



Gaza©Jordan

Introduction and exploration of a spatial frame for Gaza camp, its community and context



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its community and context.

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Charlotte Dhollander
Valentine Gruwez
Tom Lanclus

Thesis submitted to
obtain the degree of
Master of Engineering:
Architecture

Promotor:
Lieven De Cauter
Co-promotor:
Guido Geenen
Local promotor:
Ismae'l Sheikh Hassan

Master's thesis file

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Title: Gaza©Jordan: Introduction and exploration of a spatial frame for Gaza camp, its community and context.

Abstract:

As one of the numerous Palestinian refugee camps in the Middle East, Gaza camp has undergone a profound transformation throughout its almost fifty years of existence. Departing from an emergency 'tent settlement', it has over time gradually evolved into a unique urban entity, bringing along a wide range of problems. This collective research seeks to acknowledge and reinforce the latent potentials and possibilities of this human settlement in exile. As a stain of urban fabric embedded within a rich landscape, the camp has not become a space of exclusion nor isolation, but evolved towards a strong pole of attraction. Hence, the camp today can no longer be considered as merely the space within its initially defined perimeter, but as a wider Jordanian territory that became occupied by the ex-Gazan community. By means of both objective and explorative mappings, supplemented with a set of spatial readings, we have tried to distillate a spatial frame that constitutes the precondition of the camp's future development which is translated into explorative design approaches that seek to tackle the camp's current problems related to its increasing density, population growth and the lack of awareness towards its surrounding landscape.

Thesis submitted to obtain the degree of Master in Engineering: Architecture

Promotor: Lieven De Cauter
Co-promotor: Guido Geenen
Local promotor: Ismae'l Sheikh Hassan

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The Social Enterprise, Gaza camp Jordan: Thanks to the women of SEP for the fabrication of the bags that contain this set of thesis books.

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INTRODUCTION

PREFACE

This set of books constitute the thesis project concluding the master's program in Architectural Engineering at KULeuven. It is a reference work on the approach of Palestinian refugee camps as urban entities, more specifically studying the case of Jerash Camp in Jordan. The work attempts to demonstrate the role architecture and urban design in the everyday life of refugees living in permanent temporality.

As four master students in urban design and architecture we have been immersed throughout the course of last year in the day-to-day reality of refugees living in exile for over three generations. These refugees, victims of a complex (and seemingly never-ending) struggle between Palestinians and Israeli, found places of shelter about 46 to 66 years ago in camps scattered all over the Middle East. While they are perpetually waiting for a chance to return to their former homes, their everyday-life in the temporary camps has evolved. The extreme conditions in which they now live can no longer be neglected.

While the ambition will be to study one particular refugee camp as an urban space and to understand its specific weaknesses and potentials, the work can still be useful as a reference for all other refugee camps, from Gaza Strip to Syria, that deal with similar situations. In the same way as this work is based upon previous researches and projects in and around refugee camps, it serves as an addition to the literature, study and practice of architecture and urban design in camps.





DESIGNING FOR CAMPS

“Maybe the most ultimate goal is to start up a dialogue between Palestinians and people of our background. Very tactile, pure physical, architectural proposals already proved to be very useful as a starting point.” - Ciel Grommen, 2014

Because of the lack of rights for refugees, high poverty rates and shortage in basic needs in camps such as water, food and healthcare, architecture and urban design are commonly considered as less relevant and rarely get priority. Although this is an understandable point of view, it does not make it a right one.

In the following work we will try to clarify how architecture and urban design have an irreplaceable importance in the development of camps and their communities. They are a primary tool to help improve the life of Palestinian refugees in their homes of exile, without necessarily having to interfere with their right of return.

We have come to understand that architecture and urban design can set in motion many aspects, apart from the improvement of the physical environment. The process of design activates the community and helps in starting up debates between various stakeholders that are not always that easy to get around the table for discussion. Designing the physical environment also draws the attention to the importance of common space in a camp, to its strength and potentials and to the feasible and creative solutions for its problems. Furthermore it has been very clear how design can reinforce the identity of the refugees (far from home, with now only a narrated memory of it), how it can clarify the notion of the common and how it can establish a sense of responsibility towards the camp and the spaces that are nobody's.



A COLLABORATION

At the root of this research lies the collaboration between the KU Leuven and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The former a body of knowledge and research, the latter a body with profound experience in the field on the issue of Palestinian refugees and camps. It was in the context of the Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Program (ICIP) initiated by UNRWA in 2006 that this collaboration commenced several years ago.

The Camp Improvement Program was a first attempt to act on the direct physical environment of refugees in exile. “Over the years, these camps have transformed from temporary ‘tent cities’ into hyper-congested masses of multi-storey buildings with narrow alleys, characterised by high concentrations of poverty and extreme overcrowding.”¹ ICIP focuses on treating the camp as a whole, approaching it on several scales. Central in their work stands the importance of community involvement and the start-up of sustainable participatory processes. The program indicates an important shift in UNRWA’s mentality, as through the ICIP it is acknowledging the influence of the direct environment - the camp - on the lives of Palestinian refugees.

The collaboration between the ICIP and the KUL has been a way to reinforce several researches on camps through a series of conducted theses, PHD’s, workshops, etc. The mutual goal has been to show how this Camp Improvement Program can work and what kind of impact it can have. An attempt has been made to approach the camps not only in social and political terms, but also in terms of the camp as a physical entity; in a certain landscape, with a specific fabric, as a result of a series of historical events. Both institutions have tried to open up doors and possibilities to create a wider view on the topic, which has contributed significantly to the development of the ICIP.

[1] www.unrwa.org



PLANNING AND PROCESS

AN APPROACH FOR GAZA CAMP

Our work on Gaza camp has been conducted in two distinguishable processes that are translated in two separate books. The first months of our work constitute a rather profound research and reading of the current state of the camp, which are extensively described in the first book. This part of the work was concluded by a six-day workshop in Leuven, involving people from UNRWA, KUL professors, students, postgraduates, professional architects and a Gaza camp resident. The second part of the work - and thus the second book - directly emerges from the workshop and tries to clarify, broaden and transcend the workshop's outcome. Although we have physically separated both processes in two books, they cannot be considered independently of one another. Together they form one understanding of Gaza camp, based on a continuous alternation between research and design.

The most significant part of the research was done in the field, during a ten week fieldwork in Jordan. It provided the opportunity to make a physical analysis on one hand - something that UNRWA had not been able to do for Gaza camp and that had left a gap in its database - and to understand better the actual living conditions and the traditions, identity, culture and customs of the refugees. Through interviews with residents, focus groups and an intensive collaboration with the Jordan Field Office (JFO) - responsible for the ICIP in Jordan - many aspects of the camp were mapped and an understanding of its neighbourhoods, central areas, usage of space and relation to the surroundings started to take form. The second part of the research was

conducted through further lecture and study on the issue. Previous theory and practice proved to be particularly useful and made it possible to build upon an already elaborate understanding of camps rather than to redefine it.

This reading of the camp served as an input of information for a six-day design workshop. The goal of this intensive Gaza©Workshop was to develop some first ideas for the future of the camp and to translate them into a draft version of a set of projects. During this brainstorming exercise, a focus was laid on the previous analysis work and on the work that had been done by UNRWA and the community to determine the needs and the most problematic issues in the camp.

During the workshop, a spatial frame was built up as a strategic tool for future interventions. The step from research to frame was a smooth and logical one, translating the needs, potentials and observations into a clear vision. That is why we would like to stress that the reading - and through that also the research - is as significant as the development of a vision, as this vision directly emerged from it. Some explorative design strategies have been worked out to illustrate and strengthen the spatial frame. They are a way to make the ideas of the frame more tangible and to get out of mere theory and dive into the practice of Camp Improvement.

FIELDWORK

11.08.13	Arrival in Amman, Jordan
14.08.13	Meeting with UNRWA and Ismae'l Sheikh Hassan, first visit to the camp, introducing presentation by Dina Dabash
15.08.13	Meeting with UNRWA and Ismae'l Sheikh Hassan at JFO, draw up of a schedule for the first five weeks of research
18.08.13-24.08.13	Week 1: Research on historical evolution of the camp
20.08.13	Focus group #1 [Large group]
22.08.13	Focus group #2 [Small group]
25.08.13-31.08.13	Week 2: Research on shelter & building block evolution
29.08.13	Focus group #3 [CDO volunteers]
01.09.13-07.09.13	Week 3: Research on the camp's surroundings
01.09.13	Visit to Dibeen nature reserve, the ministries of Sakib, Raymun and Al-Kittah, Souf camp and Al-Zarqa'a river
08.09.13-14.09.13	Week 4: Research on street hierarchy and mobility
08.09.13-10.09.13	Two nights in the camp
15.09.13-18.09.13	Preparation of design-workshop in Jordan
19.09.13-22.09.13	Design-workshop with Ismae'l Sheikh Hassan, Guido Geenen and UNRWA-staff, Jordan
19.09.13	Visit to the camp, intermediate presentation at JFO
20.09.13	Design-workshop
21.09.13	Visiting the camp's surroundings
22.09.13	Design-workshop, finalisation
23.09.13-28.09.13	Exploring Jordan, visiting Talbiyeh camp
29.09.13-05.10.13	Week 5: extending research
29.09.13	Visit to ministry of Jerash: ministry of Water and ministry of Tourism
06.10.13-12.10.13	Week 6: extending research
06.10.13	Meeting head of DPA
09.10.13-10.10.13	Night in the camp
11.10.13-18.10.13	Exploring Palestine
19.10.13	Arrival in Belgium

SPATIAL READINGS

25.10.13	Presentation fieldwork results [Lieven De Cauter; Bruno De Meulder; Ismae'l Sheikh Hassan and Guido Geenen]
27.01.14	Thesis mid-jury [Lieven De Cauter and Guido Geenen]

DESIGN WORKSHOP

05.02.14-10.02.14	Gaza©Workshop, Leuven
05.02.14	Introduction, presentations, overview UNRWA's participatory process
06.02.14	Design-workshop in groups
07.02.14	Design-workshop in groups, intermediate presentation
08.02.14	Design-workshop in groups
09.02.14	Design-workshop in groups, intermediate presentation
10.02.14	Finalising drawings, final presentation, reception

DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

04.04.14	Finishing book of research and spatial readings
06.06.14	Finishing books of explorative design strategies
25.06.14	Final thesis presentation at "World Urbanisms" urban design seminar



Wednesday 14th of August 2013, our first time to the camp. We had been in the country for several days by then, but concerning the camp, we had absolutely no idea what to expect. Up till then, we only had a small theoretical background about refugees and camps from a preliminary literature study. Where would we end up? Who would we meet? How would we feel? How 'should' we feel? Was it permitted to be excited when going to a place like a refugee camp?

A white UNRWA minibus drove us in 45 minutes from Amman, past Jerash city, to Gaza camp. Ismael pointed out the camp from a certain distance. What we saw, wasn't at all what we had expected. Before us lay an urban artifact amidst a gently undulating landscape. The horizon revealed the presence of a forest in the distance, bathing in the pleasantly warm, morning sunlight. We had not expected to arrive in what seemed to be the greenest area we had seen in Jordan so far. A large mosque, on a ridge to the west, protruded from the camp's fabric as if it were an intentional eyecatcher.

The road that took us all the way from Jerash to the camp, also turned out to be the main road leading to its inner centre. This struck us; no branch, no little side way, just a large road penetrating deep into the camp. The low-lying main road was embedded in what seemed to be a valley, flanked by an abundance of shops, workshops and concrete buildings clamping themselves on the hillsides. Everywhere you looked you could see men discussing, women carrying groceries, children running around, shopkeepers sitting on their doorstep, controlling the passersby, ... Many stared at us, strangers among the crowd. We started questioning our presence. What are we, as a couple of graduate students, doing here? Isn't this a form of educational tourism, or worse, disaster tourism?

Reality kind of kicked in when we were to leave the bus. No longer in our closed vehicle where you could just look, without 'being-a-part-of', we found ourselves standing on a badly paved street, surrounded by strangers, and a lot of dust. We were really in the camp now. You could feel the heat becoming stifling, you could smell the melange of the open sewer and the fresh breads in the bakery, you could hear cars honking and boys screaming. At first sight, it all seemed like one big chaos...



A TURBULENT HISTORY

The history of the Palestinian people has been written and rewritten, it has been discussed, contested and interpreted. However, it is not within the scope of this thesis to get into the details of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Nevertheless, a basic knowledge of the main historic events and developments which led to today's social, political and cultural situation is indispensable. The thesis will start off with a sequence of events, in an attempt to frame the context in which the refugee camp should be considered. Subsequently it focuses on the history of the Gaza camp refugees in particular, in order to understand the conditions they are forced to live in, how this is connected to their origin and what this origin signifies.

TIMELINE

The following timeline - provided by Team Husn I and supplemented by Team Husn II - highlights the key dates in the extensive and turbulent Palestinian history. In addition, specific dates and events were added that relate to the refugees of Gaza camp in particular.

First World War | 1914-1918

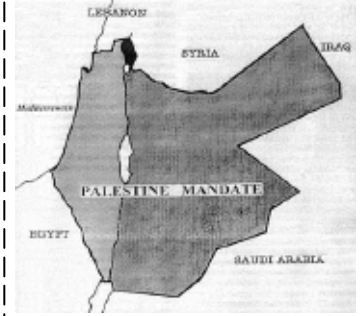
The weakness of the Ottoman Empire sets hopes for Zionist and Arab nationalist movements. Hoping to achieve independency in the Arab districts of the Ottoman Empire, Sherif Hussein of Mecca promised to support the British in their war effort. [Tessler, 1994]

Ottoman Empire | 14th-20th century

At this time, Palestine is part of the Ottoman Empire and is inhabited by as well Muslims as Jews (600.000 compared to 60.000) but furthermore also Christians, Armenians etc. Being started in the 14th century, the Ottoman Empire is one of the longest lasting empires. However, in the 19th century, it starts to weaken.[Tessler, 1994]

San Remo Conference | 1920

During this peace conference, the division of the defeated Ottoman Empire between the British and the French is decided upon, conform the Sykes-Picot agreement. Palestine is assigned to the British, the territory of Transjordan felt also under the British mandate. [Tessler, 1994]



Sykes-Picot Agreement | 1916

Secret agreement between the British and French. They agree on dividing the Arab districts amongst each other. Furthermore they agree on not recognising Arab independency if it will be claimed.[Tessler, 1994]

Zionism | Starting end 19th century

Nationalist movement that strives towards the establishment of a Jewish state in the region where in ancient times the Israeli Empires - Israel and Judea - used to be settled. This region is at that time known as Palestine.[Tessler, 1994] In 1882, 25,000 Jewish immigrants begin to settle in Palestine, mainly from eastern Europe.[Pappe, 2006]

Balfour Declaration | 1917

Arthur Balfour promised in a letter to Lord Rothschild that the British government would support the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. [Tessler, 1994]

1920-1948 | British Mandate

The British Mandate of Palestine is a protectorate system issued by the League of Nations to administer Palestine “until such time as they are able to stand alone” (The covenant of the League of Nations, art 22). It includes the Balfour Declaration. The introduction states:

“Whereas the Principal Allied Powers have also agreed that the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2nd, 1917, by the Government of His Britannic Majesty, and adopted by the said Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.” This period is known for several Jewish immigration waves in Palestine. [Tessler, 1994]

Second World War | 1940-1945

During the second world war, more Jews immigrate to Palestine, the percentage of Palestinian inhabitants drops to 60 percent in 1948 - compared to 90 percent in 1922. Meanwhile Palestinians refuse every solution that doesn't include a secular Arab state. After the injustice done during the Holocaust, the international community feels guilty towards Jews all over the world. [Tessler, 1994]



source: www.wikipedia.org

Partition Plan | 1947

In 1947, the United Nations received the authority to decide about Palestine's future. They divided Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish region. Jerusalem and other Holy Places came under international administration. [Tessler, 1994]

1st Refuge | 1948

As a result of 'Al-Nakbah', the ancestors of Gaza Camp's inhabitants were expelled from their original cities such as Jaffa, Yavne and Ramla, but most of them from the Bedouin villages surrounding the city of Be'er Sheva.

'Al-Nakbah' | 1948, May 15

The Partition Plan resulted in Al-Nakbah ('the Catastrophe'), according to the Arab world, or the 'Declaration of Independence' for Israel. 100 000 people fled to Jordan. [Hamed El-Said, 2004] According to the DPA, Five refugee camps were established in the following period. [DPA, 2000]

Resolution 194 (II) Approved by the UN | 1948

“The refugees wishing to return to their homes and live in peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible ...”

Israel Member of the UN | May 11 1949

[www.UN.org]

Establishment of UNRWA | December 8 1949

'The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East'

[www.UNRWA.org]

Jericho Resolution & Consequences | 1948-1967

In 1948 Jordan, ruled by King Abdullah, annexed the West Bank in the same year of the Nakbah by means of this resolution. This action is said to be part of his Greater Syria Plan and was strongly condemned by Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Lebanon who demanded the expulsion of Jordan from the Arab League. Yemen and Iraq prevented this. Jordan defended themselves by stating that they only want to safeguard the territory. [Aruri,1972]

Establishment PLO | 1964

The 'Palestinian Liberation Organisation' was established with the purpose of defending the rights of the Palestinian people and Palestine. Today, the PLO is considered to be the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people". [UN]

Six-Day War | 1967, June 5-10

Following the attacks from Palestinian guerrilla movements in Syria on Israel, tension increased between the 2 countries. Jordan, Egypt and Syria together fought in the Six-Day War against Israel. The Arab countries still regarded Israel as an illegal state.

300.000 Palestinians left the West Bank and fled to Jordan [DPA, 2000; El-Said & Harringer, 2004; www.unrwa.org] According to the DPA, seven more refugee camps were established in the next years in Jordan. This brings the total to 13 refugee camps of which only 10 are recognised by the UNRWA.

Massacres at the Gaza Strip | 1956

Hundreds of Palestinian refugees were killed by Israeli soldiers in Khan Yunis camp and Rafah camp in the Gaza Strip, respectively on the 3rd and the 12th of November 1956.

[www.occupiedpalestine.wordpress.com]

Establishment Jerash Camp | 1968, March 3

Jerash Camp -locally known as Gaza Camp- was set up by UNRWA as an "emergency camp" for 11,500 Palestinian refugees and displaced persons who left the Gaza Strip as a result of the Arab-Israeli War.

[www.UNRWA.org]

source: www.unesco-ci.org



2nd Displacement | 1967

As a result of 'Al-Naksah' - the Six-Day War -, Gaza camp's residents were displaced a second time in the summer of 1967. Although most of them travelled straight from the Gaza Strip to Jerash camp, several families held a stopover in one of the emergency tented camps that were established in the Jordan Valley.

Israeli Occupation of the West Bank | 1967-1987

Following the Six-Day War, Israel occupied the West Bank. [El-Said & Harrigan, 2004]

1st Intifada | 1987-1993

In November, revolt broke out in the West Bank. Unarmed Palestinian refugees, especially boys and young men threw stones at the Israeli army forces, protesting against the ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

[Lockman & Beinin, 1989]

source: www.mideastweb.org



Black September | 1970

The civil war in Jordan, also known as 'Black September' was a result of increasing tensions between the Jordanian armed forces and the Palestinian Guerillas. This resulted in the eviction of these Palestinians to Lebanon in 1971.

[El-Said & Harrigan, 2004]

Colour Coded Cards

| 1983, June

| In 1983 Jordan introduced colour-coded cards for Palestinians. Four colours were introduced with each a different meaning. [Al Abed, 2004]

Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA) | 1988

The DPA is part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Jordanian Government. In general the Department is charged to monitor, study and analyse issues related to Palestinian affairs inside and outside the occupied Palestinian Territories. [DPA, 2008]

Withdrawal from Jordan in the West Bank | 1988

King Hussein of Jordan declared the dismantling of all administrative and legal ties with the West Bank after failing to establish an agreement for a confederation of Jordan and a future Palestine and at the same time supporting the desire of the Palestinians for their own independence. [Kassim, 1987]

2nd Intifada | 2000-2005

The 2nd Intifada, also known as the 'Al-Aqsa Intifada' was the second large violent encounter between Palestinians and Israelis, as a result of a, what some might say, provocation of Ariel Sharon (at that time a candidate for Israeli Prime Minister) at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on the Temple Mount, a holy place for both Muslims as Jews. [Baroud, 2006]

source: www.theprisma.co.uk



Gaza Conflict | 2008-2009

When Israel and Hamas were unable to extend the fragile six month truce which expired on 19 December 2008, the conflict began when Israel launched the military campaign "Cast Lead", aiming to stop Hamas attacks on southern Israel. The operation is also known as the 'Gaza massacre'. [Shoshan, 2010]

Palestine's Application for Full Membership in UN is rejected | 2011, November

President Mahmoud Abbas (PLO) sends in an application in order to become a member of the UN. But the application was rejected because they had not enough support in the UN Security Council. [UN]

Oslo Peace Accords | 1993-2000

The Oslo Peace Accords or the 'Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements' (DOP) was a peace gesture between the two parties. It stated that Israel must retreat from parts of the Gaza strip and the West Bank, the fact that Palestinians had the right for self-governance. Both would do some effort for an economic cooperation and a regional redevelopment of destroyed areas. [Handelman, 2011]

General Assembly Grants Palestine Non-Member Observer Status at UN | 2012, November 29

After failing to receive full membership in the UN, President Abbas managed to push through the application to receive a Non-Member Observer State status at the United Nations. US minister Clinton named the increase in status counterproductive for the peace negotiations.

DUAL DISPLACEMENT

Like most refugees residing in Jordan, the expulsion of those living in Gaza camp is twofold. Gaza camp accommodates mainly refugees who were displaced from different camps in the Gaza Strip in 1967, during the Six-Day War, also referred to as *Al-Naksah*. This second displacement was preceded by a first refuge in 1948 as a result of *Al-Nakbah*, literally 'the catastrophe', caused by the establishment of the state of Israel.

While the majority of the current inhabitants of Gaza camp were born in the camp, their ancestors and the elderly used to live in different parts of Palestine. Through numerous interviews and focus groups, we learned that they have their origins in cities like Jaffa, Yavne and Ramla. However most of them are originating from the Bedouin villages surrounding the city of Be'er Sheva. The first refuge was predominantly done with the whole family, afoot or with camels, towards different refugee camps in the Gaza strip such as Rafah, Khan Yunis, Deir al-Balah, etc. These camps were set up by the freshly established UN-organisation UNRWA, who provided the refugees with tents and basic facilities such as medical aid and food supply.

Despite UNRWA's efforts, the conditions in these camps were often very hard. Because of the concentration of Palestinians, these places of refuge became strategic sites for targeting the Palestinians in times of 'heightened conflict'. [Sheikh Hassan, unpublished] Referring to the massacres in the camps of Rafah and Khan Yunis in November 1956, Zakea (62) remembers:

"Some days, the Jewish army came to the camp to gather our young men in the streets and shoot them in front of our eyes."

These horrific public executions in strategically chosen camps and villages spread anxiety among Palestinians in neighbouring camps and villages, causing them to flee to different camps in the Gaza strip or to the open land.

The second displacement in 1967 differs from the first refuge in several aspects. Firstly, the displacement was done by car, truck or bus, instead of afoot or with camels. Secondly, it was not a forced displacement, but one out of fear for getting killed if they did not flee. To foster this, the Israeli soldiers offered the refugees in Gaza transportation to neighbouring countries in exchange for signing a document that declared the abolition of their property and thus giving up their right to return. Thirdly, most of the families got split up at this point. Members of the same family fled to different countries such as Syria, Lebanon or Jordan, or to different camps within the same country.

While most of the refugees travelled from the Gaza strip straight to Jerash camp, several households held a stopover in one of the temporary camps in the Jordan Valley, such as Damia camp and Gogh Nimrin camp. However, these camps were closed in February 1968 due to military actions along the Jordan river, causing the refugees to move further eastwards into the hills of Jordan around Amman, Jerash, Souf and Irbid.

The second displacement was predominantly done by car, truck or bus.



“His name was Zakaria, a Muslim stranger, though locally very known in the camp. He scared us by telling that if we didn’t flee the Jewish army would come and kill us all. So we paid him a lot and he took us to Jordan in the back of his truck. Afterwards we heard from my sister, who stayed in Gaza, that the camp was not in danger at all. This Zakaria was an agent, paid by the Jews to displace as much Palestinians as possible. One of Israel’s many tricks to get rid of us...”

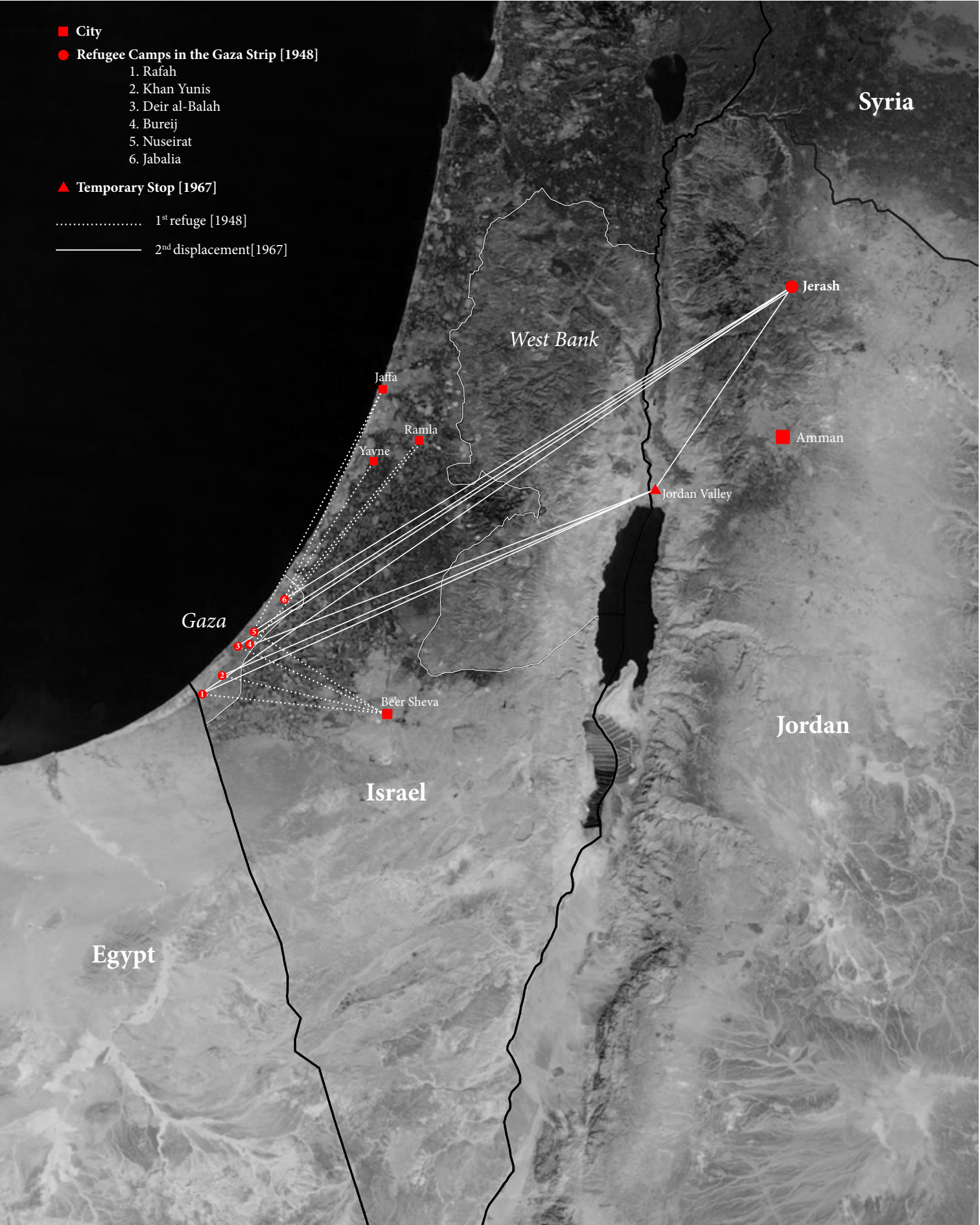
- Salma, Gaza camp resident (87), 2013

- City
- Refugee Camps in the Gaza Strip [1948]
 1. Rafah
 2. Khan Yunis
 3. Deir al-Balah
 4. Bureij
 5. Nuseirat
 6. Jabalia

▲ Temporary Stop [1967]

..... 1st refuge [1948]

———— 2nd displacement [1967]





Saudi Arabia



Exodus



Allenby Bridge Crossing

A COMPLICATED PASSPORT SYSTEM

Unlike the other Arab countries who refused to grant citizenship to the Palestinian refugees and displaced people - in order to retain their Palestinian identity -, Jordan adapted a different position towards those expelled by Israel. However, among the more than two million Palestinian refugees residing in Jordan today¹, a distinction has to be made regarding their identity.

