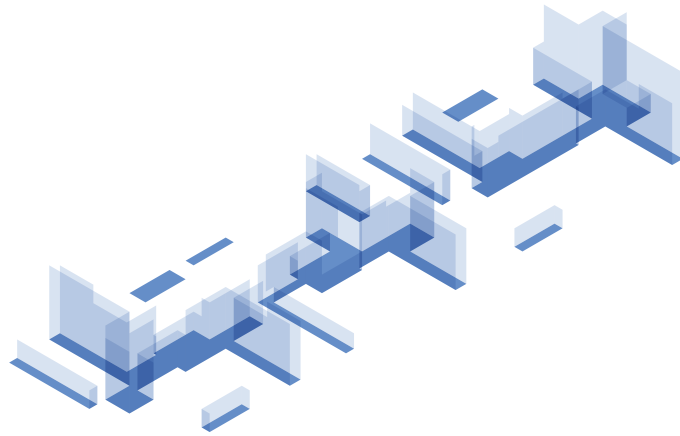
5. Second stage of development



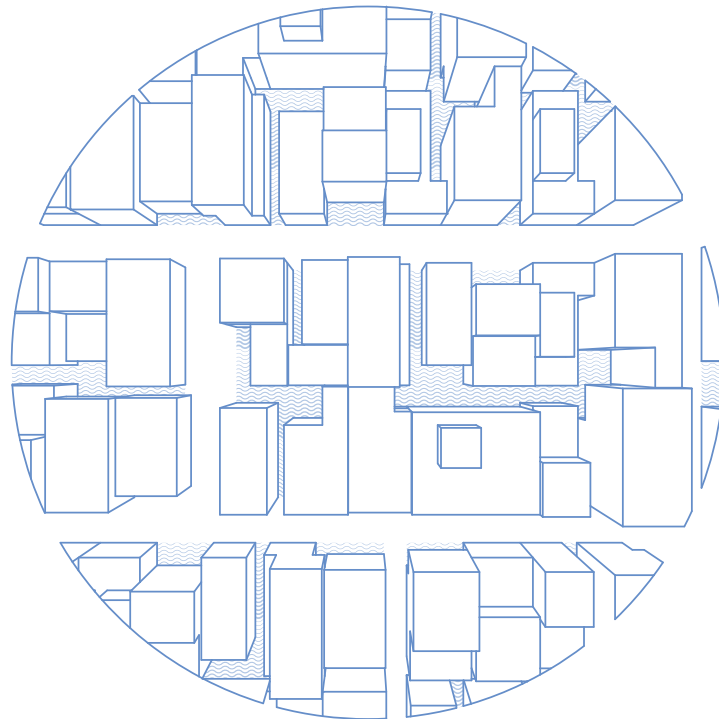
6. Max. building block height



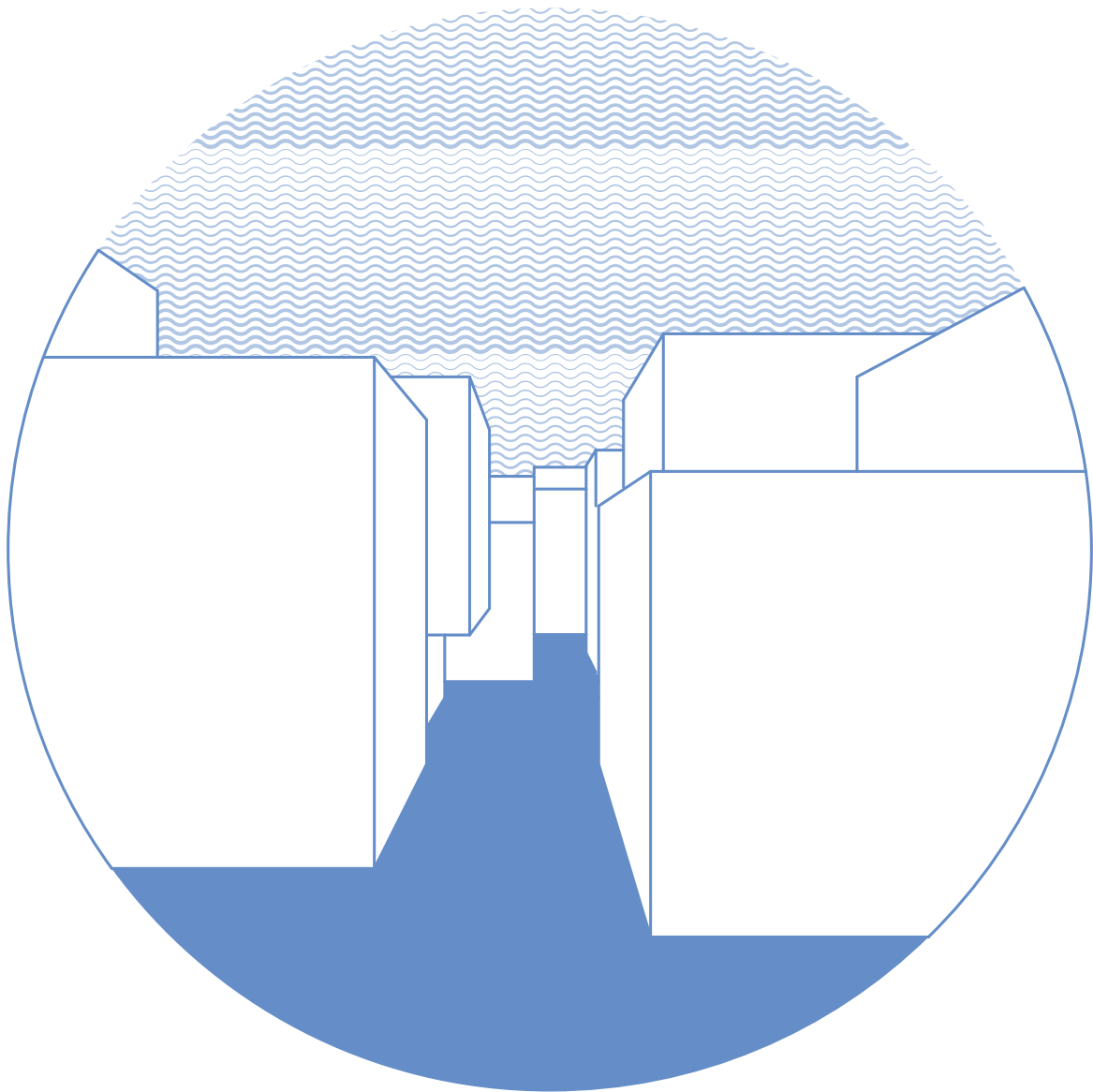
7. Third stage of development



8. Network semi-public spaces



9. Semi-public spaces from a sikka network of connected small streets



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The norm

voidex

Imagine, the exception
becomes the new
norm *

Imagine, the exception becomes the new norm

2050, in the aftermath of Arab Spring the situation in the Middle East region is still vulnerable and hostile. In the past 30 years, nothing significant has changed. The quest for democracy, nationhood, and identity has led to political disunity, a further polarization among populations and a continuing economic crisis. Boundaries that were drawn more than a century ago are still under pressure and discussion. There is no speaking of post-conflict, the cradle of our civilization is a war zone of nations and rival parties with little prospect for peace.

As a result of years of uncertainties and regional instability a large group of displaced people has found refuge and shelter in Jordan. The Guest Kingdom of Heaven surrounded by rogue states. The United Nations, national government, and international relief organizations have tried to channel aid by steering the waves of refugees towards Za'atwice camp. A new build refugee tent camp located in the middle of nowhere near the border of Syria. Disconnected and isolated from the civilized world. A place where refugee rights are ignored, a place where an exception to the rule prevails and inhabitants are reduced to bare life.

When we take a closer look something strange has occurred in this new camp. Instead of misery and the smell of poverty the camp and its tents are abandoned and empty. International media asked the camp mayor [its only resident] for a reaction, he stated: United Nations have nothing learned from its past, 'today refugee camps are the cities of tomorrow because urban dwellers of conflict are by nature urban refugees'. This time they were not be fooled. With a marginalized life behind fences in the prospect, refugees decided to migrate directly towards urbanized areas.