[1] www.unrwa.org

When Transjordan became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, consequent to the formal annexation of the West Bank in the aftermath of *Al-Nakbah* in 1948, the first wave of Palestinian refugees that fled to and subsequently resided within the borders of this Kingdom were granted full-fledged Jordanian citizenship. As full *muwatin* (citizen), they and their offspring are in the possession of a five-year Jordanian passport with a national ID number, which grants them full access to government services and also the right to vote.[El Abed, 2006]

Mahmoud showing his two-year temporary passport.



“They are permanent tourists in their own country”

- Max Marin, American volunteer in Gaza camp

Regarding the second wave of Palestinians that arrived in Jordan after *Al-Naksah* - the Six-Day War in 1967 -, the allocation of the Jordanian identity was not that unambiguous. Classified as ‘displaced persons’ - defined in UN General Assembly Resolution 2252 as those ‘who have been unable to return to the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 - this second wave consisted of Palestinians originating from villages, cities but particularly camps in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Unlike those coming from the West Bank who were already in hold of a proper Jordanian passport – since they actually moved from one part of Jordan to another, respectively from the West Bank to the East Bank -, those being displaced from the Gaza Strip did not receive the Jordanian citizenship.[El Abed, 2004]

At their arrival, the ex-Gazans were granted a two-year temporary passport, without a national ID number nor citizenship rights. Coming from the Gaza Strip that had been placed under the administrative rule of Egypt since 1949, they are being considered as the responsibility of Egypt, which constituted the main argument for not granting them the Jordanian identity. Hence, their ‘passport’ is merely a residency permit and serves a double purpose: it indicates to the Jordanian authorities that they and their dependants are temporary residents and it provides them with an international travel document, enabling access to other countries.[El Abed, 2006] Moreover, the biannual renewal of the temporary passport requires the approval of the Jordanian state. Any denial - predominantly on grounds of national ‘security’, such as membership in a political or religious group -, or any delay in renewing whether applying for one puts the ex-Gazan at risk of being left without a legal existence.

With a population approaching 30 000, Gaza camp - plus its overspill - accommodates the highest concentration of the estimated 165 000 ex-Gazans living in Jordan today. [US Human Rights Reports, 2010] Besides the few who obtained the Jordanian citizenship by naturalisation or payment, the ex-Gazans and their descendants have been stateless for nearly 50 years now, living in a permanent state of legal limbo.[El Abed, 2006] Their lack of citizenship is translated into a wide range of legal restrictions. One of the major limitations they’ve been facing concerns the right on ownership of property, including both land and buildings, for which they are ought to have a local Jordanian partner and the approval of the ministerial council. Even the purchase or registration of a car requires a security approval. Moreover, many restrictions on the participation in the labour market or in the political sphere, as well as on their access to government services - such as higher education - inhibit the legal integration of ex-Gazans in Jordan.[cfr. Education and Job opportunities]



A PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMP

||

Palestinian refugees are spread over a total of 64 - official and unofficial - refugee camps in West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. To understand one of them, we consider it crucial to provide a glance at the general notion of a camp and the characteristics they all share. Although the gross of this work consists of a social and spatial analysis of Gaza camp, the following chapter endeavors to approach the topic from a more philosophical point of view. The aim will be to express what stamp a camp and its refugees carry as a result of their turbulent past, their provenance, their political identity and their permanent refugee status. Furthermore, it will shortly be discussed which authorities collaborate for the management of Gaza camp and how the presence of such a relatively high number of governing bodies does not always run smoothly.

NOTION OF A REFUGEE CAMP

“(Palestinian camps) represent a unique urban pattern which has special features, problems, structures and consequently requires a special classification in the study of urban societies in the Middle East”

- Ishaq Al-Qutub, 1989

Refugee camps have proven to be exceptional spaces, hard to compare to any other densely populated entity. They represent a variety of conditions - some unique to the Palestinian refugee case - that add to their complexity. It is crucial to understand these conditions - that reflect not only on the camp, but also on its inhabitants - prior to understanding Gaza camp in particular. Naturally each camp is different from the next and an even bigger distinction exists between camps in different hosting countries, among others as a result of their dissimilar legislations. Ismae'l Sheikh Hassan clarifies how the site of each camp plays the most important part in the development of the identity, the role and the spatial formation of each individual camp. Nevertheless all of them share a common past and a mutual aspiration - the return - for the future.[Sheikh Hassan, unpublished] The historical context of the refugee camp created a space of exile and a state of exception, but the shared vision for the future generates spaces where the Palestinian identity and the Right to return can actively be sensed.



EXILE AND DISPERSION

Throughout their existence, Palestinian camps have had many functions and meanings for refugees, locals, governments, municipalities, NGO's and UNRWA. In the first place they were spaces of refuge, of protection for those who had been expelled - whether by force or lead by fear - from their homes and villages all over Palestine. As such a camp is a place of displacement, a result of forced mobility across borders and mass movement towards safety. Therefore, camps are until today, a physical expression of the diaspora. They will always be a constant reminder for the dwellers of their deprived homes and the violence inflicted upon them.

Studying Gaza camp showed very clearly how a place of displacement will tend to be - to a greater or lesser extend - a representation of the place of which one was displaced in the first instance.[Sheikh Hassan, unpublished] Although hosting countries and humanitarian organizations organized most refugee camps as rigid grid structures, villages of origin, extended families and different communities quickly started to express themselves within the camp tissues. In Gaza camp for instance, it was noticeable that this tendency even showed itself in the physical appearance of the shelters, streets and buildings blocks.

While the Palestinians fled in 1948 and were displaced in 1967, they were also dispersed. As a result, 64 Palestinian camps are scattered all over the Middle East and a total of around five million Palestinian refugees live all over the Arab world.¹ It goes without saying that in the course of over 60 years, each camp has developed its own identity, influenced by its direct surroundings, the legislation of its host country towards refugees, previous - political - events, etc. Although the dispersion has left the Palestinian community as a patchwork of

diverse identities, their common past and future - as mentioned before - bind all Palestinians together.

Before, it was stated that a camp showed to be a direct reminder of the displacement - this was very noticeable during interviews with elder generations - and thus a representation of movement. But simultaneously it became clear through experience that a camp is also the opposite, a representation of the impossibility to move. Not only does this refer to the prevented return, but also to the restrictions that come with the refugee status and the lack of legal identity. Refugees - such as the Gaza camp inhabitants - are mostly confined to the space that was granted to them, within strictly defined borders. As such, the Palestinian displacement and the life in exile are inextricably linked to the notions of space and its limitations or borders. While in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank physical and tangible borders - in camps and cities alike - indicate the territorial results of the Israeli colonization, camps outside the former Palestinian territory are rather articulated by political borders and social boundaries that are felt strongly by those who live within or just outside the space of the camp. Although less tangible, camp borders are a constant reminder of the extraordinary state of the camp and the exile and displacement that lay at its origin. The significance of the border will be explained much more elaborate in further chapters.

[1] www.unrwa.org





STATE OF EXCEPTION

The Italian political philosopher, Giorgio Agamben, introduced the concept of a 'State of Exception' as a frame in which - Palestinian - refugee camps can be understood.[Husn I, 2011-2012] He refers to the camp as the materialization of the state of exception, as an ex-cepted space, taken outside - *ex-capere* - the legal order and included through its own exclusion. These camps - mostly concentration camps from the Second World War - were defined by Carl Schmitt as sites of intensified sovereign power, in which the legal order was suspended by the sovereignty of the nation-state. According to Agamben, in contemporary politics, this has in fact become the rule. "This is a condition that he identifies as one of abandonment, in which the law is in force but has no content or substantive meaning - it is in force without significance." [Catherine Mills]. As a result, the subject of the law - in this case that would be the refugee - is at the same time turned over to the law and deprived by it. In such a state the subject has become, what Agamben describes as, the "*Homo Sacer*": a man taken outside the law as the exception, stripped of all political life (*bios*) and reduced to bare natural life (*zoe*). However, this "*bare life*" is no exception in contemporary politics, so Catherine Mills explains: "for Agamben, the fact that the exception has become the norm or rule of contemporary politics means that it is not the case that only some subjects are abandoned by the law; rather, he states that in our age, we are all virtually *homines sacri*.""

Several questions now arise, for instance; How does this theory relate to the issue of the refugee camp? Can we blindly apply the notion of "State of exception" to the camp and the notion of "Homo Sacer" to its dwellers? Do Palestinian refugees really find themselves fully abandoned by the law?

There is no doubt that a refugee camp is exceptional in many ways. It was built as a

temporary place of refuge, not as a home; It is dependent of humanitarian aid, not only of the government; Its community is "hosted" by a country, not considered a part of it; and so on. Nevertheless, what Julie Peteet [2005] states when she explains that "by definition, refugees have been excluded from the state and can no longer avail themselves of its protection", we consider as a little too bold. Being excluded from citizenship and from several rights, such as the Gaza camp refugees, does not signify that the refugees are fully excluded from the state, or stand outside the law - as Agamben would describe it - rather we could suggest that they stand one foot inside, and one foot outside of it. The hosting state does have a significant influence in the camps, but opposed to Agamben's intensified sovereign power, it forms only a part of the multiplicity of sovereignties that govern a camp.

The refugees are thus partly abandoned by the law and live in a state of semi-exclusion. During the fieldwork the impression arose that the refugees of Gaza camp actually feel as if they belong to nowhere, neither fully to the Palestinian community, neither to the Jordanian one. "We are not Jordanian, we are not Palestinian ... everyday we dream of getting a nationality, Jordanian or Palestinian, to get the feeling somebody cares about us." [Mahmoud Riyad Kromp, 2013] This indicates that camp dwellers are significantly excluded as a community, and rather in part excluded legally - from citizenship - and physically - within the camp. In such a way, the "bare life" that is referred to by Agamben as the state in which refugees find themselves, might be more of a bare community life, and less of a bare individual life. Still to an extent individually subject to the law, the community of Palestinians in Gaza camp finds itself, excluded with no representation or political life, and subject to several sovereign powers.

IDENTITY AND RIGHT OF RETURN

“Space, place and landscape haunt the Palestinian imagination. Their identities are inseparable from their places of origin, desired places, and the contemporary landscape in which they reside.”
[Julie Peteet, 2005]

The concept of one’s “identity” can refer to a legal identity, of which many Palestinian refugees in camps are deprived, but it could also refer to one’s cultural and social identity, which is related to origin and provenance. It is the latter form of identity that proved to be amazingly strong in Gaza camp, where the physical entity of the camp itself might be an element supporting this identity. The Palestinian - social - identity is kept vivid throughout the articulation of the border, the unusually high density, the exceptional status, the humanitarian character, etc. Simultaneously the identity is expressed through these specific characteristics of the refugee camp. In contrast to Palestinians with a Jordanian passport who live spread across the country and who experience their Palestinian heritage rather individually, the camp generates a space of collective identity, where this experience seems to be much more intense. Collective identity forms the basis for a strong community to which all refugees are committed in a way that is incomparable to the individualism in most western countries. It proved to be surprising what can be achieved by the community as a whole and how rapid mutual support and protection are set in motion.

The former demonstrates the significance of identity, but what is understood by it, what is the essence of the Palestinian identity? Defining the identity of a people as an outsider is virtually impossible, nevertheless it is plain that this identity no longer constitutes only of the traditional Palestinian way of life, but that it is now inseparably interwoven with the injustice inflicted on Palestinians and with the land they cannot return to. The more the former

Palestinian lifestyle becomes a tale rather than a memory, the more the lost territory and the injustice become the beacons of Palestinian identity. As such today, the Right to return - to undo the injustice that was inflicted - is inextricably linked to “being Palestinian”.

There is not just one explicit manner in which this Right of return can be interpreted. Traditionally it is understood as the return to the village of origin and to the actual, individual house. The old key to the house, displayed in shelters as a valuable piece of art, is pre-eminently the symbol that stands for the Right to return and - even though it might be destroyed by now - the rightful ownership to that house.

Though this approach of the Right of return is still of paramount importance to the refugees, another relevant approach was rightly touched during a workshop at the Berlage Institute². A focus was laid on the common dimension of the Right to return, the right to the common. “We identified the right to the urban condition, ... at the same time it is the condition of the Mediterranean, which Palestine is geographically and culturally a part of, ... another aspect of the return to the common is the return to mobility, which has to do with the freedom of movement, culturally and economically, ... lastly the return to the common is the return to nature, because there has always been an important connection with nature or with the landscape.”² This interpretation of the return is not so much considering how Palestinians could return to their past, but rather how they could practice this Right of return starting from present conditions. The most significant present condition from which this right can be practiced is no less than the refugee camp itself. “Return has thus a simultaneous material effect in both the sites of origin (Palestine) and sites of displacement. The result might be a reciprocal extraterritoriality that connects these two sites. Both kept apart, both transferred to common use.”³



PALACE NOT FOR SALE

Glückselig

بمقتضى قرار مجلس إدارة المجلس
الخاص
إذ إن زوجه أستاذة العمل مدير فرقة
وهندسة الفنون في جامعة القاهرة
وأنه قد تم إقراره من قبل المجلس
في اجتماعه بتاريخ 15/1/2011
أشير إلى أن
العودة حق راس المجلس
بمقتضى قرار المجلس

A NEW MENTALITY?

“I congratulated him on this project. “But does it not preclude the idea of return by making something for people to settle for, to really settle I mean?” Here he looked at me and was firm: “For me that does not change anything. If I could go back, I would go back immediately, on my own. If I have no place to stay, I would sleep under a tree, no problem. My wife and my children could join me, or stay here, but I would go.””

[Lieven de Caeter, 2009]



*Focus Group during
fieldwork*

Former Pages

[2] www.youtube.com,

[3] www.decolonizing.ps

The former answer shows nicely how - as could also be felt in Gaza camp - the mentality in refugee camps is starting to change. Although refugees are not - even for all the money in the world - the least interested in waiving their desire to return, they have realised that a dignified environment and a humane life are not necessarily contradictory to this awaited return. As mentioned before, the right of return can even be practiced from the present condition of the refugee camp, as the right to the common.

Whereas any attempt to enhance living conditions in the past evoked serious protest, the younger generation - better and higher educated - adopts a different point of view. This generation has never seen the Palestine of which their grandparents always talk, the land and their former lives only exist in tales. Ismae'l Sheikh Hassan nicely puts that "with the fragmentation and dissolution of their physical spaces - a new 'Palestinian territory' has emerged that is made of paper and memory"[Sheikh Hassan, unpublished]. Consequently the younger generation experiences this memory and their Palestinian identity very differently compared to former generations. There is no nostalgia, no real miss, rather there is a kind of natural longing and a more rational conception of their reality. This does not mean that there is no emotional connection to their land of origin - on the contrary - but the reflection on the current situation, the history and the possible return are more rational. "We need to study, we need to become an intelligent community so that we are a stronger one"[Mahmoud Riyad Kromp, 2013] This indicates that the notion of the right to the common and the importance of the community to maintain the identity is as much starting to be understood in the camps, as it is in the academic world.

The conception of the refugee camp is not the same as it used to be some decades ago. Rather than being a temporary place of refuge, it is starting to be perceived as a space from which the right to return can be actively exercised. The camp is no longer a gap in the lives of the refugees, it has completely become a part of it, as well as it has become a part of the identity and the aspiration to return. And while this aspiration continues, a dignified and proper environment does not deny the return, on the contrary, it would enhance the feeling of belonging to the Palestinian identity and to its common.

A MULTIPLICITY OF BODIES

The governance of a refugee camp does not lay in the hands of one singular body or sovereignty. As brought up before, Gaza camp needs to deal with a multiplicity of bodies that are trying to keep a hand in its development. Carrying the complex status it does, and hosting a refugee population without proper rights and excepted from the state, the politics in a Palestinian camp consist of a fragile and complicated web of different authorities and bodies, each with certain responsibilities, visions and say. In every host country, the division of these responsibilities is diverse as every legislation deals differently with the refugee case.

as the main sovereign, collaborating powers within the camp. First of all the Jordanian government is represented by the Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA), specifically established for dealing with Palestinian refugees residing in the country. Furthermore UNRWA operates as the main humanitarian body in the camp, representing the United Nations and its member states, while other non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and individuals take on smaller parts of the humanitarian aid. Finally, not to be overlooked, are the local municipalities adjoining the camp. Although they do not have actual say in the goings of Gaza camp, they do influence many decisions that are made, and they are a key collocutor when something needs to be done outside the official borders.



UNRWA

“UNRWA is created by General Assembly resolution 302 (IV), with the initial mandate to provide “direct relief and works programmes” to Palestine refugees, in order to “prevent conditions of starvation and distress... and to further conditions of peace and stability”. UNRWA takes over from the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR), established in 1948.¹ Such was the initial assignment of UNRWA, but as time passed and camps developed, the Agency’s services evolved and they now “encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance, including in times of armed conflict.”¹ Nevertheless, it is not UNRWA’s responsibility to be occupied with the administration, the law or the security in the camp, as those are concerns of the DPA.²

Apart from creating job opportunities and offering services and basic necessities, UNRWA fulfills an entirely different function towards the refugees, one that is not explicitly described on its official website, but that could strongly be sensed among the camp inhabitants. As the organization stands closest to the refugees - many refugees work at UNRWA, employees personally know most inhabitants and their situation, UNRWA is omnipresent in practically all activities within the camp, etc. - it has come to be seen as a piece of the camp itself, an indispensable element and even a part of the Palestinian identity. A second reason for UNRWA to be associated with the identity of the refugees lies in its humanitarian character. Humanitarian aid is commonly connected to the idea of people in need, who find themselves in an abominable situation of which they cannot get out without the help of others. The refugee is a prime example of such a case. If Palestinian refugees would no longer be considered in need of humanitarian aid, if they would be considered living in acceptable circumstances,

the Right of return to their former homes and lives, would not be such an issue. As such, by its continuous presence, UNRWA is keeping the Right of return alive and by that also the fundamentals of the Palestinian identity. “We feel like UNRWA is our country”[Mahmoud Riyad Kromp, 2013]

In the field, it quickly became clear how the cooperation between UNRWA and the DPA does not always go without a hitch. Especially when it concerns UNRWA’s infrastructure and Camp Improvement Program, which pretty much completely overlaps with the responsibilities of the DPA. Both concerned with the refugees, but each pursuing their proper ideals and goals, occasional collisions seem inevitable. Sadly such encounters generally tend to slow down or even put a stop to projects that are intended to improve the living conditions of the refugees.

“UNRWA works closely with a wide range of partners – from the smallest local NGOs to sister UN organisations with global mandates, each with unique resources and strengths – in order to deliver the best possible services to Palestine refugees. UNRWA also partners with companies, individuals and academic institutions.”¹

As UNRWA coordinates the aid from its various partners, the NGO’s - and others - provide financial support, knowledge and expertise, and goods. In Gaza camp several shelters, mosques and the ‘French’ hospital came forth as the tangible proof and visible evidence of humanitarian aid from all over the world.

[1] www.unrwa.org, [2] www.space-time-dignity-rights.com



The youth club in Gaza camp was originally founded and funded by the DPA. Nowadays it also hosts an office for the Camp Committee and its members.

DPA

Officially the Department of Palestinian Affairs “takes care of all administrative and security matters related to the thirteen camps in Jordan. It supervises the physical infrastructure in the camps including water pipes, sewage systems, electricity and road maintenance. It monitors the construction of residential and commercial units and outlets in the camps.”[El Abed, 2004] The DPA is a department of Jordan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which demonstrates how the issue of the Palestinian refugee is not considered a Jordanian matter and how refugees are rather treated as foreigners, than as formal inhabitants of the country.³ In Gaza camp the DPA has tried

to involve refugees in the decision making and the management of the camp, by appointing a committee - the Camp Committee - of leading community figures. The committee is supposed to form a link between refugees and government, as such the government is informed on the needs of the inhabitants and vice versa, the camp inhabitants feel more involved in their camp. However, due to the undemocratic nomination of the committee members and the meager response to many high needs, the community has lost its faith in the committee and does not really consider its members as representatives of the camp.



The nearby municipality of Sakib is pretty self-sufficient. However it is still interesting for the town to be on good terms with the camp as it provides interesting services and opportunities.

MUNICIPALITIES

At last, there are the municipalities, local authorities that prevalingly seek to meet the needs and desires of their inhabitants. As many local Jordanians are not always content with having a refugee camp in their vicinity, neighbouring municipalities are often put under pressure to object against interventions inside and around Gaza camp for the benefit of the refugees. Although locals admit the camp forms an important asset to their environment, they frequently reject and protest against any project that might increase the presence of Palestinians in the neighbourhood of the camp.

However, any municipality might be interested in projects that could simultaneously benefit the municipality as well. This provides an interesting, open window for interventions and project that do not necessarily have to lay inside the official camp borders.

[3] www.dpa.gov.jo

Even though the multiplicity of bodies governing the camp causes some serious issues of collaboration and coordination, much might be done for the refugees and their living environment if all stakeholders could be stirred with some benefits for their proper cause. In the end, it is only through this collaboration that steps can be taken to improve living conditions - UNRWA's "vision is for every Palestine refugee to enjoy the best possible standards of human development"⁴ - and thus, it is essential to get the DPA, UNRWA, the municipalities and the NGO's around the table for discussion.

A fine example of such a collaboration is the currently executed sewerage project. As the last refugee camp in Jordan, Gaza camp is - as we speak - receiving a full sewerage network for the drainage of its grey water. The project is a result of the cooperation between the DPA, UNRWA, the local municipalities - on who's sewerage network the system is being connected - and the Swiss Agency of Development and Cooperation (SDC). "The project aims to ensure equal access to safe drinking water as well as efficient and sustainable sanitation facilities to all of the camp's 2,550 households. It also aims to decrease cases of diarrhea significantly, especially among children below three years old. Refugees will benefit from employment opportunities during construction."⁵

[4] www.space-time-dignity-rights.com, [5] www.sdc.admin.ch





GAZA CAMP'S COORDINATES



Due to the Palestinian exodus, thousands of Palestinian families were dispersed across several host-countries in the Middle East. Subsequently, they found shelter through the installation of many temporal refugee camps, which, after half a century, became part and parcel of the landscape in which they are embedded. Getting a grasp on the hosting areas' history and contemporary conditions - climate, vegetation, mobility,... - is therefore crucial in the understanding how the camps have been evolving and how the camps are related to their environments. Hence, the following chapter will be discussing Gaza camp's host-country, Jordan, and its hosting region, Jerash, in an attempt to shed light on the environmental conditions and their consequences for the camp.

JORDAN, A REFUGEE HAVEN

“Jordan is the America of the Middle East. Everybody goes there.”

- Christopher Ibrahim (American Palestinian)

Jordan has been shaped by its extensive history. The ancient lands of Palestine and Jordan have always served as the nexus connecting Asia, Africa and Europe. Due to its central position and its important role as a conduit for trade and communication, Jordan has been home to some of mankind's earliest settlements.¹ Traces of history are still present in the country's well-preserved landscape.

The independent Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as we know it today, was established in 1946.² It became a relatively stable country and quickly gained a reputation of hospitality towards refugees. Since *Al-Nakbah*, the Palestinian exodus of 1948, Jordan's demographical, economical and socio-political situation has been strongly influenced by numerous migration waves from neighbouring states like Palestine, Iraq and Syria.³ Real native Jordanians principally originate from small Jordanian villages and Bedouin families, while current Jordanians are largely descendants from neighbouring states. Half of Jordan's population officially consists of Palestinians⁴, although there are also hundreds of thousands of other refugees and guest workers.⁵

[1] www.kinghussein.gov.jo, [2] www.wikipedia.org, [3] www.migrationpolicy.org, [4] www.cidcm.umd.edu, [5] www.wikipedia.org

Ruins of the ancient city of Gerasa, Jordan (1867).



Bedouin family.



Due to *Al-Nakbah* (1948) and *Al-Naksah* (1967), thousands of Palestinian families were dispersed across Palestine's neighbouring countries and brought back together in 64 Palestinian refugee camps.

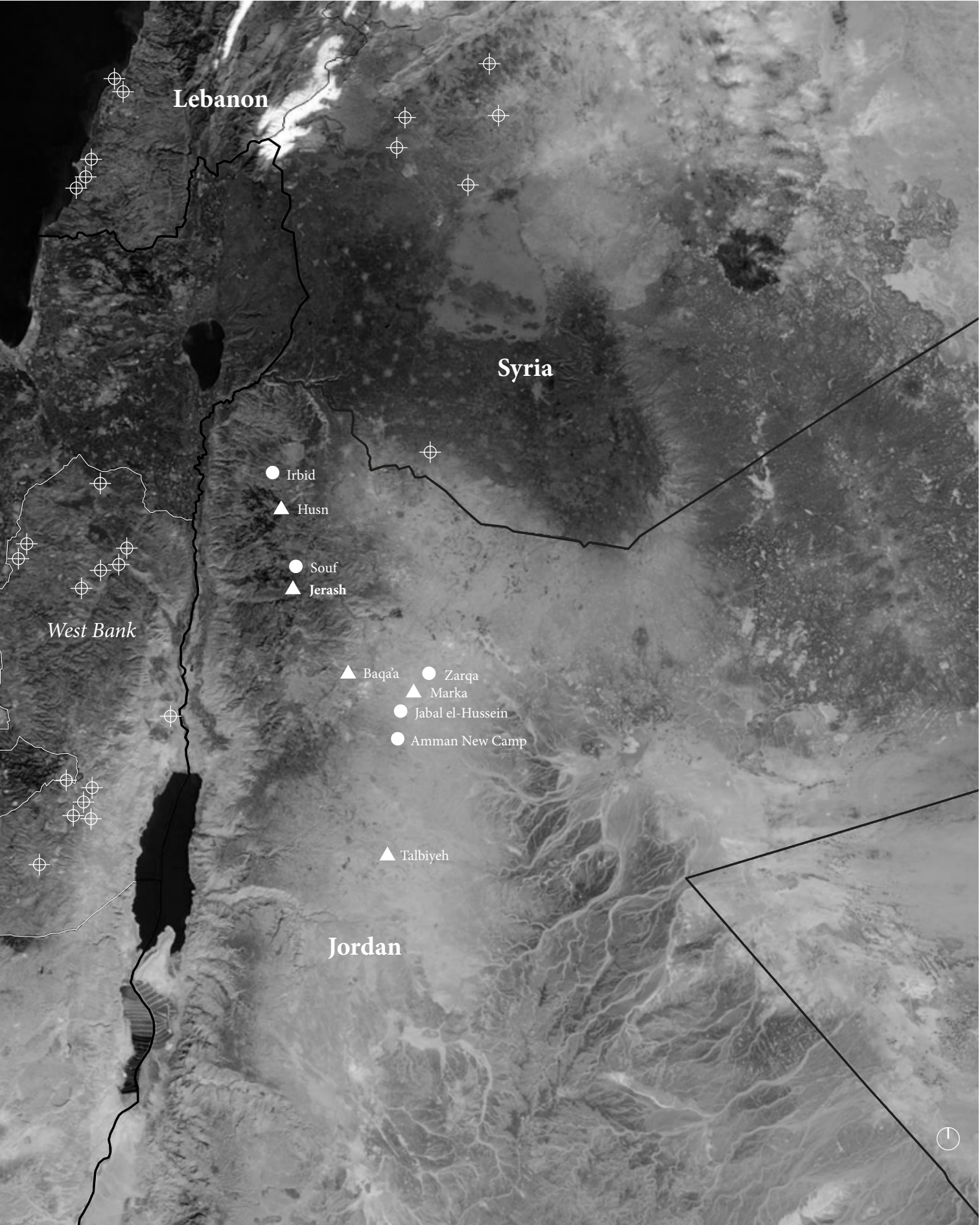
Nowadays, about 370.000 Palestinian refugees are still living in refugee camps in Jordan, spread over the north-western part of the country.⁶ According to the DPA, there are 13 Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, but only 10 of them are officially recognised by UNRWA. [Khawaja and Tiltnes, 2002] The camps in Jordan are predominantly located around the largest cities like Amman, Jerash and Irbid. [Sheikh Hassan, unpublished] Five of these camps were set up in response to the mass flight following *Al-Nakbah*. The remaining camps were initiated to shelter the approximate 300.000 displaced people as a result of *Al-Naksah*.⁷

[6] www.unrwa.org, [7] www.palestinefacts.org

- Camp established in 1948, Jordan ●
- Camp established in 1967, Jordan ▲
- Camp in other host-country ⊕

source: www.unrwa.org





Lebanon

Syria

Jordan

West Bank

● Irbid

▲ Husn

● Souf

▲ Jerash

▲ Baqa'a ● Zarqa

▲ Marka

● Jabal el-Hussein

● Amman New Camp

▲ Talbiyeh





Camp in Jordan Valley, 1967



Ghor Nimrin Camp, 1967

The decisive factors in the choice for the location of Palestinian refugee camps are not univocal, but differ from camp to camp and depend on the date of establishment. The first camps that emerged shortly after *Al-Nakbah*, were mainly located close to the border of the Palestinian territories or in the West Bank, reflecting the refugees intention to return as soon as the situation would calm down. These initially tented camps arose where and how the refugees had gathered and were determined by the refugees' initiatives through negotiating directly with landowners.[Sheikh Hassan, unpublished]

After the first year, other actors started playing a decisive role in locating new refugee camps. Firstly, the governments of the host countries mainly decided the location and the size of new camps, based on several variables such as the availability and rent prices of land, as well as security considerations. Besides, UNRWA also influenced the final location of the camps, aiming for control in relation to hygiene and relief management. The latter's vision on the location and size of camps often collided with that of the hosting government. Where UNRWA considered tented camps along the borders as unsafe and difficult to reach, the Jordanian government pleaded for locating camps within the border region of the Jordan

Valley to increase pressures for the Right of return.[Sheikh Hassan, unpublished]

This led to the emergence of several tented camps in the Jordan Valley by early November 1967, as an accommodation for the second wave of displaced Palestinians caused by the Arab-Israeli war.

These camps were evacuated in February 1968, due to military actions along the Jordan river, forcing the refugees to move eastwards to the hills covering the Jordan Valley and beyond. Here, new camps were established according to the Jordanian policy to limit them in size and have them geographically scattered.

Hereby, Palestine's social and physical networks were fragmentised, which is reflected in their distinctive spatial forms and site-specific relations to their immediate environments. Even within the same host-country, camps can be clearly distinguished from one another. The original location of the camp is considered to be the main factor in the acquirement of its own identity.[Sheikh Hassan, unpublished] In the case of Gaza camp, its present spatial, economical and social existence is clearly defined by its embedment in the landscape of Jerash governorate.

A comprehensive comparison of Jordan's climate is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it can be easily proved that the location of Gaza camp is one of the greenest and most fertile areas in Jordan. The highlands in the north-west of the country receive the highest amount of rainfall, making these lands appropriate to support agriculture, to, in turn, sustain large populations. Hence, most of the urban civilizations of Jordan are located there. The southern and eastern deserts on the other hand, are home to some dispersed, nomadic tribes, more commonly referred to as Bedouins. They are the least populated regions of Jordan. The fertile conditions of Jordan's north-west highlands directly affect the socio-economical situation in Gaza camp. It is stated that the camp is one of the more rural camps in terms of population's involvement in agriculture. [Khawaja and Tiltnes, 2002]

"God is with us. We get a lot of rain compared to the rest of Jordan. He has not forgotten the Palestinian refugees!"

- Quote from focus group with elderly women



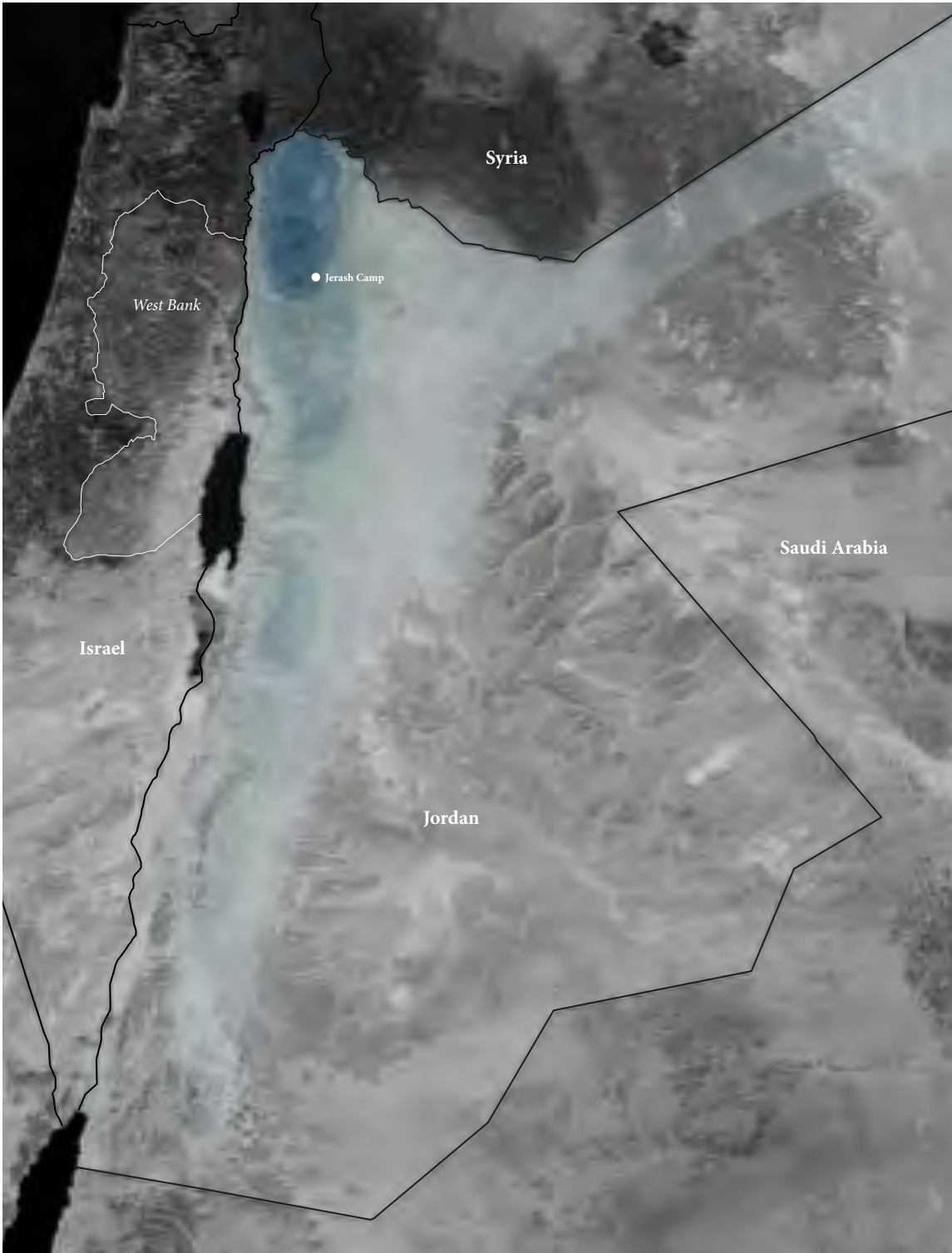
Syria

● Jerash Camp

Jordan

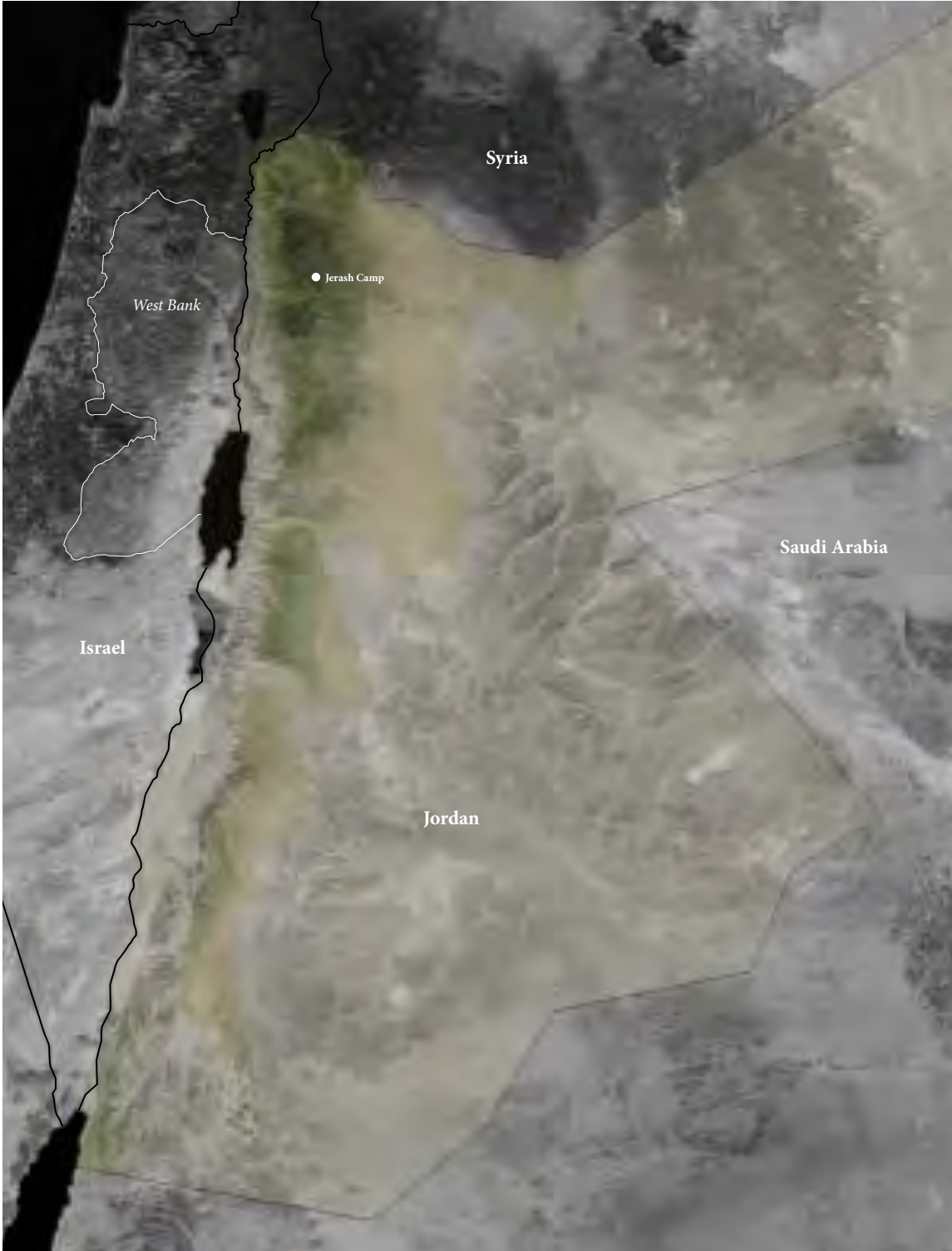
Saudi Arabia





Yearly amount of rain (mm)





JERASH, LANDSCAPE OF SHIFTING IDENTITIES

The study of the ancient landscape of Jerash reveals numerous remnants and ruins, the memorials of thousands of years of civilization. Due to the fertility of the soil, the continuous presence of fresh water and its prominent location along the main trade network, the area between wadi Jerash and the perched forests of Dibeen attracted different peoples and tribes throughout time. All have left their traces and have contributed to the richness of the landscape in which present day Gaza camp is embedded.

Although the first settlements in the area around Jerash date back to prehistoric and neolithic ages, the small town which later became the great city of Gerasa, was established around

2500 B.C. The town was called “Antioch on the Chrysorrhoas”, which literally means “Golden River”, referring to the stream that runs through the town and ends up in the Jabbok river, which today is called *Al-Zarqa'a* river.¹

The ancient city of Gerasa, was founded by Alexander the Great around 331 B.C. and grew rapidly through its increasing prosperity and security. In the first century A.D., Gerasa was characterised by an accumulation of wealth and became one of the major free cities of the Decapolis. Flourishing trading relations with neighbouring regions led to the establishment of an extensive network of trade routes.²



After three ages of increasing wealth, the trade routes shifted eastwards due to the growth of the Sassanian Kingdom in Iraq. Although the flourishing days of the city of Gerasa were over, it still attracted some large Christian communities during the next few ages. Around 614 A.D., the decline of the city was heavily accelerated by a Persian invasion and the Muslim Conquest. Yet, it got its final blow by a series of devastating earthquakes.¹ The once-great city of Gerasa was completely uninhabited during the next millennium. A remarkable break in the civilization of Jerash that safeguarded the old ruins of the Roman city from demolitions and restorations.

[1] www.almashriq.hiof.no, [2] www.wikipedia.org

*Ruins of the ancient city of
Gerasa, Jordan.*



Unlike the city of Gerasa, some Jordanian villages ten kilometers east of Jerash resisted the oppression of external powers. These ancient villages - today called Sakib - and their tribes were known for their hospitality and protection towards Christian refugees from all over the Levant. In these small villages, Muslims and Christians lived side-by-side for many ages.³

In early nineteenth century, there was a growing interest in the ancient site of Gerasa among the surrounding Jordanian villages like Sakib, Raymun and Al-Kittah. Their inhabitants could be considered as the founders of the modern city of Jerash. The combination of the regional road, which connected Damascus with Salt and Jerusalem, and the fertility of wadi Jerash, was probably the main trigger of Jerash's modern civilization. In 1878, a first wave of refugees - Caucasian families who fled the Ottoman-Russian war - found shelter in the city of Jerash. A second wave of Syrian refugees followed soon, all settling themselves upon and adding new elements to the ancient landscape of Jerash.³



After the Second World War, the modernization of The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the successive waves of refugees from its neighbouring states resulted in several drastic changes in the region. The influx of Palestinian ('48, '68), Iraqi ('91-'04) and Syrian (from '11) refugees caused an unseen demographic growth and the establishment of several temporal installations like Souf camp and Gaza camp.⁴ Even though the camps were intended as temporal, the almost 50 years old settlements became part and parcel of the regional landscape and built mutual, but perhaps disproportional, relationships with their neighbouring villages, cities and natural elements.

[3] www.middle-east-online.com, [4] www.unhcr.org



Current location Gaza camp ⊕
Ruins and remnants ☆

S A M A R I A

JEPHATH



Reimun

Tekitty

Jerash

Dibbin



The transformation the landscape is undergoing due to the rapid modernization of Jordan, is even more embodied by the construction of highways and distorting development projects. In the region of Jerash, two infrastructural interventions are worth mentioning, regarding the current situation of Gaza camp. In 1971, three years after the establishment of Gaza camp, the Jordanian government constructed the King Talal dam across the stream of *Al-Zarqa'a* river, creating a water reservoir of 56 million cubic meter to counter the country's water scarcity.⁵ As a result, the ancient trade route between Damascus and Jerusalem, which passes through the centre of present day Gaza camp, was interrupted. A new, fast highway between Jerash and Amman now replaces this ancient, trading route.

These new, perhaps disruptive conditions frame a secluded area in the south-east of the camp which is sparsely inhabited. The area is clearly defined by the new highway embedded in wadi Jerash in the east, the *Zarqa'a* basin in the south, the Dibeen forests in the west and some steep hilltops in the north. They form crucial preconditions for the development of the Palestinian community in and around Gaza camp, residing in the area.

With the construction of the King Talal dam and the highway, the once so important regional road was downscaled to a local road connecting the city of Jerash to the forests of Dibeen. On the intersection of this road with the road leading to Sakib, Raymun and Al-Kittah, Gaza camp was established.

[5] www.web.macam.ac.il

*Historical map (1959),
complemented with more recent
installations:*

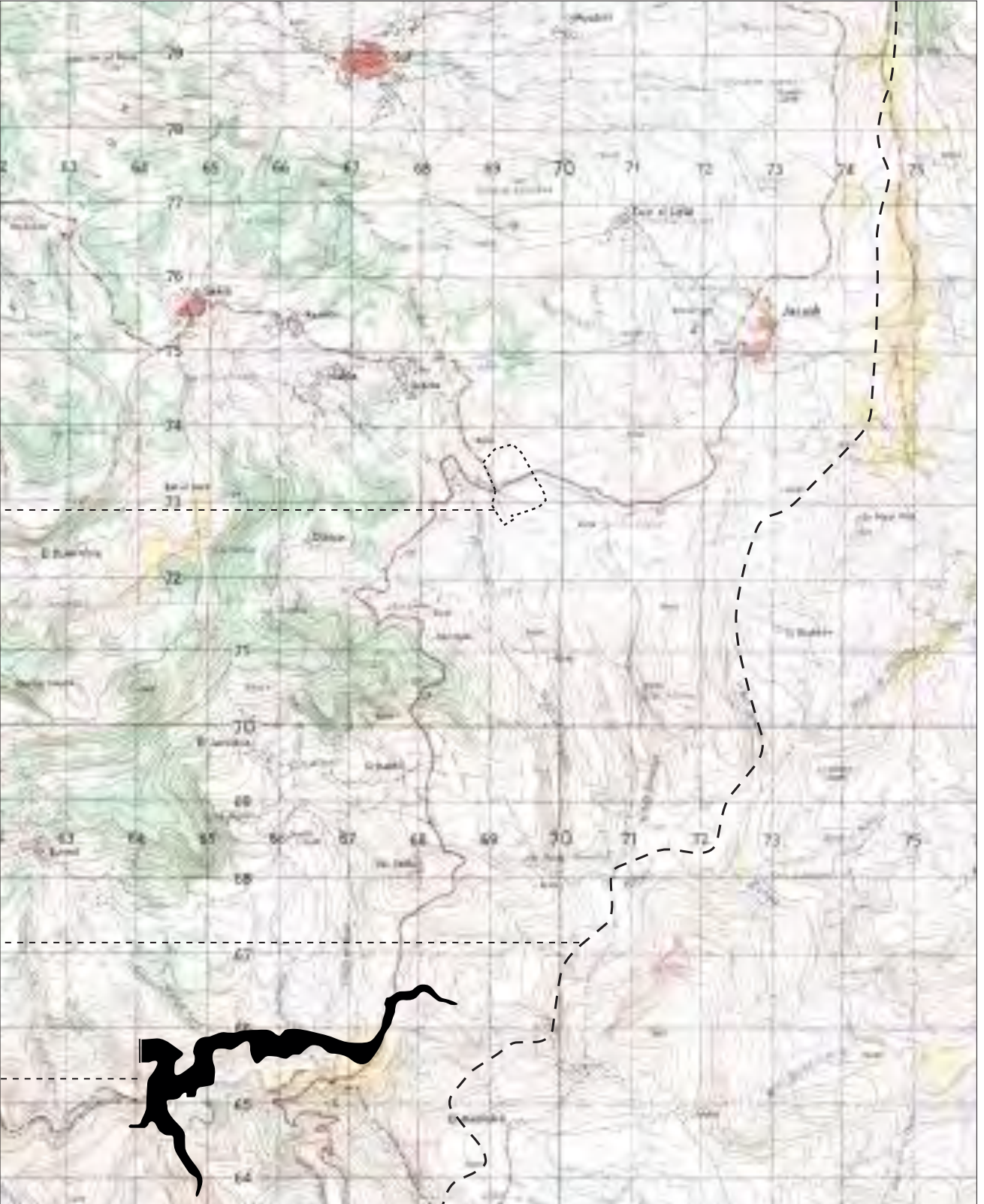
Gaza camp -----

Highway Amman-Irbid -----

King Talal dam -----



*Road Damascus - Jerusalem
through Al-Zarqa'a valley.*







A PLACE OF REFUGE AMIDST A VERSATILE LANDSCAPE

Gaza camp is situated in Jerash governorate which, in terms of surface area, is the smallest of the 12 Jordanian governorates. The governorate carries the name of its capital and largest city, Jerash. Besides the city of Jerash, the governorate includes 22 villages and 2 Palestinian refugee camps, Gaza camp and Souf camp (both established in 1967 after the Six-Day War).¹ As a result of the presence of both camps on its territory, the population density of Jerash, 410 pers/sq.km, is the second highest in Jordan.²

When comparing the fabric of the camps with that of the surrounding villages or urbanized areas in the governorate, the camps can clearly be distinguished as alien patterns in the territory. The difference in density between - for example - the city of Jerash and Gaza camp is therefore also an astonishing 410 to 23602 pers/sq.km.[UNRWA survey, 2007] Although the governorate is quite sparsely populated, the camps inside it are extreme concentrations of large communities.

[1] www.wikipedia.org, [2] www.dos.gov.jo



Gaza strip

King Talal dam

West Bank

Jordan valley

Zarqa'a river



Dibeen forest

Gaza camp

Jerash city

Mediterranean sea





32°15'43.64" N

35°51'20.96"O





Sakib

Raymun

Al-Kittah

Gaza cam

Neighbouring villages
Grid unit 1km



Jerash city

pp

NEIGHBOURING VILLAGES

Present day Jerash city, located about five kilometers north-east of Gaza camp, provides some larger and more specific services to the entire area; two hospitals, a private university and an extensive commercial area including a *souq* - the Arabic term for 'market' - and a wide variety of specialised stores.

Apart from being a concentration of facilities for its surroundings, Jerash is an international attraction and cornerstone for Jordanian tourism. The city became famous for its well preserved ruins and remnants of the ancient Roman city of Gerasa. Apart from a large site right in the heart of the city, many more ruins are scattered all over its landscape. The Roman site is ranked the number two 'place to be' in Jordan - after Petra - and attracts around 200 000 international tourists each year. Furthermore, the old ruins turn into the scene of a magnificent two-week festival for art, music, culture, theatre and more, each summer. The Jerash Festival tries to attract all ages by offering a wide variety of activities, spectacles and shops from 5pm to 11pm, leaving time for the discovery of the rest of Jordan during the day. As summer is a rather quiet period for tourism in Jordan, the sudden influx of thousands of tourists gives the economy an extra boost.³

On the perched hills in the west of the camp, three smaller villages - Sakib, Raymun and Al-Kittah - are located. Sakib, the largest population of all three, disposes of an active commercial centre, several facilities and a bus station that connects it to the public transportation network. Therefore, Sakib could be considered a self-supporting village and its inhabitants rarely visit Gaza camp for any of its services.






Raymun and Al-Kittah on the other hand are much more dependent on their neighbouring villages. The Jordanians living in these smaller villages often make use of Gaza camp's *souq*, gas- and bus station. The camp's health centre and mechanical workshops along the main road however, attract people from all over the governorate, even from the city, due to their cheap and qualitative services.

Unlike many other refugee camps - e.g. Husn camp -, Gaza camp has quite a positive relationship with its Jordanian neighbours. There is a certain mutual dependency between the smaller villages, the camp and the city of Jerash, which caused the camp to become an indispensable element in the landscape.

[3] www.atlastours.net








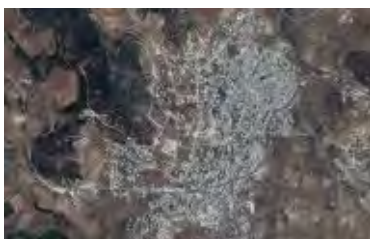
Gaza camp

-  26785
-  UNRWA clinic
-  Health Centre
-  4 schools
-  souq + shopping area








Jerash city

-  41500
-  2 hospitals
-  university + schools
-  souq + shopping area
-  ancient sites





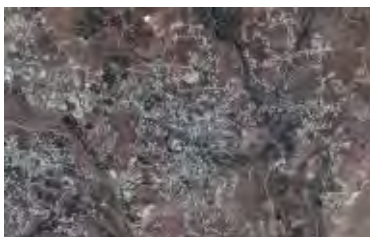
Sakib

-  15000
-  first aid centre
-  13 schools
-  souq + shopping area
-  ancient site







Raymun

-  8000
-  first aid centre
-  6 schools
-  scattered shops



Al-Kittah

-  8500
-  first aid centre
-  7 schools
-  scattered shops







The perched villages Sakib, Raymun and Al-kittah.



Centre of Sakib.



◀ Ajlun

Mobility
Grid unit 1km

Zarqa'a basin
▼



▲ Irbid

▼ Amman

MOBILITY

Gaza camp was originally established, as indicated before, on the historically important intersection between the ancient trade route from Jerusalem to Damascus, and the more local road to Sakib and Ajlun. The ancient regional road lost most of its importance after it got cut off by the filling of *Al-Zarqa'a* basin. Being located so close to the lake and the Dibeen forests, it is now an area popular among the prosperous, urban population of Amman for their country retreats.

Even though the old trade route - which is nowadays the main road of Gaza camp - no longer forms a continuous connection between significant cities, the camp is still well connected to its surroundings. Thanks to a good interconnection with the city of Jerash, most of the other, larger cities in the area - Amman, Irbid, Mafraq, etc. - can easily be reached.

Furthermore the northern villages are fastly accessible via one single road that strings Gaza camp, Al-Kittah, Raymun, Sakib and Ajlun together. Both roads intersect at the very heart of the camp, which caused this crossing to become the circulation, commercial and social centre of Gaza camp. Transportation in and around Gaza camp is mainly dominated by small busses, private cars and trucks. Only a minority of the camp inhabitants owns a car,

which makes public transport the primary way to travel. The centre of the camp is equipped with not only a gas-, but also a relatively large bus station.

Although busses to Amman and Jerash leave approximately every half an hour, an alternative taxi-service in private cars is also frequently made use of. This informal service logically results from the banning of Gaza refugees from working in the public sector.

Busses and private taxis drop off and pick up people anywhere along the road to Jerash for just a few piaster, a service that is commonly used by women and children living outside the official camp borders. Apart from taking busses to go to school or to buy groceries in the camp, public transportation is used to reach workplaces, universities or large cities with specific facilities, which the camp does not provide.

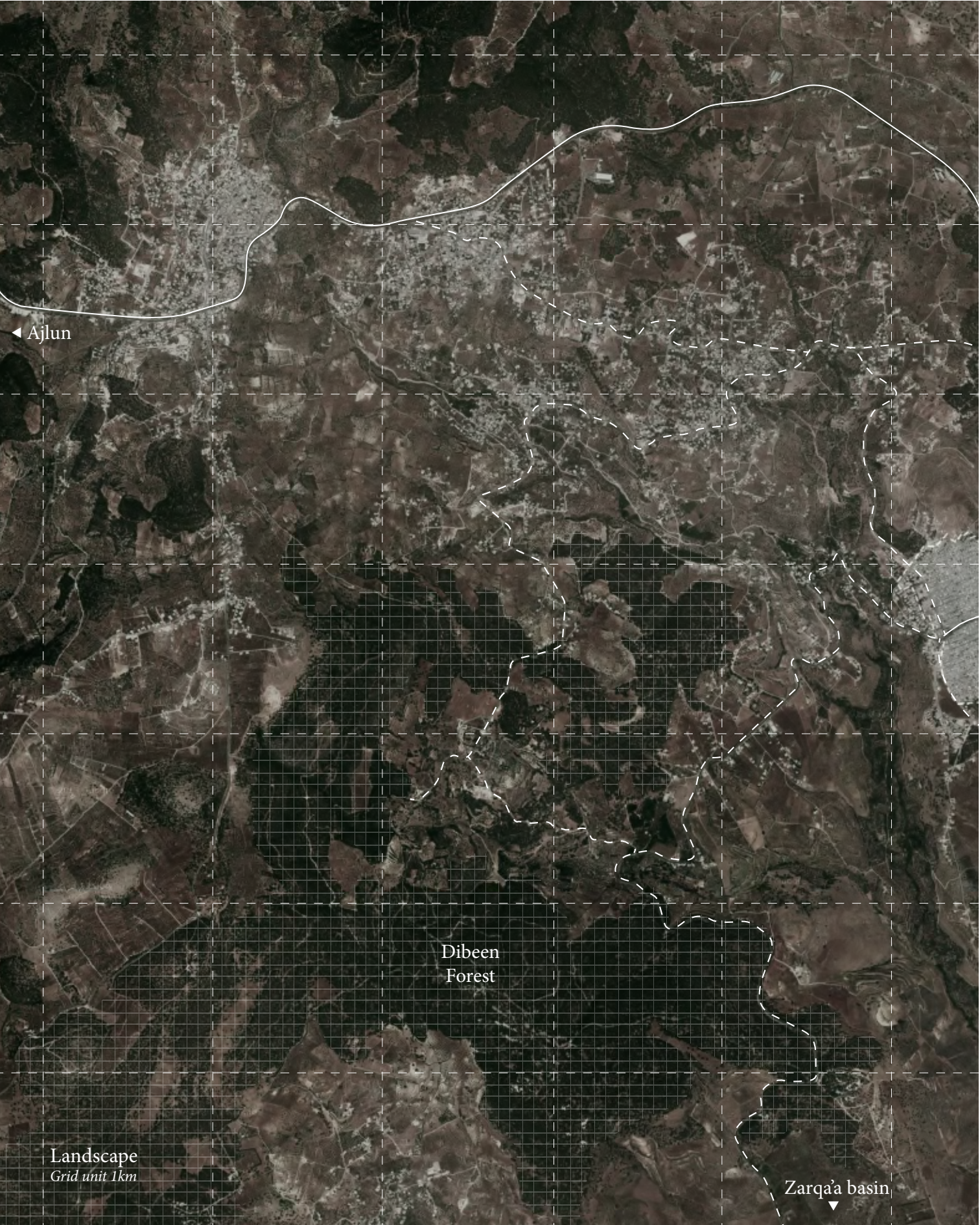
It is a prominent asset for Gaza camp to be such an important shackle in the transportation net around Jerash. Where many refugee camps are remote urban entities, located along branches of the road network, Gaza camp is greatly advantaged by its unique, central position and the transportation facilities - bus station, gas station, taxi service, car-mechanics - it provides.