Fortunately, Amman Jordan's capital saw it coming and acted as it always did, as a hospitable host for newcomers. As part of their future growth strategy, the city council implemented an old inclusive shelter model that was used for planning and

building Palestinian refugee camps. Set up in the aftermath of the Palestinian-Israeli war after the declaration of independence of the Jewish state.

These Palestinian camps, ones built as satellite villages on the fringes of the city have become - 100 years after their establishment - an important spill in Amman's economic and cultural life. As a matter of fact, these camps have - in time - become cities on their own, inclusive and interconnected to existing living environments. Inspiring places that flourish, places that people refer to as the new norm of Arab living standards. Locally these neighborhoods are known as Wihdatopia's. Amman's reintroduction of these Wihdatopia's turned out to be a golden move. As large waves of refugees arrived on the outskirts of Amman these flexible settlements started to grow. Well-connected and close to existing settlements, refugees could move around freely and have access to labor, education and healthcare services. With all the benefits of living close to or in the city, the residents of these communities soon started to rebuild their lives with help of relief organizations. As their living standards improved, and self-reliance increased the humanitarian aid services and programs were taken over by local authorities and transformed into public facilities. As residents of Wihdatopia's - realizing the conditions and circumstances they were in - could gradually identify themselves with these places. The strong will to return to the lands they have been expelled from disappeared and residents started to refer to these new places as home.

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