Gaza camp's bus station



Gaza camp's gas station



◀ Ajlun

Dibeen
Forest

Zarqaa basin
▼

Landscape
Grid unit 1km



▲ Irbid

Ruins of
Gerasa

▼ Amman

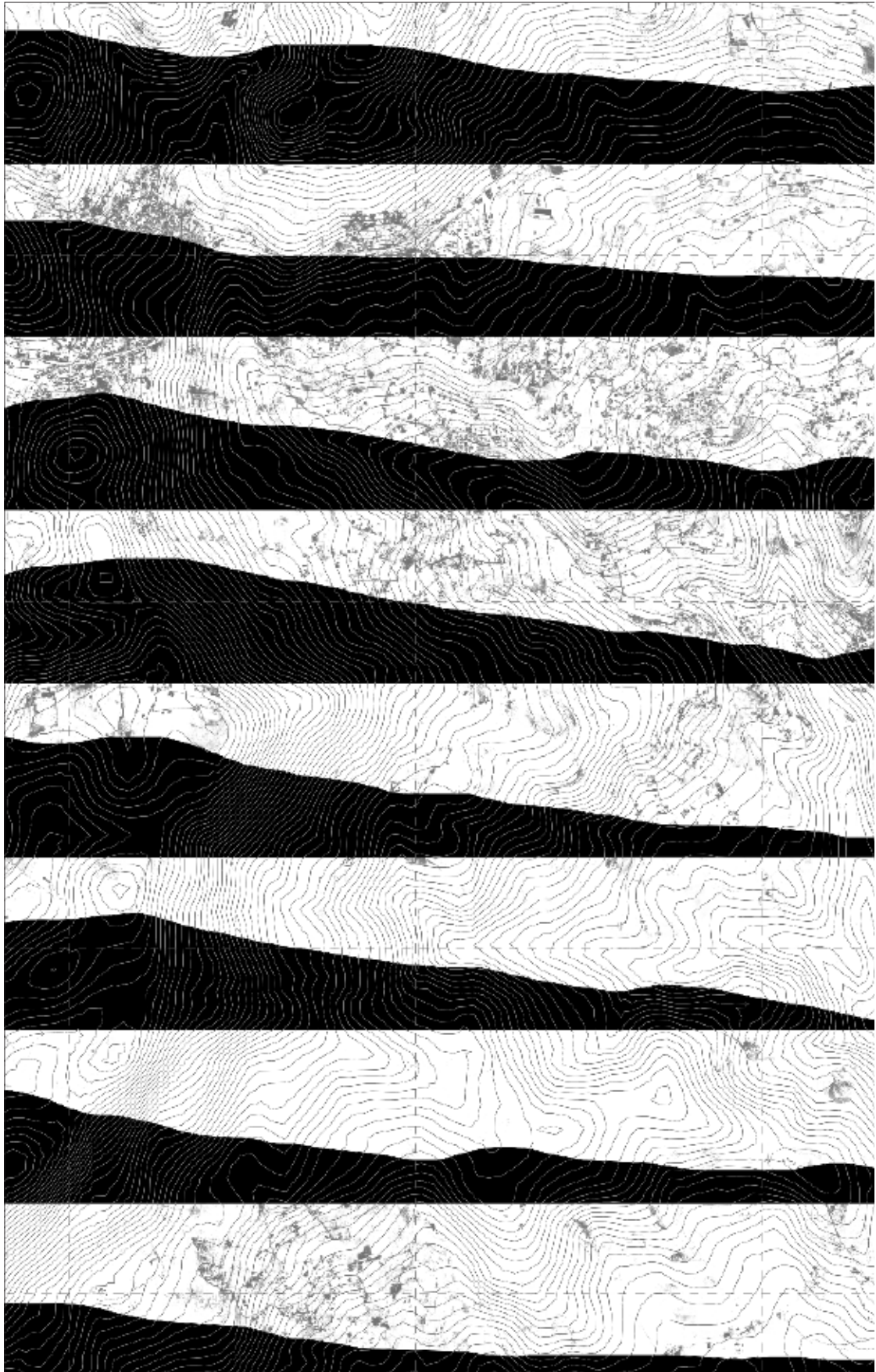


Section line

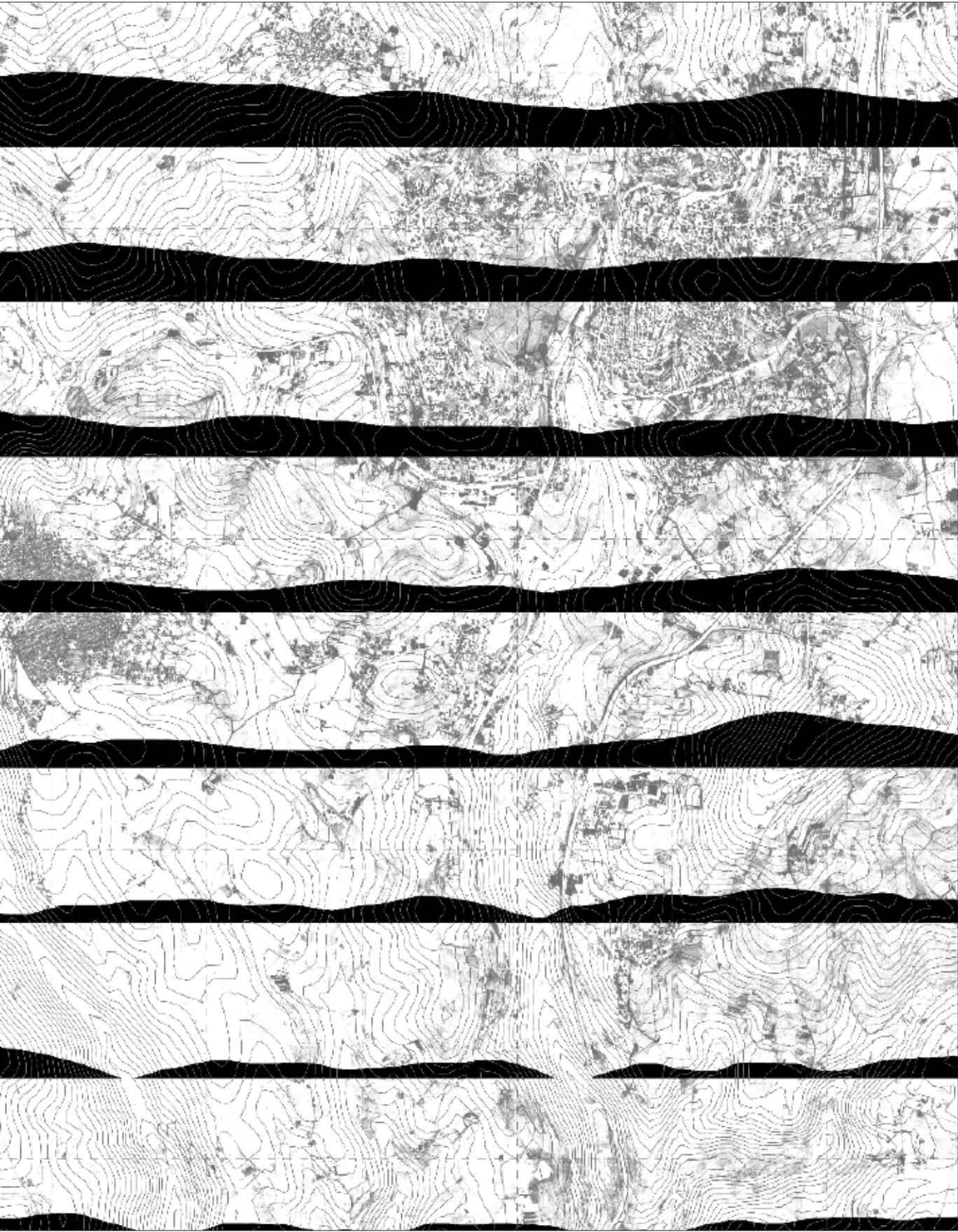
300m 1200m

Grid unit 1km





Grid unit 1km



LANDSCAPE

Apart from the more urbanised areas in the north and the east, the camp lies along a fertile area of valleys, stretching all the way to *Al-Zarqa'a* river in the south. The main activity in this area is agriculture. The deeper parts of the wadis - or valleys - are used for the growing of more fragile crops, while the upper parts are mainly cultivated with olive groves. Most of these groves are owned by Jordanians, but nevertheless provide seasonal jobs to the inhabitants of Gaza camp.

The wadis form an ecological system leading rainwater from the camp's immediate environment to *Al-Zarqa'a* river, located about six kilometers to the south. The water of *Al-Zarqa'a* gets collected in the water-basin of King Talal dam, before it flows further into the Jordan river.[cfr. Jerash, landscape of shifting identities] This entire area is quite distinctive from the rapidly urbanised areas around the camp. It is characterised by a slower way of life, less traffic, more zones of untouched nature and only a few scattered houses. Bedouins can still be found here, leading their grazing herds from source to source over the hilly landscape.

To the west lies the forests of Dibeen National Park, one of the few recognised and protected natural areas - determined by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature - in Jordan since 2004.⁴ These pristine forests form the habitat of some of the oldest and largest Aleppo pine trees in the country.⁵ The exceptional landscape of Dibeen is representative of the native, wild

forests that once covered large parts of Jordan's north-west highlands. Its globally significant biodiversity, wild animals and recreational hiking trails yearly attract thousands of visitors. This tourism is accommodated by a comprehensive tourist complex, including a rest-house, restaurant, sleeping chalets and a camping.⁶ The construction of this complex, as a matter of fact, led to an extensive debate on environmental conservation and economic development.⁷ Many tourists make a trip to the Dibeen forests as an extension of their visit to the ancient city ruins of Jerash. Besides its attractivity towards Jordanian and international tourists, the reserve is also very popular with the locals - Jordanian as well as Palestinian - especially on fridays, for picnics or barbeques.

Geographically, Gaza camp is located in between both tourist attractions, connecting them by its main road. Some tourists would stop at the camp to stock up supplies for the trip, owners of holiday homes on the road to the lake would let camp residents maintain their properties during absence, and visits to the car mechanics on the main road would be made in case of emergency. Nevertheless, many do avoid the camp and prefer traveling the extra distance through the northern villages to avoid the traffic jams for which Gaza camp is well known. In any case, it is certain that the camp and its residents could benefit much more from the advantageous position than they are doing now.

[4] www.international.visitjordan.com, [5] www.rscn.org.jo,

[6] www.lonelyplanet.com, [7] www.cmsdata.iucn.org





Dibeen National Reserve



[Next Page] View on Gaza camp and Jerash city from the Dibeen forests.

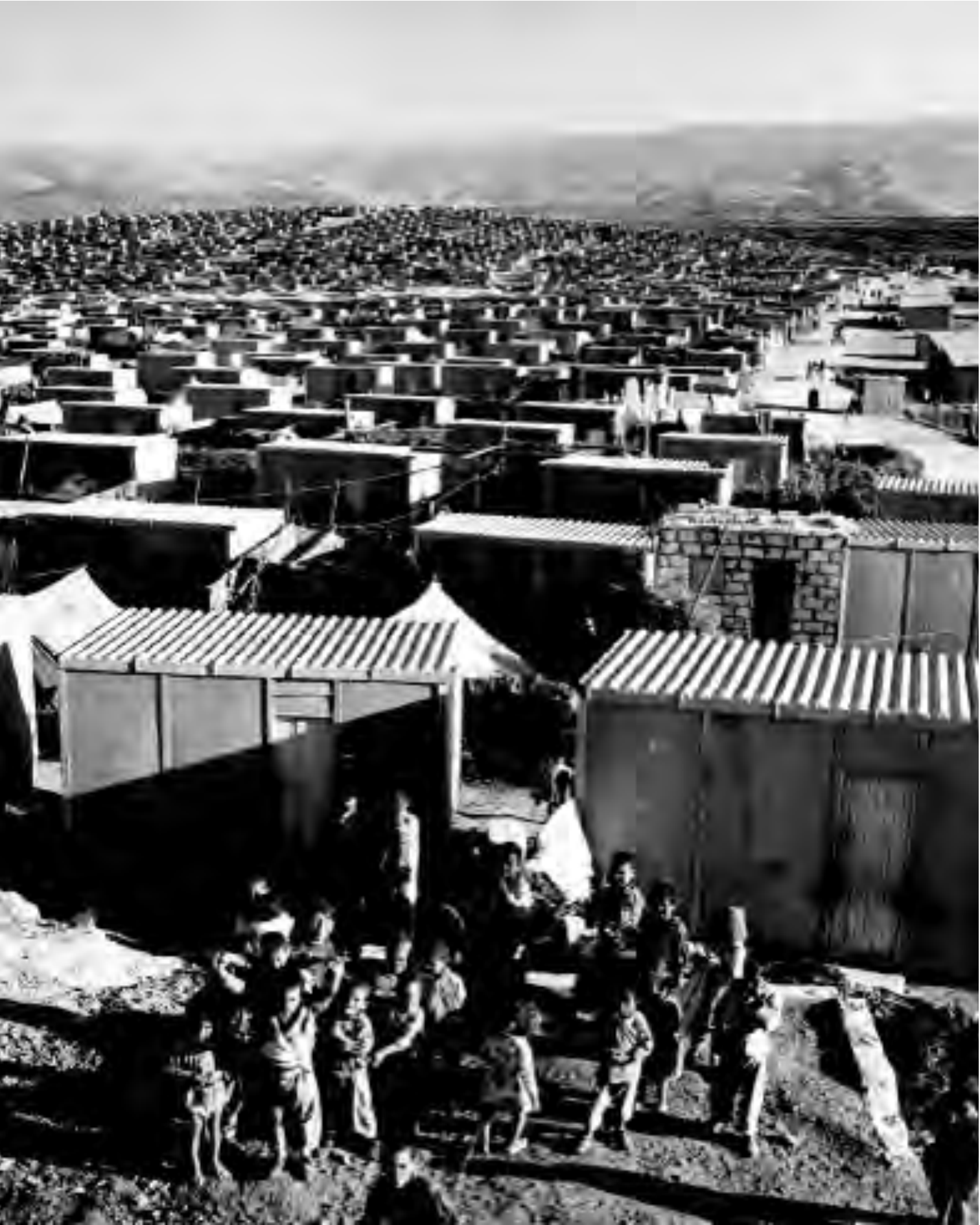






Al-Zarqa river





HISTORICAL GROWTH OF THE CAMP

IV

In order to understand Gaza camp's current physical appearance, it is crucial to get a grasp of the way the camp has grown as a spatial entity throughout its nearly half a century of existence. In the following chapter we'll run through five decades of this human settlement in exile, from the initial emergency tents over asbestos units towards the processes of densification and spatial integration that are ongoing as we speak. By focussing on the decisive factors that steered Gaza camp's spatial evolution, we'll seek to determine the underlying logics of its growth in order to get a view on how the camp will probably grow in the future.

MORPHOLOGICAL EVOLUTION OF THE CAMP

On the 3rd of March 1968, Jerash camp was established by UNRWA as a new emergency camp on an open land that was assigned to them by King Hussein of Jordan. An area of 0.75 square kilometres was provided to house the initially 11,500 Palestinian refugees and displaced persons coming from (other camps in) the Gaza Strip, either directly or after having spent several months in one of the refugee camps in the Jordan Valley.[cfr. Dual Displacement]

From the second focus group conducted with some of the elderly of the camp, the choice for establishing the camp on this location was not unambiguous but determined by a combination of several factors. Firstly, Gaza camp's coordinates relate strongly with the favourable topography. As a rather flat area amidst a hilly landscape, the site was suitable for easily putting up the tents that were assigned to the refugees by UNRWA at their arrival. Moreover, the area is sheltered from the wind by the hills in the north resulting in higher temperatures during cold winters. Another reason was the proximity of the city of Jerash, which was seen by UNRWA as a precondition for the camp inhabitants' access to employment and a necessity in order to facilitate the transportation of goods and services.[Al-Husseini, 2011]. Nonetheless, a certain distance with the city was preserved out of fear for the camp's incorporation with the neighbouring areas. The availability of land and its rent price also played a decisive role in the choice of location. The area is not owned by UNRWA but leased from the Jordanian Government for a period of 99 years. It consists partially of land owned by the government (43%) and partially of privately owned land (57%), which the government in its turn has rented from the local Jordanian owners. [Khawaja & Tiltnes, 2002]

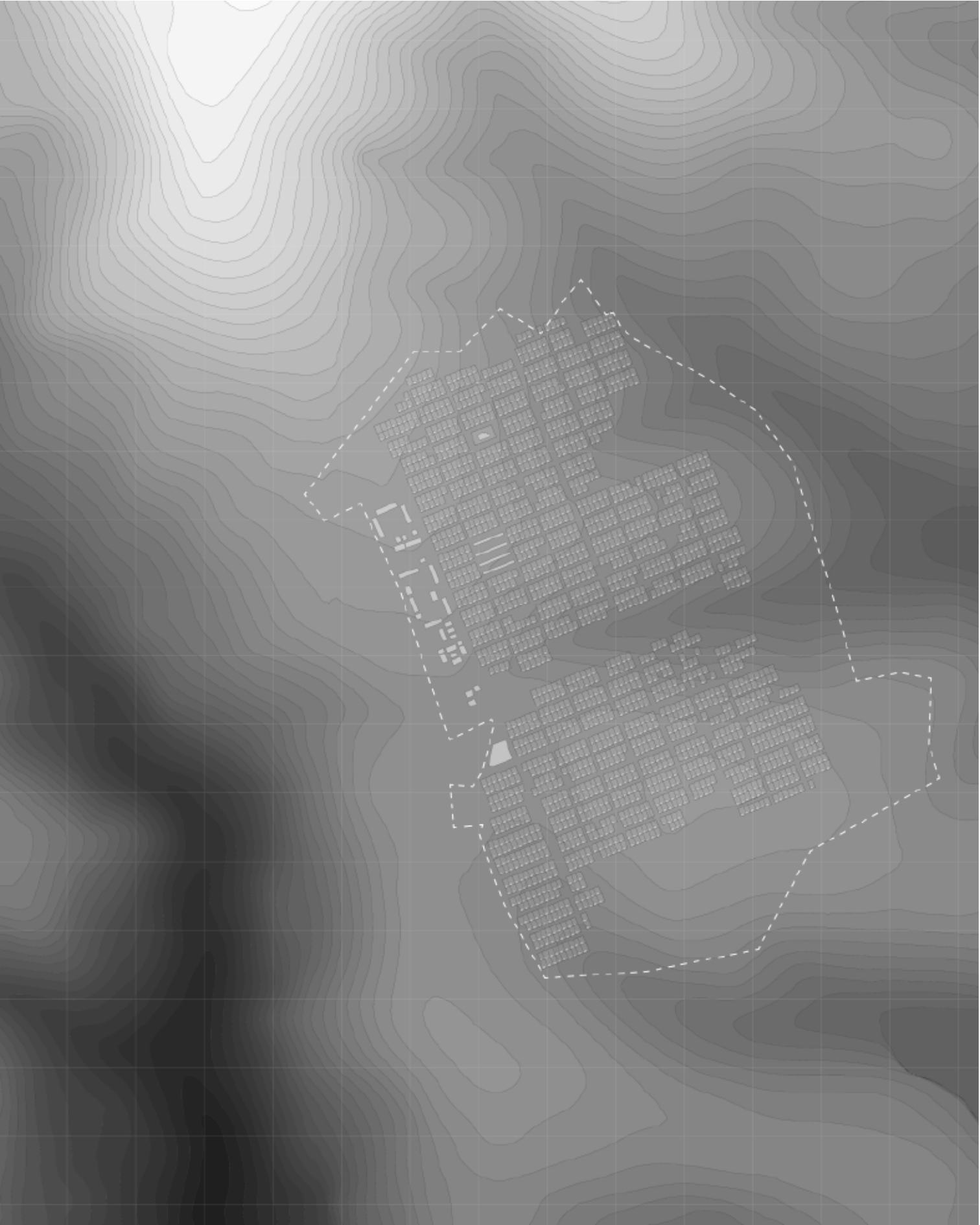
At the camp's inception, UNRWA subdivided the empty land according to an orthogonal grid structure, which created an efficient and equal distribution of plots for the arriving refugees and at the same time facilitated the management of UNRWA's humanitarian practices. Besides, it was also an instrument to easily control the refugee population by both UNRWA and the hosting government. [Sheikh Hassan, unpublished] The subdivision plan did not cover the entire area within the camp's perimeter but was only drawn for the rather flat areas. This was of course due to topographic reasons - as it is difficult to put up tents on a slope -, but also due to DPA's policy that by prohibiting to build in these areas tried to safeguard a belt of open land along the camps boundaries.

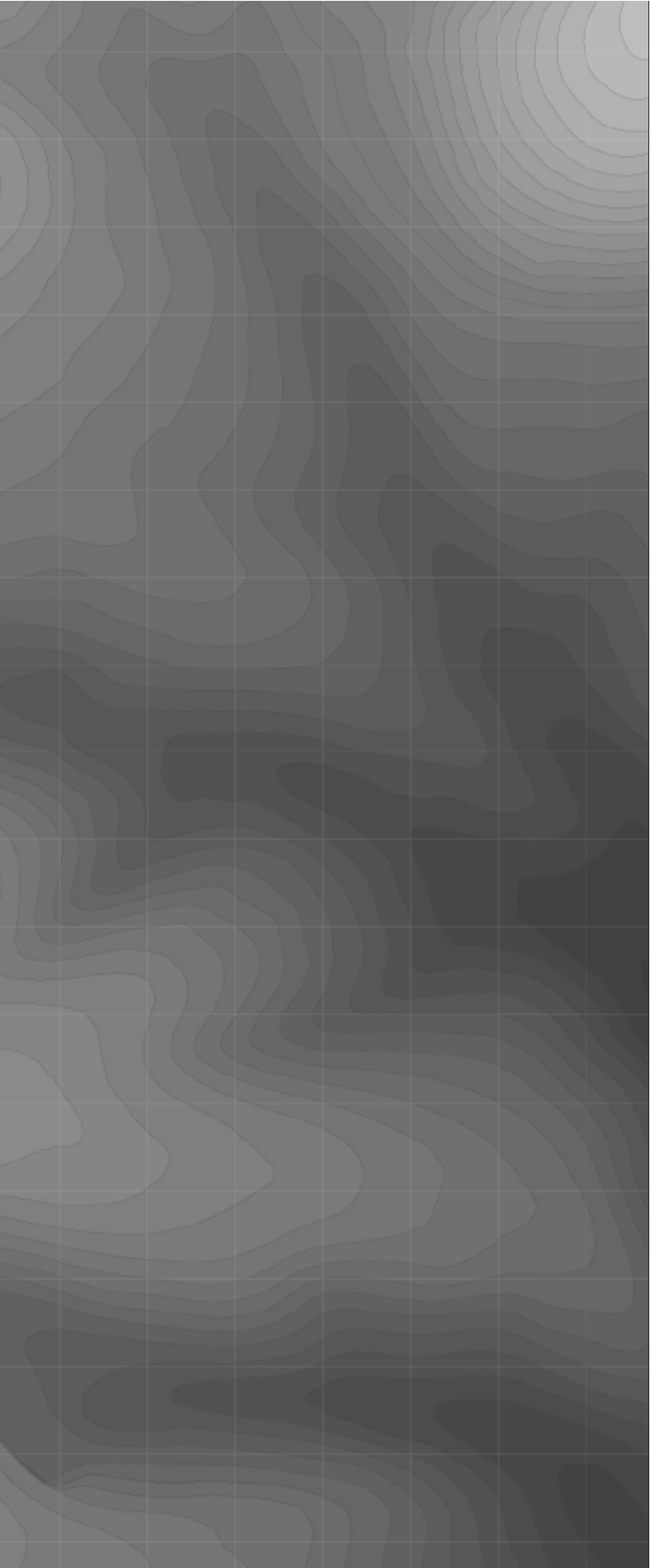


1973



2013





Topographic Map 1970
Grid unit 100m





Replacement of tents by asbestos units.

At their arrival, the refugees were assigned to one of the equally sized plots of 96m² per family and each 6 to 8 members received one tent. Besides tents, UNRWA provided humanitarian services such as food distribution, medical supply and education. As is the case in most camps, these facilities were concentrated within a compound that since the camp's establishment created a morphological break with the rigid grid structure. Although this cluster of amenities formed the heart of the camp, it was not implemented at its centre of gravity, but strategically located on the highest and flattest area, easily overlooking the entire camp and simultaneously defining the western border. Throughout the decades, as population increased, remaining open spaces got appropriated and densification occurred, the UNRWA-compound became a walled-in island that presents the last bastion of strictly controlled order within the camp.[Sheikh Hassan, unpublished]

Within the first year, individual plot demarcations started to appear defining the pathways between the plots. Due to these 'fences,' as a means for improving privacy, the camp's grid structure became gradually visible. This was moreover emphasised by the replacement of the initial tents with asbestos units by UNRWA in order to withstand the harsh winters. Between 1968 and 1971, in total 2000 prefabricated shelters were implemented in the southwest corner of each plot.¹ Subsequently, horizontal shelter extensions occurred within the plots consisting of new rooms in mud, brick or concrete in order to create more indoor space and fit the needs of the growing families.



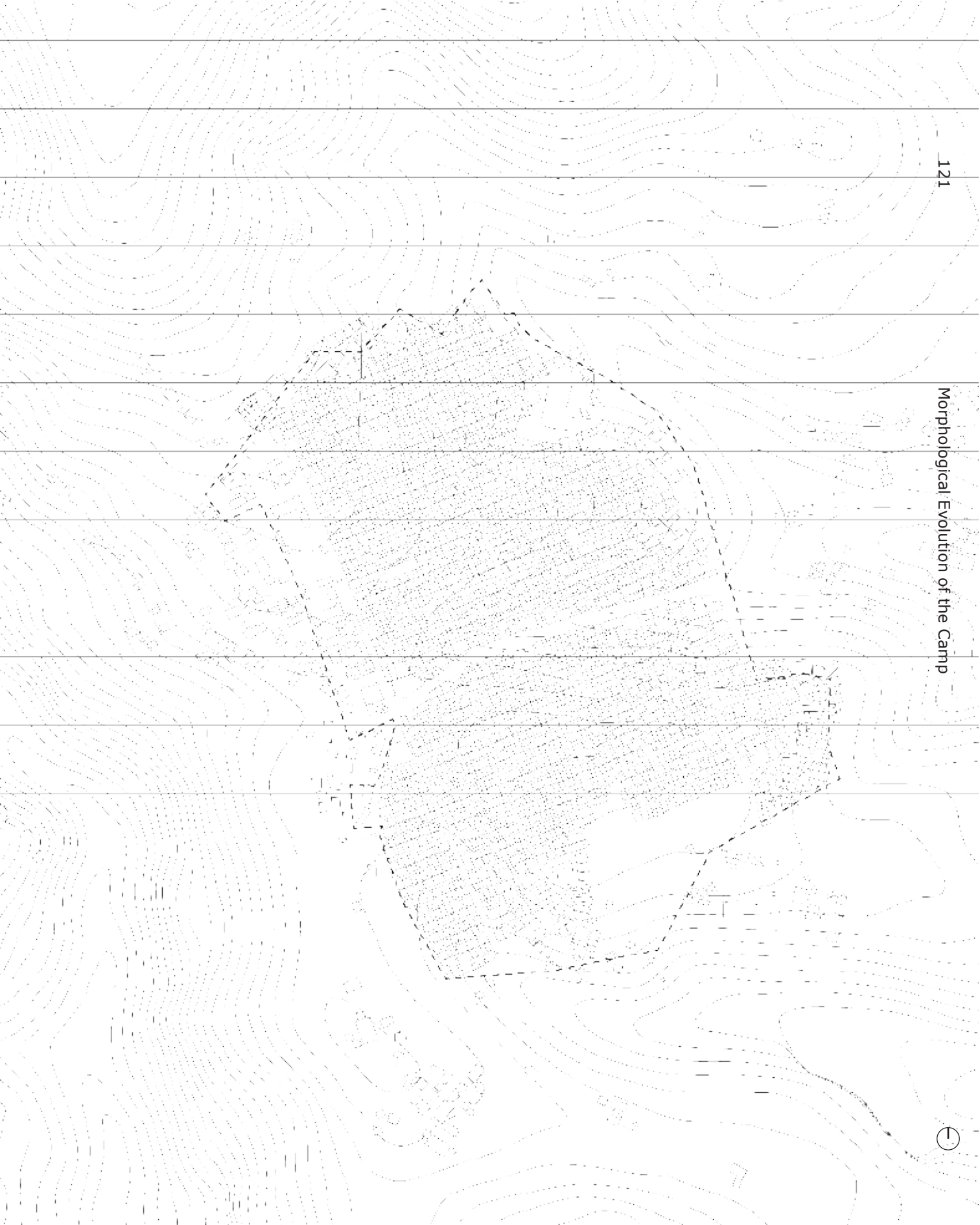


An important moment in the historical evolution of the camp was the decision taken by the DPA at the beginning of the '80s that abolished the prohibition to build in the outer belt of the camp. This decision was a reaction to the need for more living space since the camps population increased and the existing plots saturated. It is important to note that vertical expansions of the shelters in these times were prohibited, this was in order to underline the temporary character of the camp. As a result of these policies and restrictions, saturation of the individual plot was reached. Eventually, the DPA had no choice but to allow vertical expansion of the shelters. The permission to build a second floor was given in the early '90s, while the permission for a third and a fourth floor was only granted in 2005.

After DPA's approval, urbanisation of the open belt along the border took place. The way the allocation of plots occurred differed a lot from the plot distribution during the establishment of the camp. Where in 1968 an organised plan was drawn by UNRWA, something like an 'extension plan' was never made. It rather was a process of urbanisation during which the refugees tried to grab as much land as possible. This 'greedy' appropriation of land, in combination with the steeper topographic conditions at the boundaries, resulted in a more organic fabric that did not follow the rigid grid structure of the 'original' camp. Implemented along the topographic lines, these new shelters formed a fabric that became difficult to permeate and which shifted certain boundary conditions

from an openness into a physical wall of dense tissue. This limited the accessibility in certain areas and made the camp become spatially more introverted, while neglecting its immediate surroundings.

With the passage of time, the increase of the camp's population went hand in hand with a decrease of open spaces within the camp, resulting in a deterioration of the living conditions in terms of privacy, space, air, light, etc. The impotence of the ex-Gazans to buy and own land outside of the camp – due to their lack of a national ID number and a proper passport – together with the fact that since 1967 no camp boundaries have been reconsidered, resulted in a process of densification that allows a comparison between the camp's fabric and that of a medieval city, since both typologies can be considered as an outcome of a border element. While the fortified wall as the boundary of a medieval city, is a mere physical element designed to keep threat outside of the city, the boundary around Palestinian camps is a legislative element enforced to keep refugees 'in'. [Sheikh Hassan, unpublished] As a delineated line, the camp's boundary was considered as non-extendable for fear that any extension might lead to the camp's incorporation with its neighbouring areas. [Rueff&Viaro, 2010] Nonetheless, the '92 satellite image shows us the appearance of new fabric outside the official borders of the camp. While the tissue in the west constitutes the Jordanian village *Al-Hadadah* - already present at the establishment -, that in the east represents the camp's first urban overspill.









Despite their current inability to purchase land [cfr. A Complicated Passport System], there was a shift in the Jordanian policy towards ex-Gazans between 1986 and 1991. Within this five-year period, Gaza camp's inhabitants were permitted to buy and own land, so the refugees who were financially capable to do so, bought a piece of the rural land around the camp in order to improve their living conditions. Since 1991, there have been two other methods to buy land outside the border. One informal way of purchase was established in cooperation with local Jordanians; Palestinians can buy land but then don't own the land by law. Another way is to simply marry a Jordanian woman, who can of course buy and own land outside the camp.

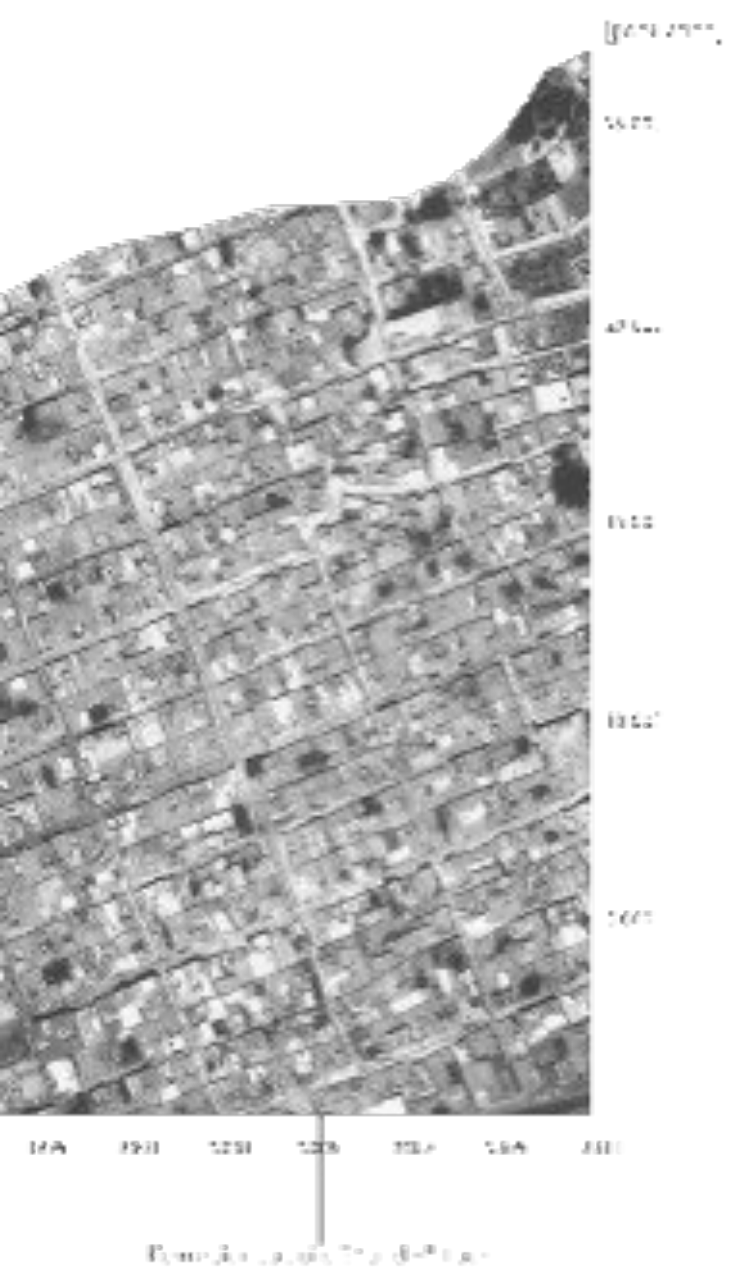
During the past two decades, this process of 'internal migration' has continuously increased, resulting in an overspill that nowadays houses an equal amount of refugees as the official camp itself.[UNRWA survey, 2007]

2013
Grid unit 100m

CONFRONTATION OF TWO LOGICS OF GROWTH

Historical Growth of the Camp

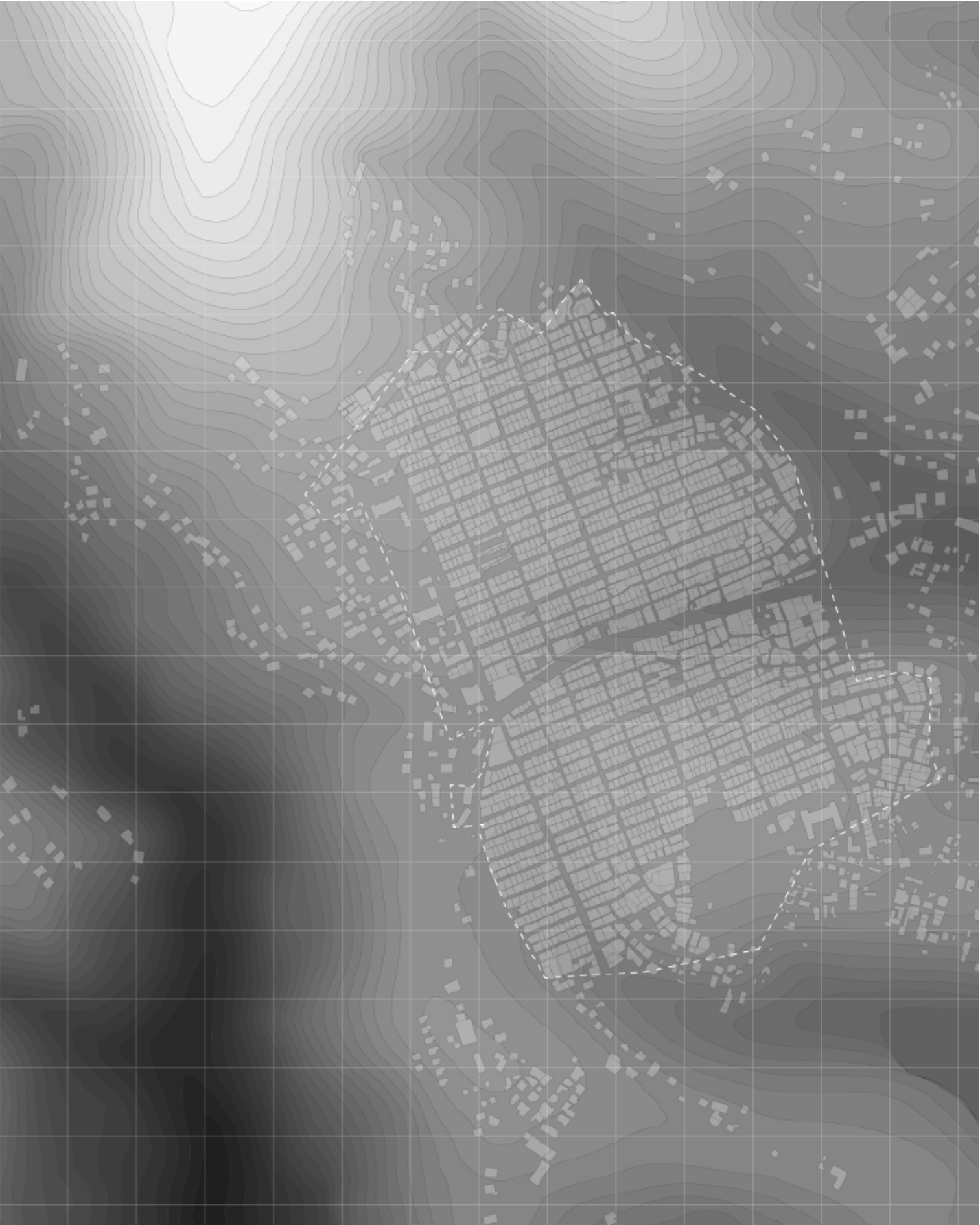




The decisions made by the authorities, both on local and national level, have played an important role in the creation of the camp's current physical appearance. But moreover, the logic of the camp – the way it has grown and probably will grow - is strongly determined by the landscape and its topography, which acts as an underlying structure.

Gaza camp's population growth, key decisions and their spatial impact.





Several wadis alternated by hilltops define the camp's surrounding landscape. In general, wadis have a more dynamic, vibrant and dynamic character. They are the areas that are cultivated, that are dry in the summer and flooded in winter since they assemble rainwater. On the other hand, a more static and permanent character defines the hilltops. The underlying structure of Gaza camp consists of four wadis, of which three enter the camp and one covers it in the west. It was on the hilltops in-between these wadis that the camp initially was established. These flat areas are separated from each other by the wadi that intersects the camp and divides it into two blocks that by its inhabitants are referred to as part A and B, respectively north and south of the wadi. Starting in the west and running down towards the east, this wadi holds the main road connecting the camp with Jerash city. While this wadi acts as the camp's 'line of gravity', the two other wadis simultaneously demarcate and locally enter the camp, strongly influencing the fabric at the edges, which caused them to become a neglected backside of the camp.

Moreover, the landscape also played a determinative role in the way the camp's overspill occurred. The deep wadi covering the camp in the west – in combination with the presence of the village *Al-Hadadah* – as well as the steep slopes of the mountain delineating the north edge of the camp, made these directions unsuitable for expansion. The south edge, on the other hand, is clearly demarcated by a green wadi. The outstretched hilltops in the east are the most suitable areas for urban expansion, resulting in a fast growing and concentrated overspill on this side.

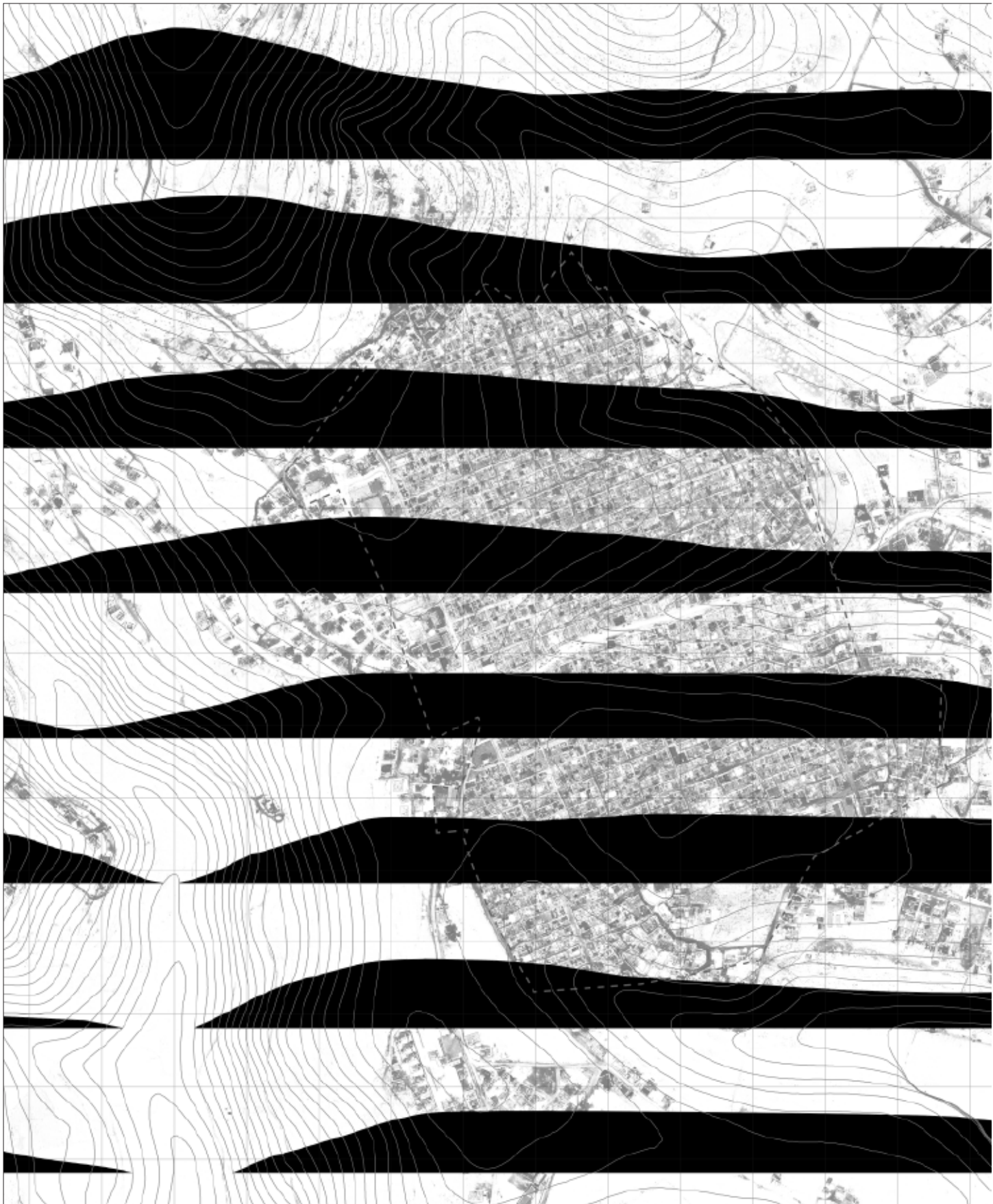
Topographic Map 2013

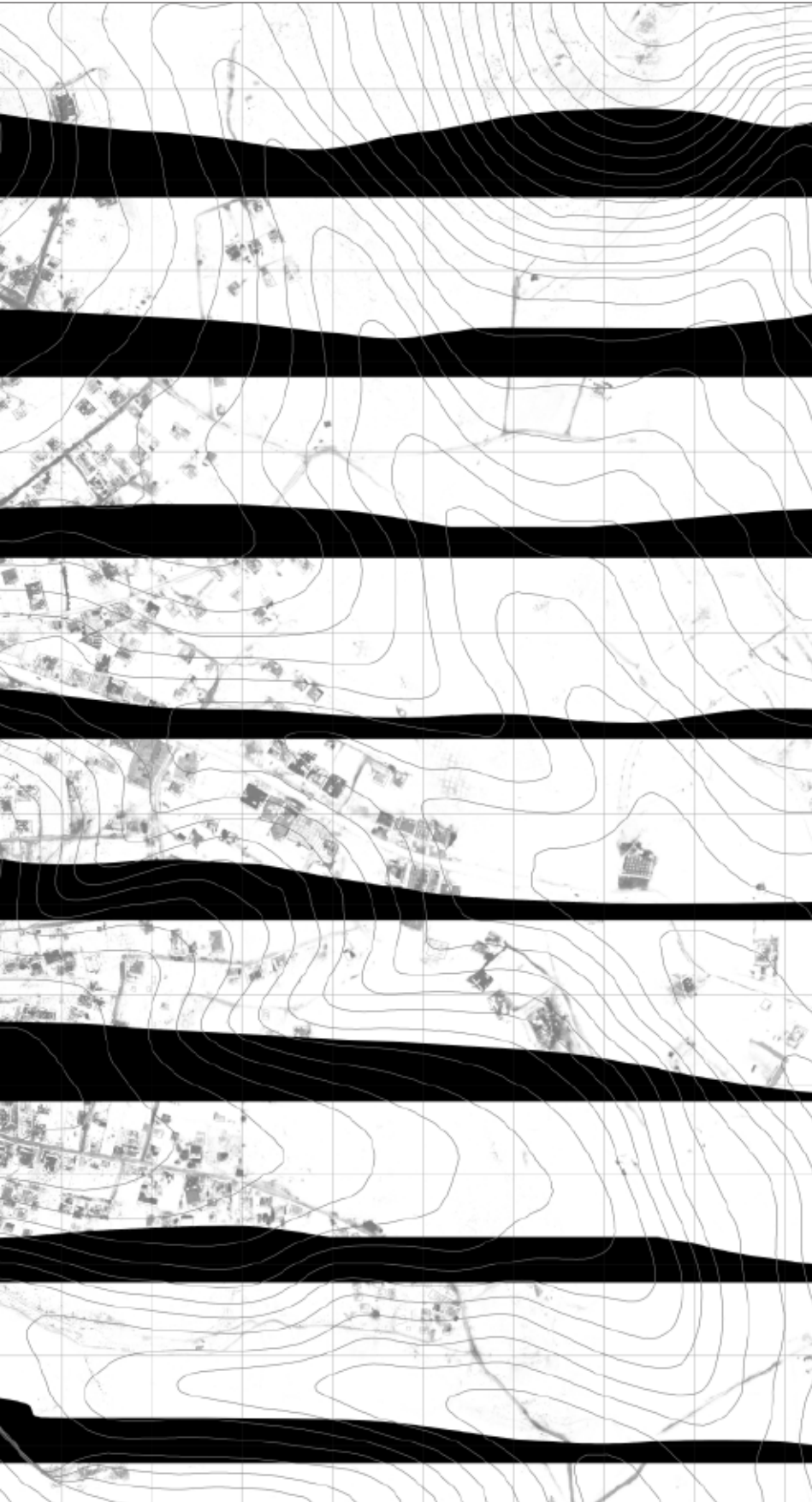
Grid unit 100m

450

670m







Grid unit 100m

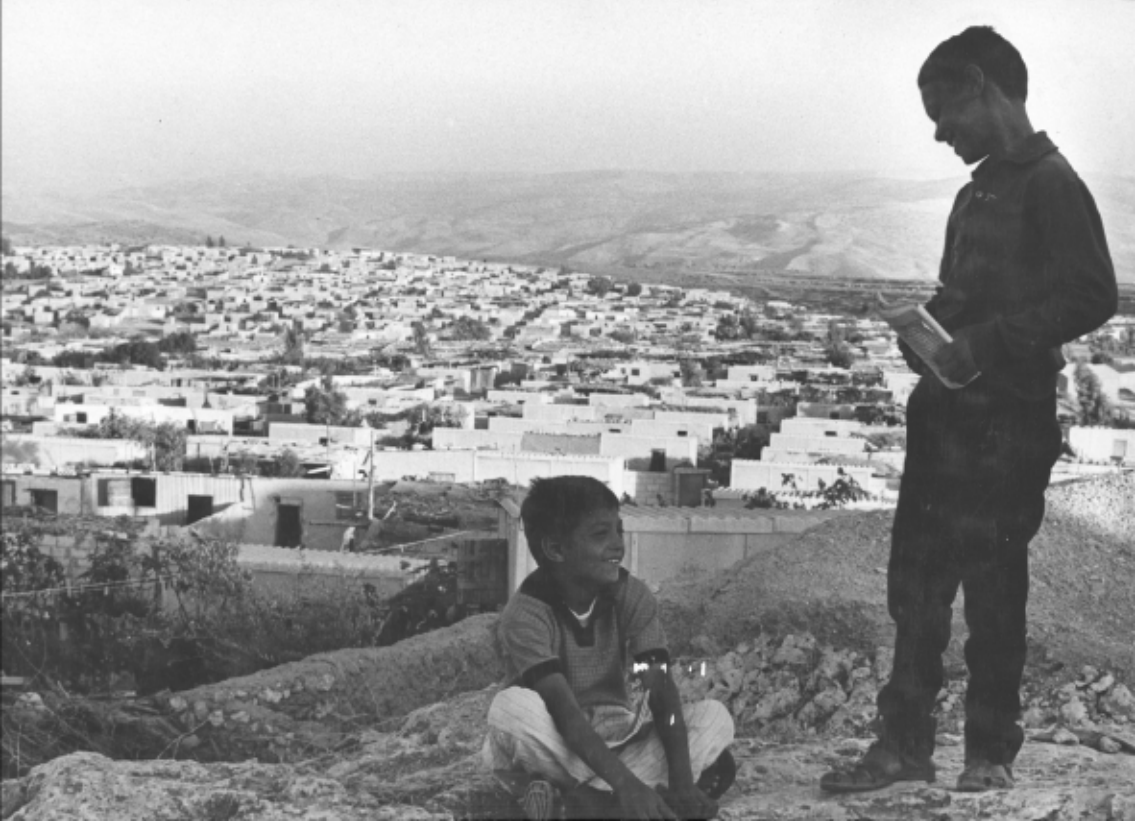




UNRWA's food distribution



Voluntary educational services in tents











Satellite Image 2013
Grid Unit 100m



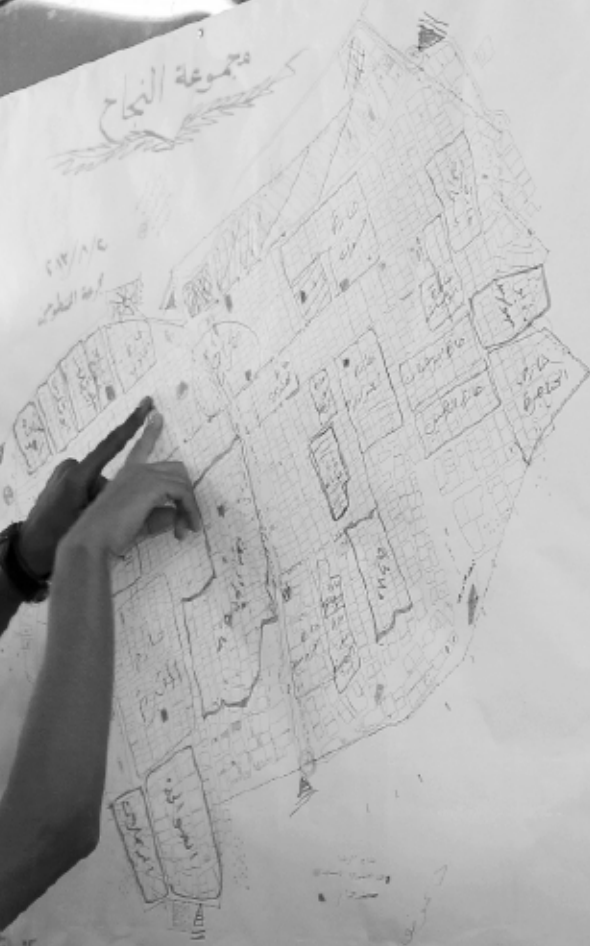
مركز التواصل

مجموعة النجاح

الخطوة

- 1- تحديد
- 2- اختيار
- 3- إعداد
- 4- تنفيذ
- 5- تقييم
- 6- متابعة
- 7- تطوير

٢٠١٧/٢٠١٤
لجنة التخطيط



مختار
مستشار
مستشار
مستشار



CAMP PROFILE

V

The following chapter provides a rather factual but absolutely indispensable overview of Gaza camp. Apart from a fast enumeration of basic facts such as total area, population density and poverty rate, it will be explained widely which facilities the camp includes, how mobility inside the tissue takes place and where commercial areas are located. Together, these observations form a complete spatial profile of Gaza camp, a whole that could be used in the coming years during the implementation of the Camp Improvement Programme.

GAZA CAMP FACTSHEET

Date of establishment:	March 3, 1968
Total area:	0.75 km ²

Demographic

Registered refugee population at establishment:	11 500
Registered refugee population at present:	26 785
Refugee population within official borders at present:	14 000 (52%)
Population density:	23 602 p/km ²
Number of households:	2675
Average household size:	6.6
Number of families:	3325
Average family size:	5.32

Socio-economic

Average monthly income:	\$217
Unemployment rate:	39%
- Males:	25%
- Females:	81%
Residents registered as 'Special Hardship Cases':	9.8%
Illiterates:	13.8%
- Males:	7.4%
- Females:	20.3%

Appliances

Car	7%
Bicycle	0%
Computer	9%
Air condition	6%
Heater	80%





Boyschool [High school]

Kindergarten

Community-Based Rehabilitation Centre

Girlschool [primary & secondary school]

Boyschool [primary & secondary school]

Food Distribution Centre

Elderly Centre

Woman's Programme Centre

Camp Development Office [CDO]

Camp Service Office [CSO]

Clinic

UNRWA-compound







----- Girlschool [primary & secondary school]

----- Boyschool [primary & secondary school]

----- Elderly Centre
----- Camp Development Office [CDO]
----- and Woman's Programme Centre

View from Abu Baker mosque



Girlschool [primary and secondary school]



Boyschool [primary and secondary school]

UNRWA-compound

“If the formal and institutional spatial element of the traditional Muslim city is the mosque, while that of the historic Western city is often represented by the central square or city hall – then within the official Palestinian camp it is the UNRWA-compound.”[Sheikh Hassan, unpublished] This walled-in compound forms a break in scale and morphology within the urban fabric of the camp. It is located on the flattest and highest point - the western ridge. Once inside the compound, an atmosphere of freshness and openness arises, which is in high contrast with the camp’s fabric.

Schools

The school system has grown remarkably since the first small tent-school was installed by volunteers in 1968. Three years later, UNRWA built a proper boys- and girlschool in asbestos and changed them into concrete schools in 1985. From then on, the kindergarten and the schools have always been inside the UNRWA-compound and have expanded drastically. Recently, UNRWA decided to build an additional school building in between the two existing schools in the colmpound.

Besides the schools located in the UNRWA-compound, there is an UNRWA boys school in the north-east of the camp, about 25 minutes walking from the camp’s centre.

Clinic

The first healthcare aid in the camp in 1968 was provided by UNRWA in a simple tent, which first changed into an asbestos and zinc unit in 1971 and later - around 1985 - into the current concrete building. In this “old clinic”, as people call it, basic health care is provided for free. For a very long time this was the only medical centre in the camp.

Nowadays, the clinic doesn’t only serve as a health centre, it is unofficially a meeting place for women. They use the opportunity to visit a doctor to meet with other women and spend most of their time chatting. It as a means for women to get out of the house, without being too exposed on the streets which would not be accepted in the camp community.

Women's Programme Centre

On the place where in 1968 the hospital and food distribution centre were installed, UNRWA later established a women's programme centre. The program of this centre is to promote the advancement of Palestinian refugee women as equal partners in the development process, by strengthening their role and active participation in the advancement of their families and the community. The women's centre in Gaza camp shares a building with the CDO, where it is remarkable how many women are involved in the projects and the improvement of the camp's living conditions.

Besides cultural and recreational activities, the program also offers a wide range of integrated services to enhance the knowledge and capabilities of women, such as skills training, advice and education. The WPC plays a pivotal role in strengthening the economic status and social development of refugee women by helping them to become more self-reliant. Informal education and internet cafes are examples of recent initiatives.¹

The first two or three years the camp was built, refugees were allowed to get food and hot meals twice a day at the health centre, by showing the "food cards" they were given. These food packs included basic items such as sugar, flour, rice, etc. and sometimes also clothing, shoes and other domestic items. [UNRWA, 2012] Simple shops only started to establish after a year, so specific shopping could only be done in Jerash. Due to funding shortages, food supply by UNRWA is now only provided for SSN (social safety net) refugees, who are declared to be unable to provide in their own basic needs, like food and water. [UNRWA, 2012]

[1] www.unrwa.org



Food Distribution Centre

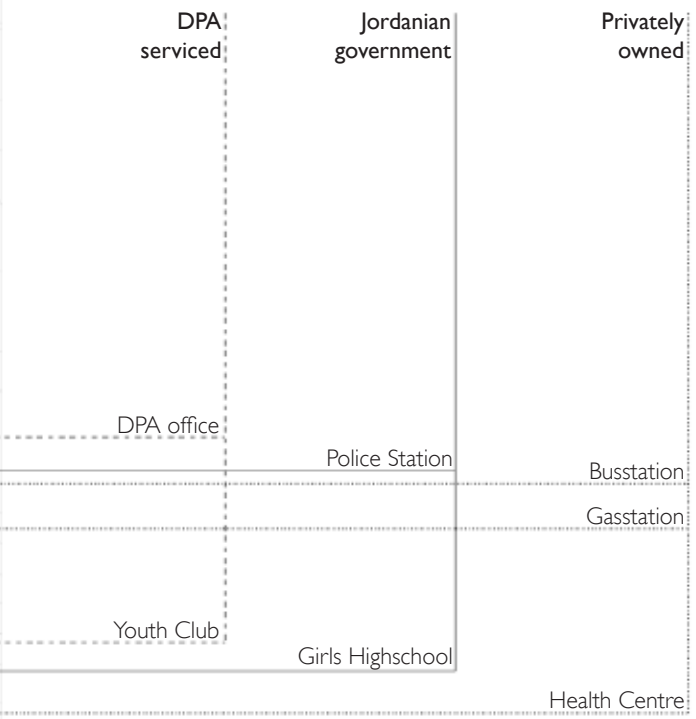
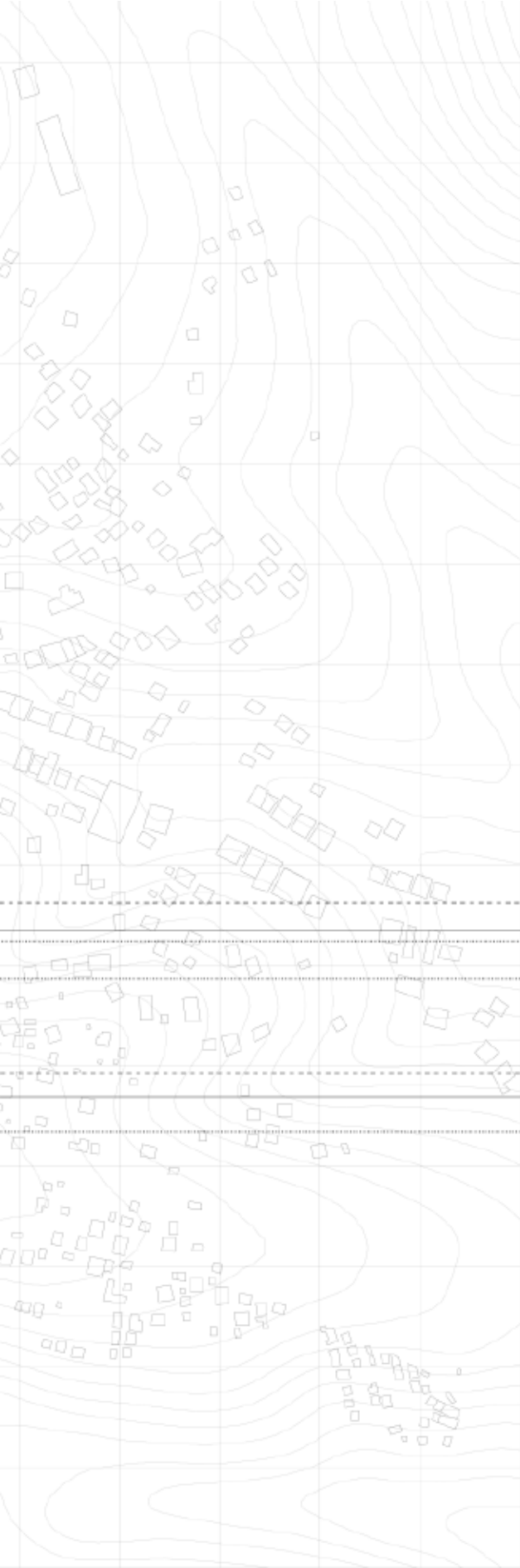


Women's Programme Centre and CDO









External facilities
Grid unit 100m



Girls Highschool

The girls highschool was built in 2006 and is located in part B, just inside the camp's border. The high school fulfils an important connecting role between the girls from the camp and the girls living in the overspill. They meet each other in their classrooms and on the playground, but when school is over, the girls from the camp and the overspill each go their own way. These two groups never meet after school, while girls from the camp often visit each other.

“My parents don't allow me to visit my friends living in the overspill. They are worried because it is too far and it could be dangerous for me to go there. But I often visit my friends from the camp. Sometimes we meet to cook together or just to chat.” - a girl in the girls highschool

“The school is an important link between the camp and its surroundings. I think it would be better to have the school outside the camp. Then the students could build up connections there and the camp would open up towards its surroundings. But then probably the girls from the camp wouldn't be allowed to come here anymore, since it is assumed to be dangerous. But the school tries to create and strengthen such connections anyway by organizing sport competitions with other schools.” - a teacher in the girls highschool

Youth Club

Gaza camp's youth club was developed by UNRWA in 1972, as a gathering place for youngsters. Such centres play an important role in refugee camps, they can give youth a place to relax, to enjoy life, interact and meet. They offer language courses, pool tables, an outdoor garden and a small football field. But they can also become very powerful within the camp community. Youth centres have the potential to turn into a gathering place for angry young people who do not want to accept their current situation that easily. Resistance and protest are not far away in such circumstances. The former function of this location proves this.

From 1968 until 1971, when the Jordanian government violently brought down the PLO in Jordan, this exact same spot served as headquarters for the resistance. It was built on the highest point in the camp, giving it an advantageous position, and on the border, making movement easier. Nowadays the youth centre is owned by the Jordanian government. Whether this take-over has something to do with the government wanting more grip on the activities within the centre is uncertain, but it is definitely not to be excluded.

Health Centre

Around 1990, French volunteers established a new health centre, commonly named the 'French centre', but officially called the 'Jordan Medical Aid for Palestinians, Jerash camp health centre'. It is equipped with better material and can handle more serious health problems, moreover it offers its services practically for free (1JD).

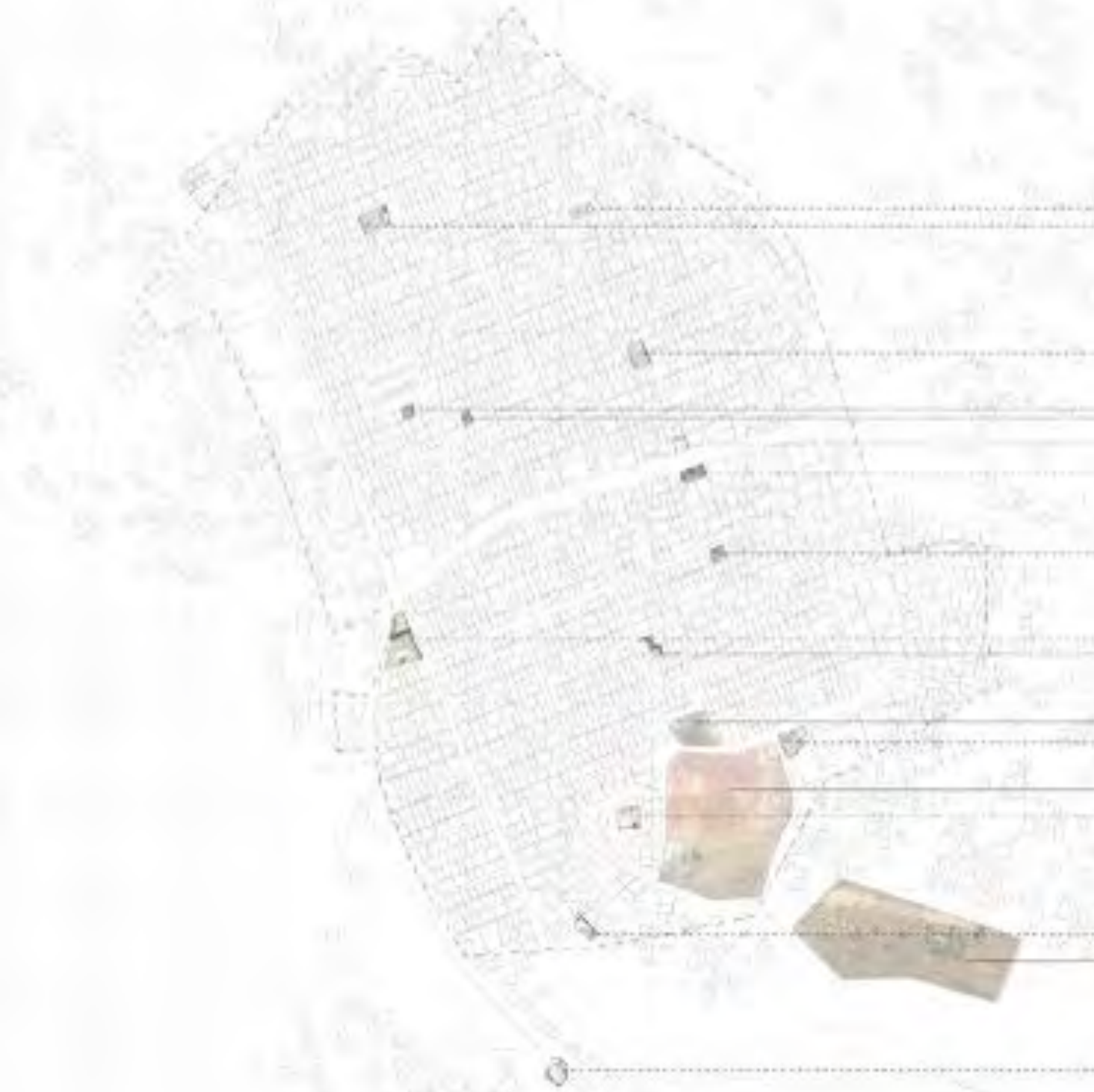
Unfortunately, in many situations, the camp residents have no other choice than to go to a proper hospital in Jerash, which will easily cost them around 80JD to 100JD (2/3 of the average camp income), as they are no official citizens of the state.

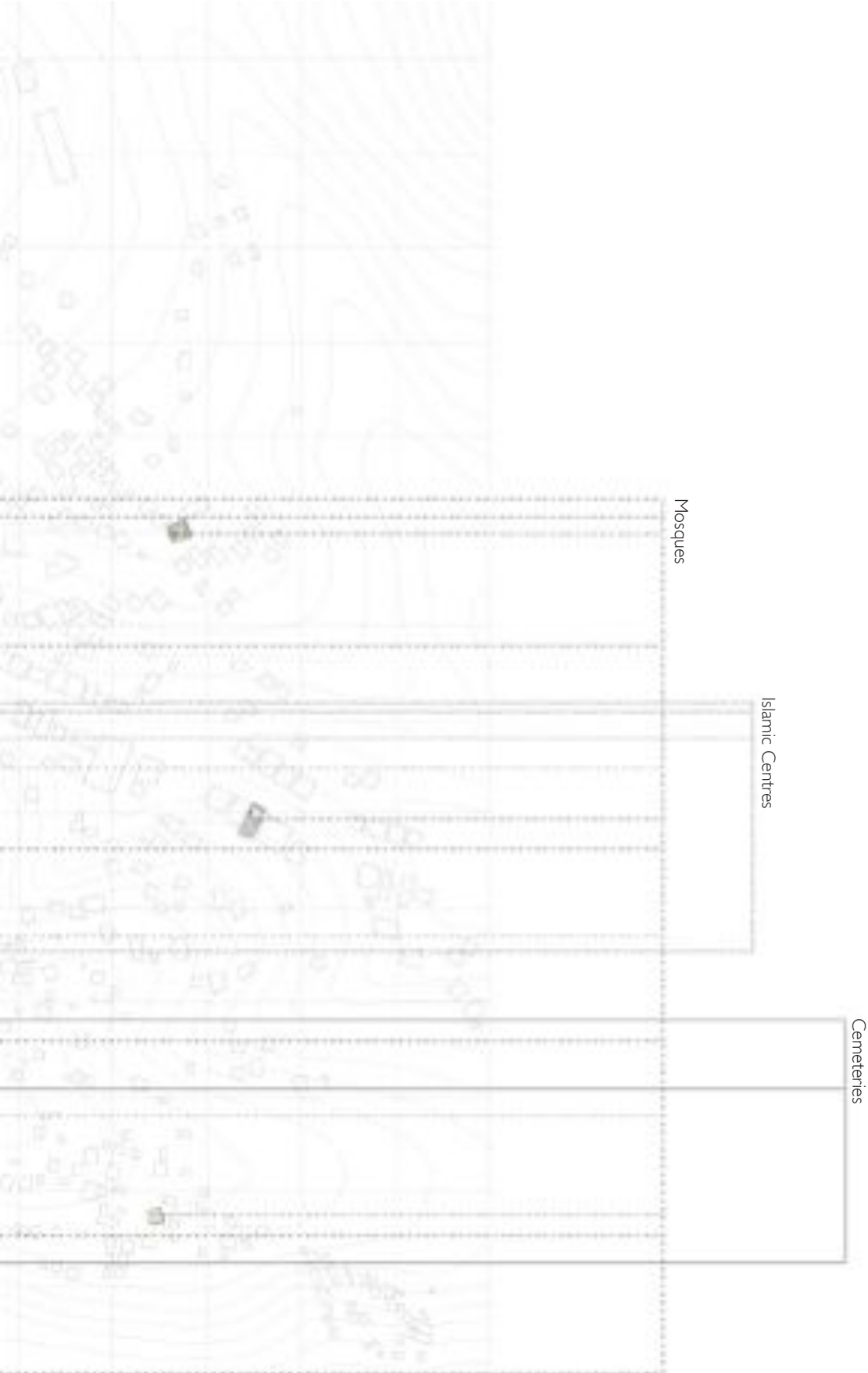


Health Centre



Youth Club





Religion related sites
Grid unit 100m





Mosques

In Islam, mosques are not just places for prayer. Mosques are - in modern terminology - community centres. A Mosque is not restricted to being a place for performing Islamic rituals as it also plays an important social and political role. Moreover, praying in congregation in the mosque teaches people unity. The mosque also serves as a meeting place where people discuss their problems and try to collectively find solutions for them. Thus, the mosque is a place for prayers and for da'wah (calling to Islam), but also a place for celebration, meetings and deliberation, medical care and education.² That is why the mosque in the camp was one of the first facilities provided. In 1968 a tent was put up by UNRWA in the south of its compound to serve as a mosque, even before the refugees had arrived. It was named the Abu Baker Mosque. After the arrival of the refugees, the mosque transformed to an asbestos and zinc building on the central intersection of the camp. It did not take long for the mosque to evolve to a proper building, in contrast to the slower evolution of most of the shelters and public facilities. In comparison to these facilities built by UNRWA, it were the refugees themselves who joined forces to build a proper mosque.

Ever since the construction of the first mosque, more mosques have been built on a regular basis (more specifically in '74, '79, '85, '90, '98, '99, '00, '12). The last one finished only a year ago. Now, the camp holds about 9 mosques, but some residents counted up to 14 mosques, including those in the near proximity of the camp. All of the 9 mosques are named after the, in the Koran stated, helpers of the prophet.

[2] www.onislam.net





Cemeteries

There are two cemeteries situated within the camp borders. The first one was used to bury the freedom fighters. This cemetery is ultimately respected by the camp residents. Although, through the course of time, neighbours gradually started to claim some extra space, causing it to shrink. To prevent this from happening any further, a high wall was built around it. Nowadays, nobody visits this place anymore, neither is it maintained. But still, this cemetery should not be touched as it is an important reminder of the sacrifices that were made.

A second, much bigger cemetery is located right next to it. Here, the camp residents can be buried. It is located just within the camp borders, right next to the south wadi, providing a beautiful view over the greenery. Unfortunately, a high wall was built around this cemetery as well, in order to protect this area from misuse such as grazing donkeys and playing children. It is not common for a muslim cemetery to be fenced off in such a way. Actually, many of the cemeteries in the surroundings and in the villages to the north are beautiful and open, green spaces. The wall only opens up along to the mosque, located next to the girls school, so the people living next to the cemetery cannot enjoy the views anymore. Similar to the other cemetery, this cemetery is generally treated with a lot of respect. But in contrast to the other one, this cemetery is frequently visited by family members of the buried, especially on Fridays.

Since this cemetery is established at the inception of the camp, it has nearly reached its full capacity. Today, a third, large cemetery is being constructed right outside the camp borders, on the slope of the wadi.

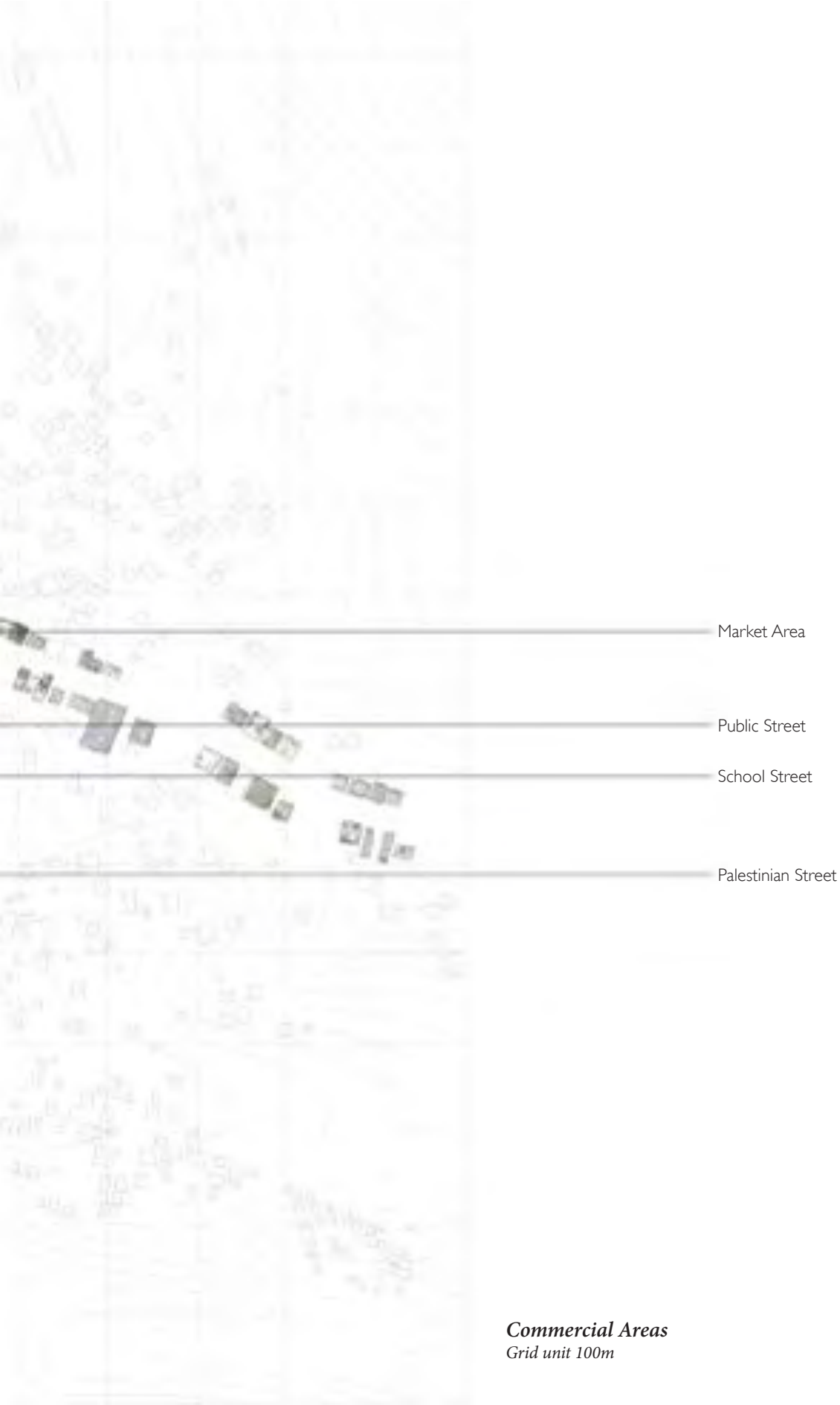


Walled-in cemetery



New cemetery on the slope of the south wadi.





Commercial Areas
Grid unit 100m



Market Area

Deeper inside the fabric of part A, an area of two residential building blocks was destined for the erection of *al-souq*. The initially three building blocks are merely intended for commercial use and hold no residential spaces up till now. Unfortunately, the infrastructure nowadays is severely outdated. This, together with the lack of hygiene, results in a dirty, odorous environment. Throughout time, the *souq* has caused the emergence of new shops in its vicinity, turning this area into a vibrant centre of the camp. Nowadays the initial market constitutes merely a small part of a much bigger shopping area which is accommodated with a variety of commerce: one can find fruit and vegetable shops, clothing stores, shops for household products, butchers, shoemakers, etc... For the salesmen in this area, it is practically impossible to supply their stores, because of the narrow streets, which allows this area to be considered as a typical Arabic *souq*.



School Street

Since the public character of its facilities, the UNRWA-compound attracts a large flow of pedestrians, consisting predominantly of the huge amount of pupils. Therefore the facing side of the UNRWA-compound became accommodated with shops, turning this 'UNRWA-street' in a commercial linear strip. This street- predominantly referred to as School Street, constitutes the transition between the commercial area of the *souq* and the school environment. Because of the high concentration of pupils, the shops located here mainly anticipate to the school life by selling pens, notebooks, etc. However, one might also find a bakery, some falafel restaurants and a few grocery stores. The combination of traffic, customers and children within this area causes a high risk for accidents.



Public Street

Because of the high flux of people along the main road, it were the refugees living next to it who expanded their shelters with an additional room for the exploitation of the camp's first shops. Until today, this axis of the camp is practically completely accommodated with commercial activities. It is remarkable how these shops have different activities according to their place in the camp. While car mechanics and workshops dominate the street outside the camp, a concentration of retail can be found close to the centre in the west. Here, one can find specific Arabic infrastructure such as coffee shops, which used to serve as a main gathering place for men up to several years ago, where they could talk and watch television. But since many families have managed to buy a television at home, the social aspect of these coffeebars has decreased. However, a bunch of men can still be found on the steps in front of these coffee bars.



Palestinian Street

In the camp's southern part B, one can distinguish another linear figure of commerce. A wider road, referred to as Palestinian Street by the camp's inhabitants, runs parallel to the Public Street and holds a concentration of more specific commercial activities, such as barber shops, electronic stores, etc. Despite the fact that it consists predominantly of retail, this area does not compete with the public street nor with the souq, since it is less frequently visited and thus less crowded. However, its wide appearance causes this street to act as one of the major axes, constituting an important connection to reach most areas in part B and the camp's expansion beyond. Moreover, this street also holds a major flow of pedestrians, as a result of its flat topography.



NEIGHBOURHOODS

Besides the general designation of the camp's part A and B, respectively north and south of the main road, a more specific 'tool' of way finding within maze of the fabric is used by the refugees in order to indicate a particular area in the camp. This indication is based on a number of neighbourhoods that were constituted over time. At arrival, families had no say in the location of the plot that was assigned to them by UNRWA and could therefore not choose to live in tents adjacent to the ones of their relatives. However, by exchanging plots amongst each other, the refugees grouped together with their families and friends form their original villages. Hence, today's neighbourhoods display the social collective of the village of origin in Palestine.[Sheikh Hassan, unpublished]. Moreover, this fragmented geo-social reconstitution has generated a new landscape, enhancing the presence of the past in partial ways while suggesting new possibilities for present and future.[Peteet, 2005] It opens spaces for new dynamic social processes, knowledge and identities to emerge. In a sense, village areas are the symbolic memory transmitting the space of Palestine to the present, giving the displaced a deep visceral and everyday connection to past time, place and social relationships. Over the years, these neighbourhoods became even more distinct as families expanded. After a marriage, the bride generally moves in at the man's parental shelter or they start their new family in the vicinity of the parents in order to enjoy their support and help or vice versa.

After the permission was given to expand up to the official borders, the families living at the initial edges started appropriating the remaining open areas, extending their neighbourhoods considerably. Hence, the neighbourhoods do not have fixed borders, since they have been changing over time and they differ according to the refugees' perceptions. Through a double focus groups – one with elderly (40-60) and one with the young volunteers (15-35) –, we were able to map today's neighbourhood structure of Gaza camp. Whereas the middle of the camp is characterised by a mixture of different families, the neighbourhoods based on the major families in the camp are predominantly located along the camp's borders. This is due to the families' Bedouin origin. Despite the fact that they have lost their land and animals during their displacement, some members of these families have managed to continue their Bedouin shepherd traditions to a limited extent, due to the interstices within the fabric at the edges, suited for holding cattle. Families more skilled in trade on the other hand clustered around the camp's centre, contributing to the existence of today's commercial areas.

Besides the many family-based neighbourhoods that appeared over time, a few areas within the tissue are indicated by landmarks, eg. the *souq*, the cemetery, the youth club, etc.

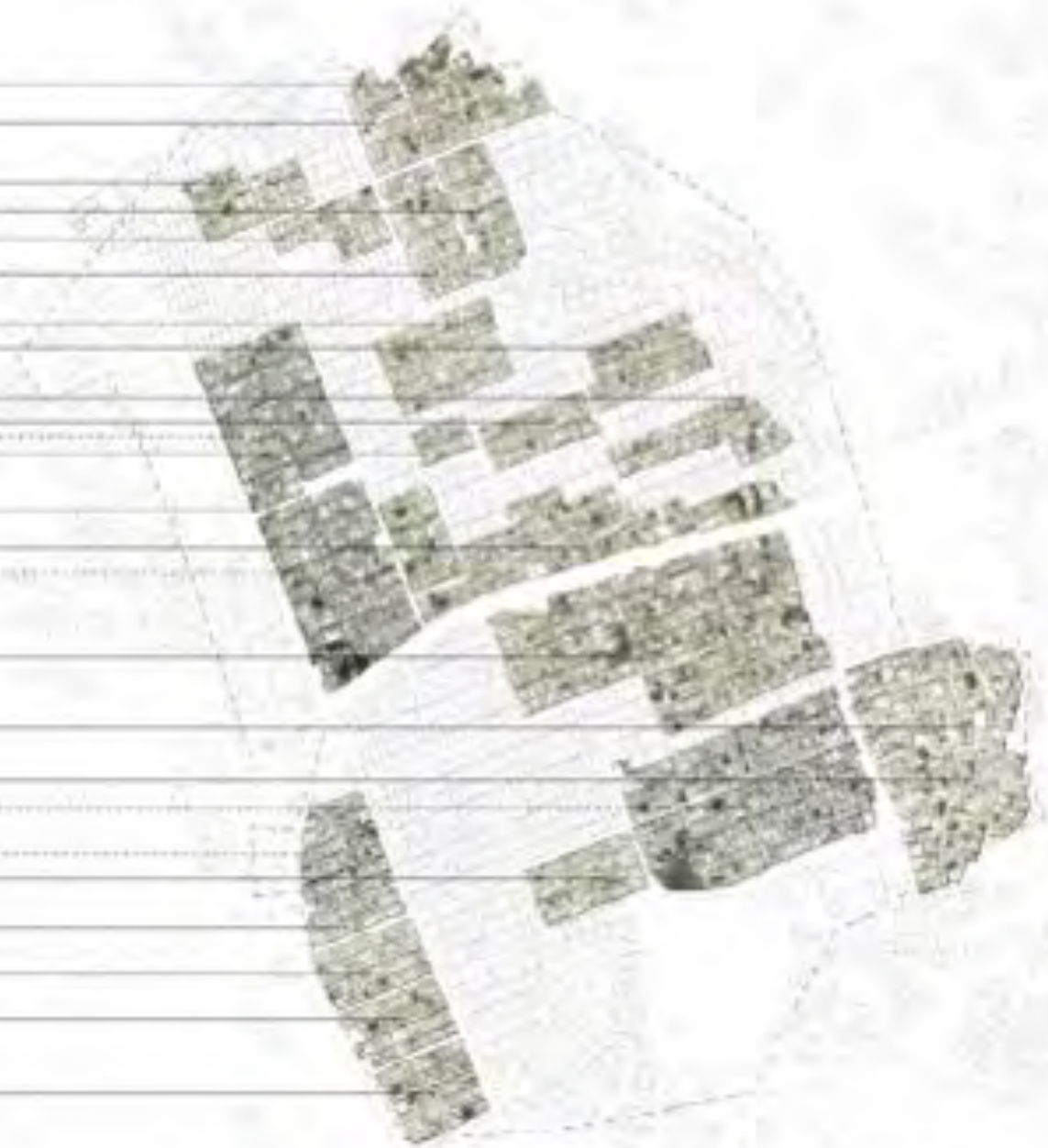


Gaza camp's neighbourhoods according to elderly and the young volunteers.

landmarks

family names

	Al-Hanjra
	Abu Sousein
	Al-Sawarkeh
	Al-Dhini
	Abu Ayyash
	Abu Shaba
	Al-A'watreh
	Al-Malaha
	Abu Husein
	Al-Aradat
Al-Souq [market]	Al-Aweidah
	Al-Hindi
Al-Garaj [busstation]	Al-Jaraween
	Al-Jaraween
	Al-Sawalha
Al-Naqbara [cemetery]	Rmeilat
Al-Nadi [youth club]	Rmeilat
	Al-A'marat
	Rmeilat
	Abu Shallouf
	Al-Irr



STREET HIERARCHY

Besides the walled-in spaces of the UNRWA compound, the school courtyards and the cemeteries, it are the streets of the camp that constitute the only remaining open spaces inside the camp's borders.

Within this network of streets, a hierarchy can be distinguished through categorizing every street in terms of its accessibility. Two major axes of the camp define a category by itself: the east-west connection cutting straight through the camp, referred to as 'Public street' and the north-south connection along the west border whose upper part is called 'UNRWA street' or 'School street'. These two roads provide the camp's connections to Jerash and the surrounding villages and hold the four main entrances of the camp. Regarding the topography, 'Public Street' follows the deepest points of the wadi in which it is embedded, while the north-south connection runs along the ridge of the deep wadi in the west. Inside the camp's fabric, the categorization of streets is determined by both human practices and topographic conditions. Two-way roads can predominantly be found on the flatter areas of the camp. Because of their width, these streets allow the passing of two cars easily and one can park his vehicle without blocking the street entirely. This is however not the case for the large amount of one-way roads. Over time, these streets have narrowed as a result of stepwise individual appropriations of the street by the refugees for the placement of outdoor staircases, privacy walls or water tanks. Moreover, in some cases such acts of 'street violence' has led to the appearance of pedestrian-only roads, whose existence is mainly due to topographic conditions, which can be concluded from the concentration of alleys and dead-end streets in areas where the topography is steepest. However in some areas, the use of the open space made the street inaccessible for cars, as is the case in the *souq*.



Pedestrian-only streets



One-way streets



Two-way streets



Main streets



Pedestrian-only streets



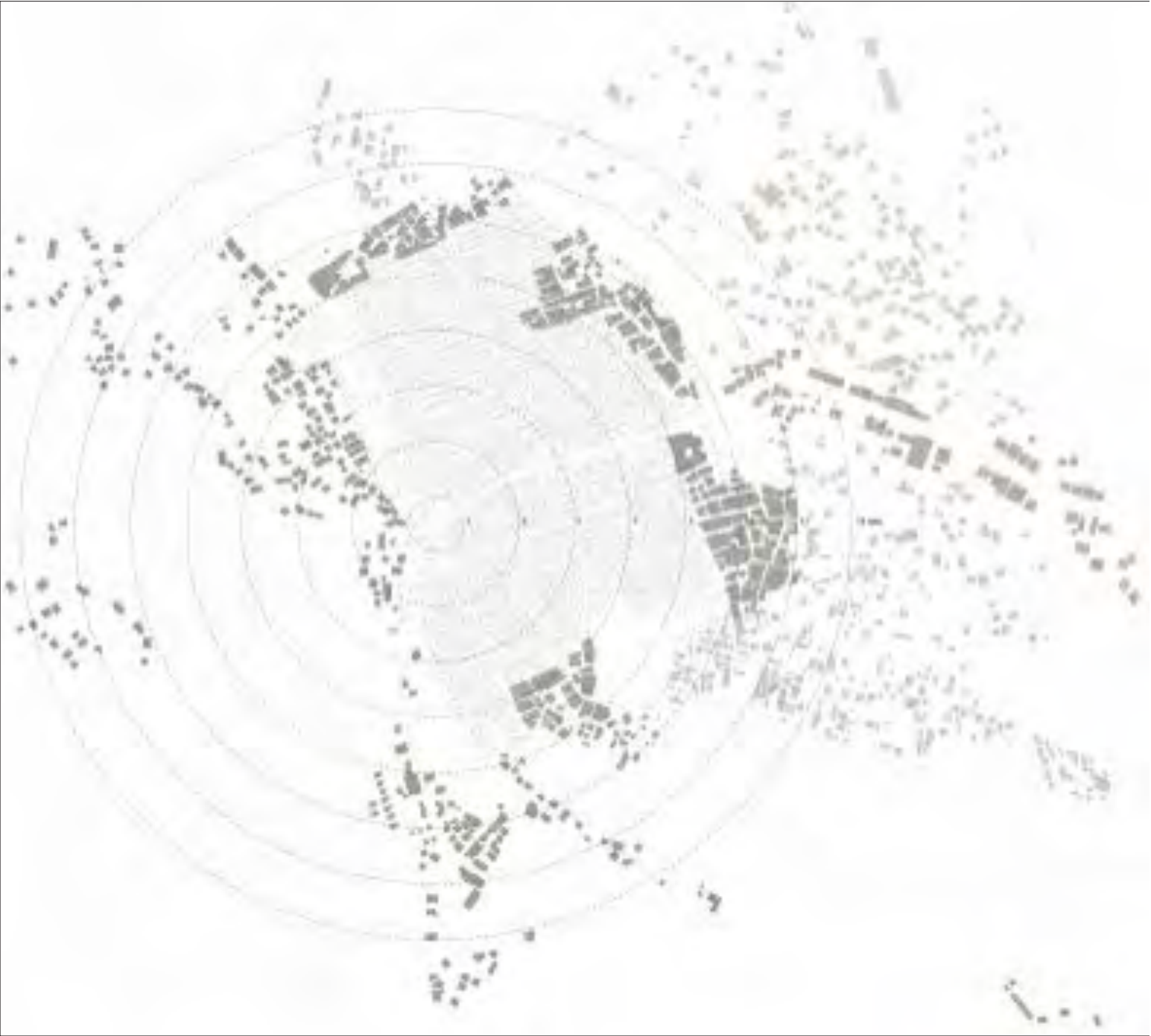
One-way streets



Two-way streets



Main streets



Al-Hadadah

Fill Up

Continuous

Linear

Plugged

OVERSPILL

As can be learned from the historical evolution of the camp, the surrounding built environment has been evolving ever since the installation of the camp. Disregarding the Jordanian village *Al-Hadadah* just outside the western border of the camp, these urban settlements and camp expansions, established both formally and informally, host Palestinian refugees who moved outside the camp. Due to their location outside the official camp, “they are excluded from the official nation-state and humanitarian categories of the Palestinian camp, despite the fact that they host a majority of Palestinian refugees who are dependent on various UNRWA services.” [Sheikh Hassan, unpublished]

In an attempt to differentiate these expansions by their physical appearance rather than by sequence in time, we distinguish 4 different categories. First of all, a dense expansion occurred within the camp’s official borders, after the approval of the DPA to build in the outer belt of the camp. This resulted in an organic tissue that clearly contrasts with the original rigid grid structure, due to the lack of an ‘extension plan’ and the steeper topographic conditions at the boundaries. The resulting density is comparable to that of the grid, but there is hardly any structure and the plot sizes differ considerably. A second type of expansion is on-going at the southeastern edge of the camp and can be considered as an almost natural continuation of the residential fabric of part B. In part A, on the other hand, such expansion of the camp’s fabric is absent due to the surrounding, defined landscape elements. Here we can clearly see how the topography influences the way the camp has grown, how it acts as an underlying structure of the camp.

The third and fourth categories of overspill are established along the main road between the camp and the city of Jerash. These linear extensions are due to the benefits that come with the presence of a road, such as connectivity and opportunities for business. There are workshops, usually with apartments on top, along the whole road. These workshops, like car mechanics and gas stations, serve the fast character of the road. Besides, new Palestinian – or sometimes mixed - villages are plugged on this axis, whose residents have a rather car based relationship with the camp. This is not the case for the expansion located northeast of the camp, referred to as *Al-Mensieh*. Separated from the camp by the wadi, this village can be considered as a plug on the main road rather than a natural continuation of the camp; yet, it works as an adjacent expansion of the camp’s tissue.

The outstretched hilltops in the east are the most suitable areas for urban expansion, resulting in a fast growing and concentrated overspill on this side. It is almost impossible to expand in the other directions, making these often very valuable areas spared from urbanization. On the other hand, the camp is expanding towards the other side of the already eccentric located centre of the camp. This is considered as a major problem for those living outside the camp, due to a increased walking distance to reach the basic facilities such as the *souq*, the bus station or the clinic.

Expansion versus verticalisation

Due to the on-going growth of the refugee population and the resulting density and privacy problems, several densification phenomena has been occurred; horizontal shelter expansion within the plots, vertical expansion - or verticalisation -, and expansion through overspill. Because the plots of the current camp are nearly completely saturated, verticalisation and expansion through overspill are the only possibilities to absorb the further population growth, but neither of the two methods appears to be easy.

Although the people of the camp are allowed to build up to four stories high, most of the shelters lack decent foundations whereby the construction of additional floors is ruled out, unless they completely rebuild their shelter. Besides, it would not be clever to greatly increase the floor area ratio in every part of the camp.

In many cases, shelters are very close to one another, resulting in a potential risk for lacking fresh air and daylight. Mahmoud, our translator, confirmed our concerns and stated that the camp's tissue evolved over a period of 42 years from asbestos units towards predominantly poor shelters, which is only a small improvement in comparison with concrete multistorey buildings with decent foundations that are needed for verticalisation.

When verticalisation is no possibility, camp inhabitants are often forced to move outside the camp, excluding them from some UNRWA-services and pushing them far away from the current eccentric centre. Many of these refugees, living outside the border, bought their land informally and still live in poverty. There is thus no single guarantee that people living outside the camp do not need humanitarian relief.





LIFE IN THE CAMP

VI

In addition to the merely spatial features of the camp, the social, economical and cultural aspects constitute important aspects that contribute to an understanding of the camp and the life that takes place within it. This chapter will dig deeper into the role of the camp as a symbolic entity with regard to its inhabitant's refugee status and into the consequences due to their lack of a proper passport, both on education possibilities and on the labour market. Finally we'll focus on the relation between the refugees and the camp as a space of exile, on their attitude towards and their occupancy of the camp's common spaces.

GAZA CAMP'S IDENTITY

As mentioned before, the camp has over time generated a space of collective identity.[cfr. Notion of the camp] Regarding to Gaza camp, this identity is something that is very strong and can be considered as one of the major assets of the camp. Compared to Husn camp, where people's perceptions of their camp can be concluded in a negative self-esteem [Husn I, 2011-2012], the refugees of Gaza camp are proud on the camp they live in. As a place where their identity is territorialised and fostered, the camp operates as the embodiment of the refugee status and the collectively shared aspirations to return. Moreover, it constitutes the closest connection between the refugee and his place of origin from which he was expelled and therefore functions as a site of commemoration of both these pre-exilic places of origin as well as the experience of the refugees' loss and displacement.[Woroniecka, 2013] This remembrance is illustrated by the designation of the camp as 'Gaza camp' instead of its official name 'Jerash camp'. Besides this reference to the refugees' former place of residence – predominantly camps within the Gaza Strip -, this nickname also stresses their political identity, or rather their lack of identity, serving as a reminder of their exceptional political condition among all Palestinian refugees residing in Jordan.



PERMANENT TEMPORARINESS

Over the years, the refugees' idea of what defines their camp has shifted from a mere physical appearance illustrating its temporariness towards a space that is inhabited by people holding the refugee status.[Woroniecka, 2013] While the camp-character was initially predominantly represented through the overall ambience of temporariness, the camp nowadays still holds a set of features that emphasize this temporary character. A first example concerns the designation of the camp's housing units. Notwithstanding the improvement of the housing conditions from tents over asbestos to concrete units, these housing units have remained their initial label of 'shelter' (*ma'wa, malja*) instead of 'homes' (*bayt, dar*).[Al-Husseini, 2012] This difference between 'shelter' and 'house' is substantial for the Palestinian refugees, since 'shelter' indicates a temporary


or emergency form of dwelling, whereas 'home' or 'house' has implications of security and permanence.[Rueff & Viaro, 2009] Similarly, the camp is still referred to as *moukhayyam Gaza* - meaning 'tent camp' - although its current physical appearance leans more towards what can be called an 'urban camp' or 'camp city'. Moreover, the camp's exclusion from Jordan's urban development plans and policies - both at national and municipal levels - bears the intention to remain it as a temporary place vested with the symbolism of the right to return.[Al-Husseini, 2012] As an example, Gaza camp has been left without a proper sewerage system and disconnected from the governorate wastewater network for nearly 45 years, despite of the fact that a major sewerage pipeline has been running under the camp for decades. Also the denial of the camp's existence



on web mapping services such as Google Maps or Bing Maps, illustrates its non-permanency. Apart from the exclusions by the hosting authorities, the camp's temporary character has also been fostered by the refugees' initial opposition to all kinds of projects that were likely to normalize their condition as being exiled and jeopardize their Right of return. [Al-Husseini, 2012] However, a gradual shift in the refugees' mentality made them realize that the improvement of their living conditions does not imply the normalization of their political exceptional condition of the camp, nor does it interfere with their Right of return. It is no longer the overall aura of temporariness manifested in the camp's appearance that constitutes the refugees' idea of the camp, but its understanding has gradually evolved into a space that is defined by the habitation of people holding refugee status. [Woroniecka, 2013]







In order to retain the refugees' temporary status, UNRWA deliberately kept the role as a tenant to avoid the acquisition of any form of permanent status. The land on which the camp was set up consisted of both state land and land rented by the hosted government from local landowners. [cfr. Morphological evolution of the camp] Consequently, the refugees do not 'own' the land on which their shelters are built, but they have merely the right to 'use' the land for a residence. At the camp's inception, this land - leased to UNRWA for 99 years - was located in a rural area and therefore of low value. But nowadays, its value has substantially increased since the camp has become embedded within a bigger urbanised area, which has led to dissatisfaction of the original Jordanian owners:

"UNRWA has rented 19 donums (1,9 hectare) of our land to use it as camp. For this land we only receive 200JD each year. When the rent is over, we will sell it for 2 million JD!"

- Brahim Rwashda, Jordanian landowner

CENTRIPETAL OVERSPILL

Since the camp constitutes the symbolic representation of the refugees' places of origin, its habitation allows the residents to retain the link with their pre-exilic conditions and therefore operates as a proof of commitment to these places of origin.[Woroniecka, 2013] As the closest connection with the original villages and cities, the camp serves as the guardian of a preserved intrinsic "Palestinianess" in exile. [Farah, 1997] Besides the legal restrictions and the financial inability, it is the 'soul of the camp'- the symbolization of the struggle and the declaration of the Right of return¹ - that withholds a lot of refugees' from moving out. But at the same time, a number of repulsive factors are at stake in the camp. The continuous increase in population and density of the camp's fabric has caused a range of problems regarding overcrowdings and the lack of space, privacy, ventilation, etc. These determinative factors pushed a lot of refugees outwards, leaving

the camp in exchange for an improved living condition. However, the way the camp's urban overspill occurred also reflects the refugees' affiliation with their camp. The ones who were able to move out, did so but stayed in the vicinity of the camp, just outside the border or along the main road. Besides the dependency on the services provided by UNRWA and the camp's assets in general and apart from family related reasons, the aspiration to remain a part of Gaza camp's community constitutes a major centripetal force that holds back those 'emigrants' and makes them settle in the camp's immediate surroundings. Over the period of 45 years, the shared fate of the refugees has generated strong friendships and social connections between the people in the camp - a collective identity so to speak - which still attracts those living outside the border to spend their free time in the camp.

[1] Campus in Camps, Common¹



Gaza camp (right) and its overflow (left)



EDUCATION AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Despite their lack of citizenship, the ex-Gazans are being treated similar to Jordanians with regard to schooling, vocational trainings and community colleges and have therefore full access to public Jordanian schools. Nonetheless, the majority of the camp residents rely on the education provided by UNRWA in the camp. Up to the age of 16, the refugees' children can attend UNRWA's primary and secondary school - located within the UNRWA-compound -, upon paying a symbolic enrolment fee of respectively 1 JD and 1,5 JD, which includes all educational material. Although formerly known because of their high level of schooling, overcrowdings of the UNRWA classes have deteriorated the quality of the education services. As a solution, double shifts were introduced. Half of the pupils attend the first classes running from 7 until 11 am, the other half joins the second shift starting at 11 am up to 4 pm. Due to the camp's growing population, this solution was no durable alternative. Hence, the new concept of the so-called 'flying classes' has been introduced recently, in which a certain group of pupils are not allocated to a proper classroom, but join others for different courses. The recently taken decision to build an extra UNRWA school in-

between the two existing ones hopefully makes these 'flying classes' a temporary solution.

From the age of 16, the teenagers can attend the governmental high school for girls or the recently opened high school for boys, administered by UNRWA though located some distance outside the camp. The registration fees for these high schools amount about 7 JD, books not included. Although these relatively cheap service, a third of the pupils (31,4%) drop out of school at this age. [UNRWA survey, 2007] According to the parents, the main reason behind this school un-enrolment is the need to start working in order to support the family. Other reasons are a lost interest in education or insufficient performance. For vocational trainings however, students have to go to the cities of Irbid or Amman.[Husn I, 2011-2012] The high transportation costs often constitutes a threshold to attend these technical education services.





“We have no house, no land and no rights, the only thing we do have is our brain, our intelligence, that is why we want to go to school and to university, we want to learn, that is our way out.”

- Mahmoud, student engineer-architect

“We don’t own our land, but at least we own our knowledge”

- Woman at focus group

As the quotes above indicate, education plays a fundamental and important role in the aspirations for a better future among the camp inhabitants and Palestinians in general. This attitude is confirmed by the fact that - despite the limitations - Palestinians have sustained the highest per capita rate of university graduates in the Arab world.[Gandolfo, 2012] Regarding to ex-Gazans however, higher education is not just a matter of course, which is reflected by the low percentage of university graduates (6,9%) in Gaza camp. [UNRWA survey, 2007] Due to their temporary passport, they are being treated as foreign students to whom only a 5% quota is reserved at the Jordanian universities. Hence, their enrolment in university is characterised by an intense competition in order to to acquire one of the limited seats. In comparison with their Jordanian fellow students, they are moreover required to pay higher fees in foreign currency, up to \$60 per tuition hour.[Gandolfo, 2012] In order to foster the amount of highly educated people residing in the camp, UNRWA can assist in the enrolment of the students in universities. In exchange, they are ought to volunteer at the Camp Development Office (CDO), such as the many youngster who translated for us during our fieldwork.

*Focusgroup with CDO’s
volunteers, most of whom are
study at university*



However, the aphorism “knowledge is power” does not really apply to the ex-Gazans. On top of the restriction on university education, they are subject to a wide range of limitations on the labour market, which forces many fresh graduates to work below their competence. But also for the less educated refugees, the possibilities on the labour market are limited, resulting in a high overall unemployment rate in the camp (39%), which is nearly 3 times that of Palestinian refugees in Jordan.[UNRWA survey, 2007] This is due to the fact that ex-Gazans are not allowed to work in the public sector and are required to apply for a work permit in order to work in the private sector.[El Abed, 2004] The camp’s high unemployment rate, to which women are more exposed than men (81% and 25% respectively), forces the refugees to rely on low-wage jobs or to work in the informal sectors, where they are vulnerable to being exploited.[El Abed, 2006] Subsequently, this leads to the high poverty rate that characterizes the camp. With an average monthly income of \$61 per adult equivalent, Gaza camp constitutes the poorest of the 13 camps in Jordan. A quarter of the camp’s inhabitants even live under the poverty line of \$1 per equivalent individual per day.¹ Hence, many refugees are keen to leave Jordan to seek employment elsewhere but are constrained from doing so.[El Abed, 2006]

“Since we cannot get a job, we could maybe play as animals in the nearby zoo. At least we get enough food and water.”

- Wael, civil engineer

ثانر فاسق بلا طه



USE OF SPACE

A SOCIAL DIVISION

Within the traditional Arab culture, a strong social division determines the occupancy and usage of open spaces, which is also the case in the camp. Due to this cultural division, different open spaces are characterised by different ways of social usage.

Men

The major dominant group consist of men and the elderly women. Because of their respected status and reputation, both categories posses a certain freedom to use the open spaces as they like. Since women gain respect and the guts to speak up as they get older and raise their family, they become more accepted in the street scene. Nevertheless, the male population remains to constitute the major users of the camp's open spaces that predominantly consist of streets. Throughout the entire day, one can find men spending their leisure time by gathering along the streets, having a chat with each other together while sipping from their Arabic coffee. Although the major streets such as the main road are the most appealing for men to gather – due to its dynamic character and the aspect of seeing and being seen -, one can also find bunches of men hanging around or sitting on the staircases in front of one's shelter. During the night, they often assemble at a particular shop, mostly at a barbershop.

Some neighbourhoods are moreover provided with a so-called *sheikh*, which consist merely of a single room, usually owned by the head figure of that particular neighbourhood. In this *sheikh* men of the surrounding area come together to discuss important matters or simply talk about the course of life, while making coffee and sitting next to the open fire. While this is characterising for a neighbourhood, they are very welcoming towards residents of other neighbourhoods or even visitors who can spend the night there when their host can't provide them a proper guest room.











Sheikh

Women

While men are not subject to any kind of restriction regarding the usage of the camp's open spaces, the younger women and girls are deemed to be protected from the outdoor world; for instance from obtrusive men. Since the females are considered to be vulnerable, they are not quite keen to leave the safe environment of their shelter since it is assumed to be a rather 'risky' operation. Hence, women and girls merely go outside if there is an actual reason to do so, eg. going to the *souq*, the clinic, school, etc. Moreover, they'll go straight towards their destination without any stopover nor intermission.

Although females also spend their time partly outdoors in order to meet up with friends, both females and males, this gathering is often done in combination with a specific goal, such as going to the *souq* or the UNRWA clinic that moreover constitutes one of the most popular gathering spots for women, often much to the annoyance of the other patients. Besides, they often meet up in one's shelter during the day, since it is unusual for women to gather in the *sheikh* and they lack a feminine equivalent for such a space. While this is the only solution to 'safely' come together, it is highly inconvenient due to the limited size of the shelters and the necessity to screen women off for the men inhabiting the dwelling.





Children

The last but most considerable group consist of the camp's children in general. To them, the whole camp constitutes one big playground. You can find them on every corner and every street, either alone or in group and from all ages. They run around, play in the dirt or ride on donkeys. Unfortunately, this sometimes results in accidents with cars or on construction sites. Even though children in general are everywhere, a difference in behaviour in the public space can be observed between boys and girls. While boys run around and do mischief, the girls rather stay in the vicinity of their shelters.



ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE STREETS

Due to its public character, in contrast with the extreme private sphere of the shelter, the camp's streets are everybody's and therefore considered as nobody's, which results in a rather averse attitude by the refugees towards the only open spaces within the camp's boundaries. This is reflected by the absence of specific social activities in the majority of the streets, aside from playing children. Moreover, an urge to bear responsibility towards this *common*¹ does not impose itself among the greater part of the camp's inhabitants. Because of this, the streets in general are left untouched, unmaintained and non-appropriated and thus contain a particular amount of rubbish that is not been taken care of.

However, a few places can be found of actual appropriated spaces in the camp. Some streets are handled with great care by its inhabitants; women clean the street and its gutter every morning, they put plants outside or even place some chairs. While still publicly accessible, these streets hold a privatised atmosphere, which is detected by the passer-by resulting in a mark of respect by taking another way route towards their destination instead of walking through this particular street. Moreover, some residents have found ways to enhance this atmosphere by parking their car at the end of the street or by hanging a curtain, which is perceived as the highest level of incorporation of the public space.

[1] *The common is that what belongs to nobody and therefore to everybody, or, what belongs to everybody and therefore to nobody.*

- Lieven De Caeter, *Preliminary Notes on the (Spatial) Commons*









OUTSIDE THE CAMP

Overspill

In the camp's immediate overspill, a similar attitude of unconcern towards the streets can be observed. Moreover the refugees' relation with the street is even more aversely. Due to the building typology that typifies the overspill, as will be discussed later [cfr. Tissue], the street is not conceived as a social gathering space, but is rather left untouched and non-appropriated, as a lifeless open area caught between the high walls that screen off the inner courtyards. Since the shelters within these areas don't face towards the streets, there are no steps that could activate the informal social use of the street as is the case within the camp. Therefore the relation between neighbours in the overspill is much weaker than the social bonds that exist in the camp.

Forests

Two forests just outside the camp's boundaries serve as the refugees' major recreational spaces, however they are destined for different social groups. The forest covering the hill in the north is predominantly visited by the youngsters of the camp and is referred to as *Al-Jabal Al-Masorah Al-Samrah*, meaning 'the black pipe', which runs through this forest over the hill. It's near this pipeline that the young men of the camp gather in the evenings to enjoy a *shay a'la elhatab* - the delicious 'fire tea' - in combination with the *arghilah*. The forest located southwest of the camp on the other hand is referred to as *Horsj Abu Zeid* and constitutes the place where all refugees go after *Jumu'ah* - the Friday prayer - to escape the oppression of the camp and to spend their free time by having a pick nick with their families. In both areas, no particular infrastructure is provided to support the social interactions that occur, since nature constitutes a hotspot on itself. But notwithstanding their popularity, both forests are subject to a similar aversely attitude from the refugees' towards maintaining these spaces, as is the case within the camp itself.











SPATIAL READINGS

VII

The factual overview of Gaza camp was one thing, nevertheless the research has gone much further than this. In a series of four urban or landscape figures, that have been extensively analyzed on their spatial qualities and characteristics, we get a deeper look at the camp's logics. What started as a four-week research on history, building blocks, mobility and surroundings has evolved, over the course of several months, into a profound analyses of spatial phenomena, their origin and their socio-economical impact. Thanks to a subdivision of Gaza camp into, what we distinguished as, its most important and significantly different figures - Main road, Border conditions, Wadis and Tissue - we were able to perform this analysis in a substantive way, touching most of the camp's spatial features in the process.



MAIN ROAD

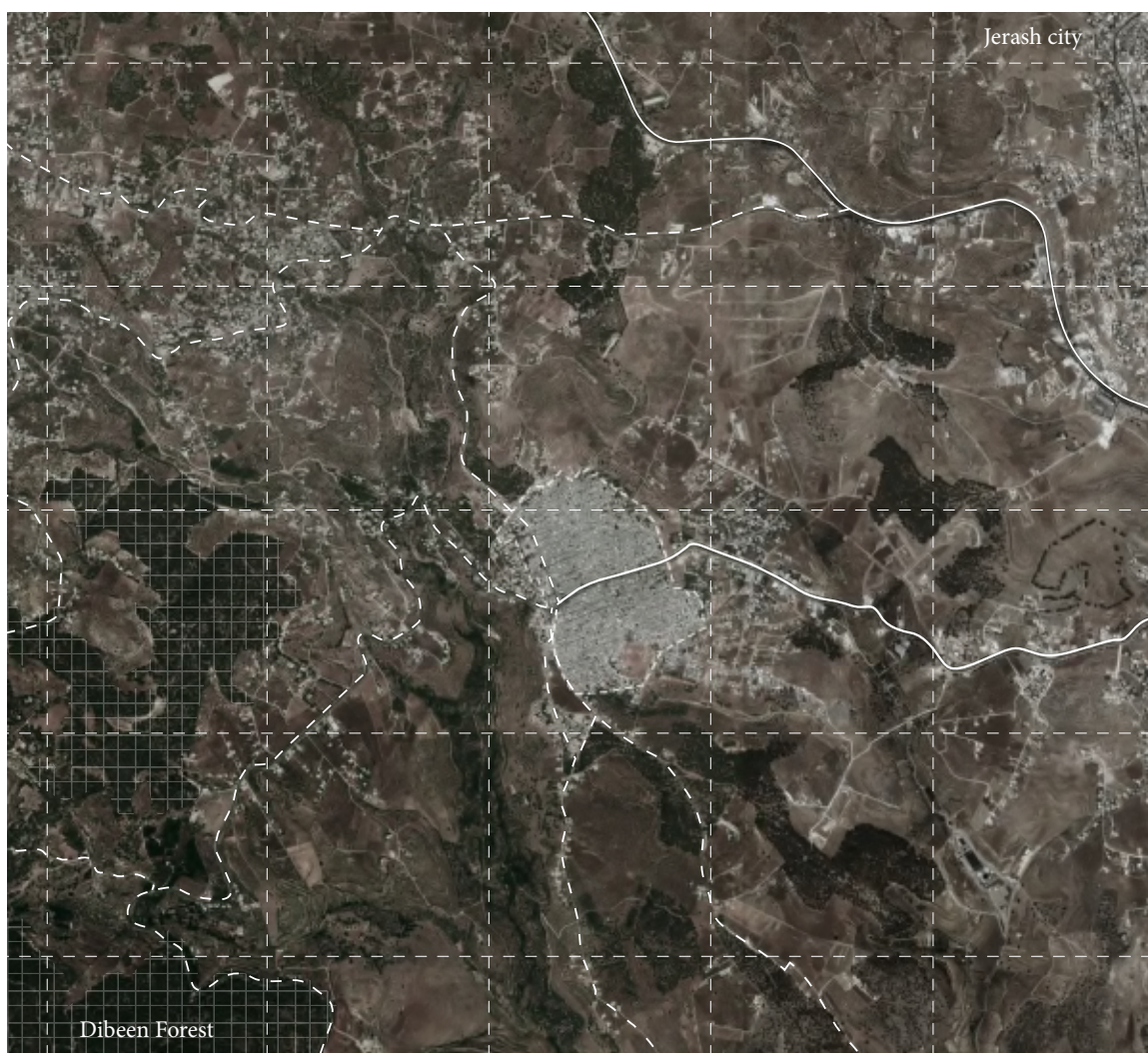
VII.I _____

ROAD IN JERASH GOVERNORATE

Gaza camp was established on the intersection between the ancient trade route from Damascus to Jerusalem, and a local road leading to the villages of Sakib, Raymun and al-Kittah. Due to the construction of the King Talal dam across *Al-Zarqa'a* river and the new highway from Amman to Jerash, the ancient trade road had been irreversibly downscaled.[cfr. Jerash, landscape of shifting identities] Hereby, the camp has been spared from heavy regional traffic and a stronger spatial division between part A and B. On the other hand, the former central role of this location would probably have been an economic asset. Yet, present day Gaza camp has a certain attractiveness due to its cheap and qualitative goods and services, which prevents it from being socially isolated, or marginalised.

Nowadays, the road consists of two parts with different statuses, between which the centre of the camp is located. The part of the road between Jerash city and the camp's centre can be considered as the artery of the whole Palestinian community residing in this area. The second part of the road, connecting the camp with the forests of Dibeen, is less frequently used and does not function as much as a passage as the former. Besides these two fragments of the ancient trade route, there are some other roads radiating from the camp's centre; the schoolstreet heading to the perched villages in the north-west, the local road that goes through the village of *Al-Hadadah* and a rural road leading to the southern forests and agricultural areas. The centre of the camp is a focus of activity, commerce and transportation, and can be considered as a hub - connecting different roads - as well as a destination.

When considering the road network as a whole, the centre acts as a sort of transition zone between the fast and heavy artery and the four rather slow, rural roads. This interpretation positions the camp as a hinge right between the urban area of Jerash city and the green highlands of Dibeen, and evokes the potentials of the camp as a gateway towards this nature reserve.



Grid unit 1km

Gaza camp as a hinge between Jerash city and the forests of Dibein.

جاروشة
الجلدي
الحديقة

الخبز

قهوة الع



As previously mentioned, Gaza camp is expanding outside its official borders due to a continuous population growth. Yet, it is remarkable that none of the outlying families wants to lose its social bonds with the camp. The process of urban growth occurs on two levels.

Since the early '90s, the areas in the east of the camp are rapidly urbanizing. This overspill can be considered as a continuation of the camp's tissue, although it is less dense and often separated from the camp by natural elements. Secondly, there are Palestinian - or sometimes mixed - villages appearing between the camp and the city of Jerash, all plugged on the road between both entities. Their residents rather have a car-based relationship with the camp.

This second kind of expansion and the fact that its inhabitants physically reside between these two entities, spatially emphasizes their mental position between their space of identity and the host-country. Although they still consider themselves as Gaza camp's residents and still have strong social bonds with the camp, they gratefully make use of Jerash's facilities, employment opportunities and university.

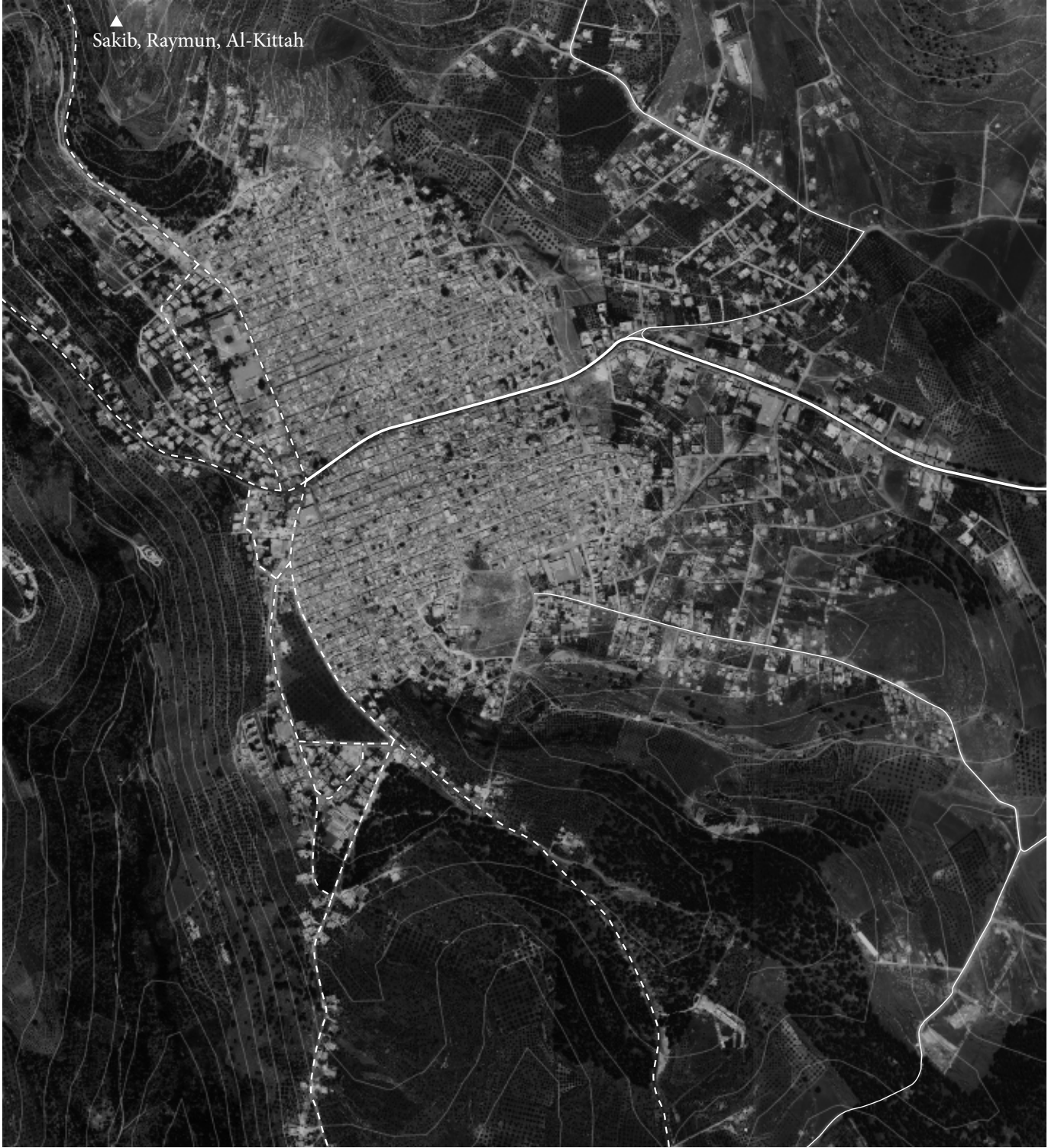
The fact that the camp is rapidly growing outside its border is delicately emphasized by a billboard, about three kilometer outside the camp's official boundary. This board welcomes visitors to Gaza camp, although it is located at the beginning of the road from Jerash.[cfr. image next page]



من آل هاشم لا ينكم عظماء... من أبناء قرة هاشم كل الحب والولاء.

لَكُمْ الْوَفَاءُ لَا لَكُمْ الْوَعْدُ







Billboard 



The main road acts as an artery for the whole Palestinian community living in Jerash. It is the channel that supplies their daily needs and discharges their sewage and waste. It is the place of exchange and distribution. Moreover, on the scale of the governorate, the road has an important role as the main sewage channel, leading the neighbouring Jordanian villages' wastewater towards the *Alme'rad* wastewater treatment plant in the south-east of the camp.

Although this sewerage pipe runs under the camp's main road since decades, the camp itself cynically has remained disconnected from this regional wastewater network. It is only since the summer of 2012 that the open sewage channels, which characterize the camp's streets are gradually being replaced with an underground sewerage by the SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation).¹

[1] www.sdc-water.ch



Regional wastewater network (Ministry of water, Jerash)



MAIN ROAD OF GAZA CAMP

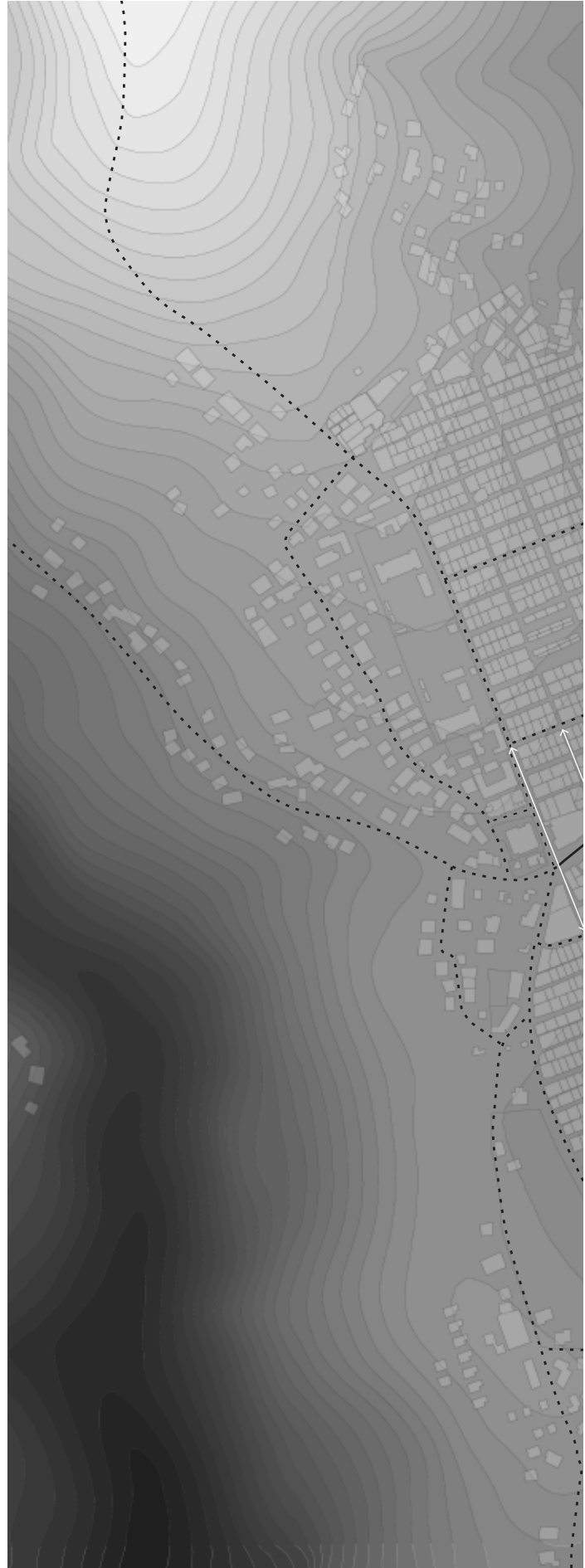
The division of the camp in two parts by a deep wadi results in a certain height-difference between the main road - and its adjacent buildings - and the rather elevated residential areas on the northern and southern plains. This height-difference gradually disappears towards the centre of the camp, which is located on the western border. Due to these strong topographical conditions, the main road forms a distinctive, persistent figure of the camp. It can be considered as a world on its own, dominated by men, traffic, labour and exchange.

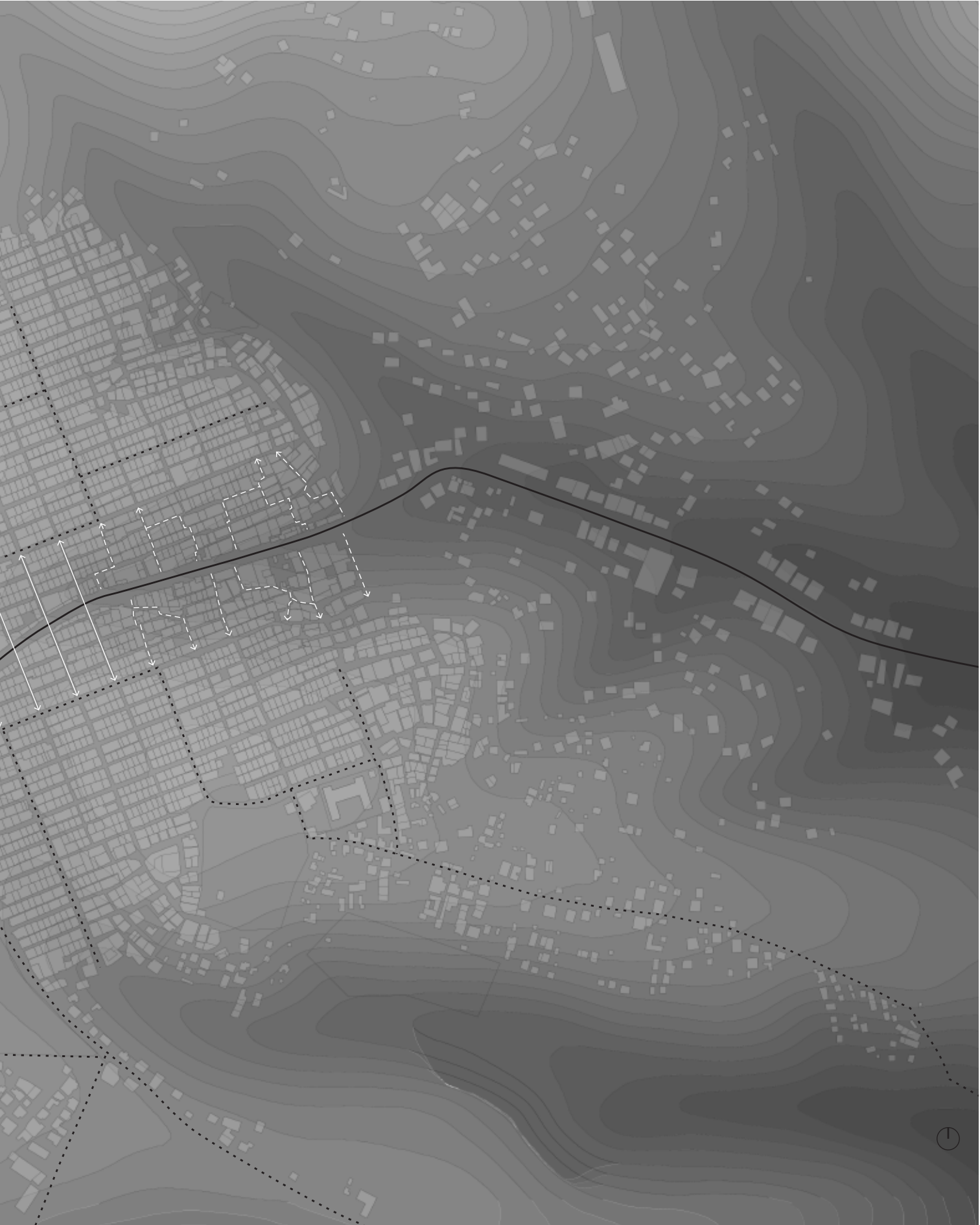
In most cases, camp residents who own a car and are coming from the city of Jerash, are forced to go all the way up to the centre of the camp, where they can turn left or right and find a way to their neighbourhoods. This spatial condition gives both advantages and disadvantages. The concentration of traffic on the main road ensures the soft and residential atmosphere within the camp's tissue. On the other hand, it results in many traffic problems in the centre.

The central wadi also affects the circulation pattern of pedestrians; they generally try to avoid the transverse movement across the main road, especially on the eastern part. At the western located centre, the crossing is rather flat, resulting in a high concentration of pedestrians. Even though it will take them longer, people will generally opt for the flattest movement possible to get from one place in the camp to another.

As a result of these topographical conditions and circulation patterns, the road has different economical characteristics, depending on the position along it.

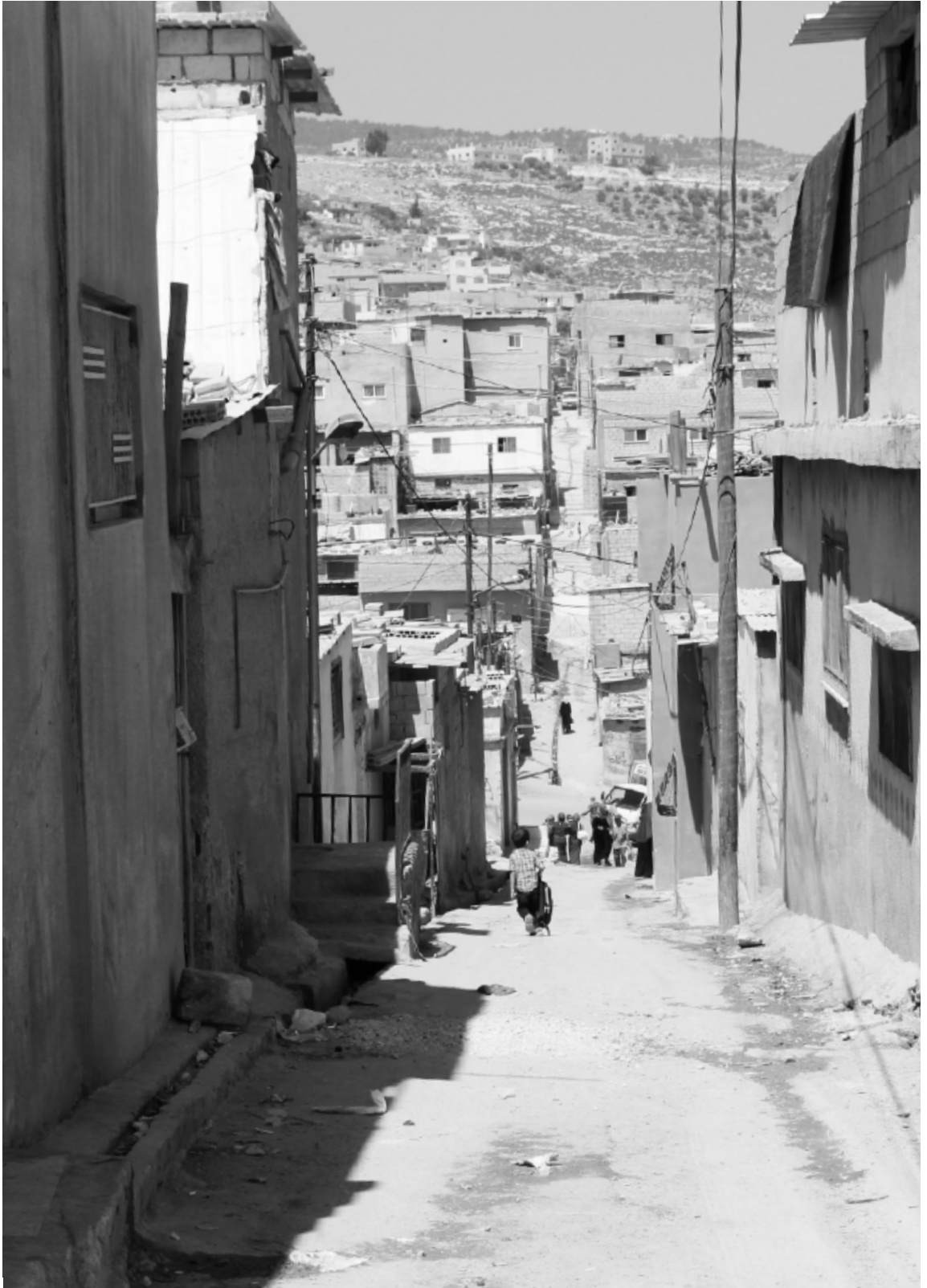
*Circulation patterns
pedestrians [white] and
cars [black].*









Street perpendicular to main road
in the centre of the camp.

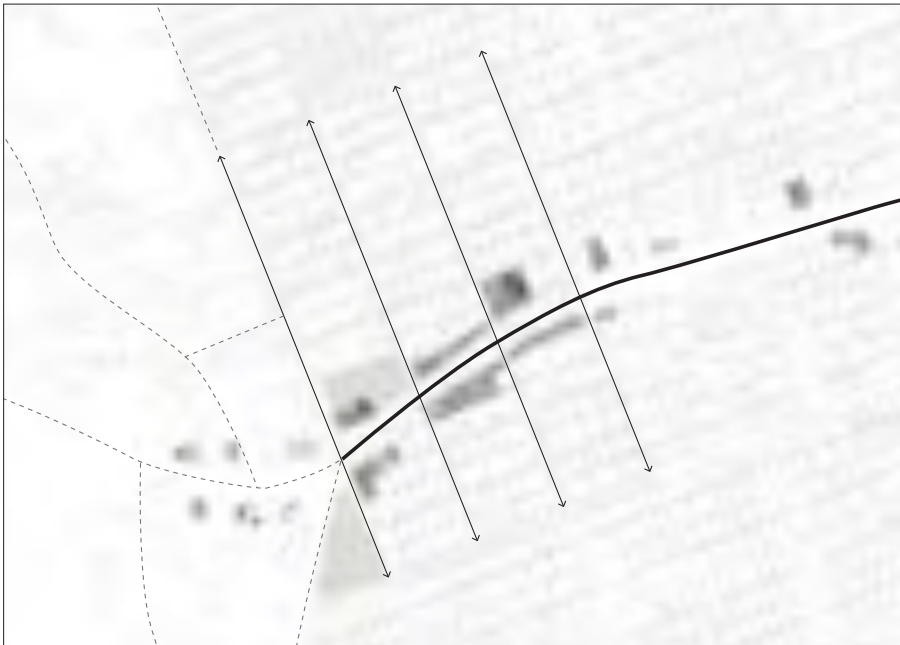


*Alley perpendicular to main road,
within eastern part of the camp.*

We can generally distinguish three main fragments of the road, all with their own characteristics; named *head*, *body* and *tail*.

The *head* of the “main road”-figure refers to the westernmost part of the road, or the centre of the camp. This is the place where an easy passage for pedestrians is possible, where cars need to decide which direction to take and where the main mosque, bus-, gas- and police station are located. Due to its exposed and busy character, it is the most popular place for men. They sit outside on doorsteps or thresholds, keeping an eye on the movement of people, cars and busses, while exchanging the latest news and stories. As a result of the high flux of pedestrians, this part of the road mainly comprises small groceries, retail- and coffeeshops.

-  Central functions
-  Groceries, retail- and coffeeshops







مخيطه
ورساء
تسليم

30

20
73969

00



Groceries next to gas station



Bus station



Electronics, - food and coffeeshops



Groceries across bus station





The combination of a high concentration of traffic and commercial activities with the presence of a bus station frequently causes traffic congestions in the centre of the camp. The following schemes present a problem analysis of this particular place.



Bottle neck



Narrow schoolstreet



Souq in front of Abu Baker mosque



Turning point



Bus station



Resulting traffic congestion



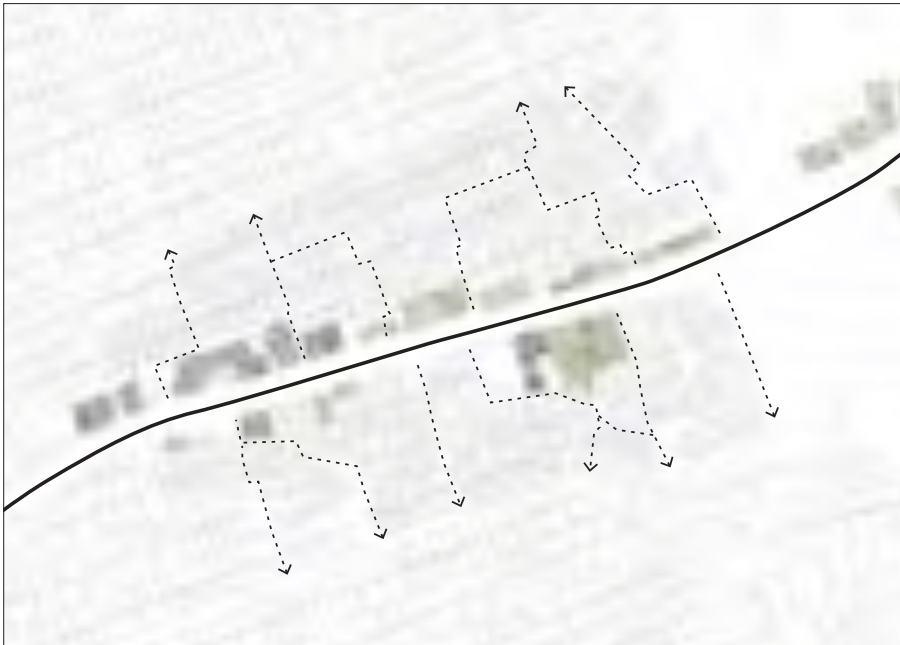


Centre of the camp



Moving towards the east, we recognize a spatial entity on itself, the *body* of the main road. This part the road-figure has a certain 'thickness', due to the height-difference between the upper residential areas and the lower main road. The steep slopes of the wadi are covered with an organic tissue in which the streets perpendicular to the main road are reduced to small alleys and staircases. Moreover, the organic tissue breaks with the rigid grid that structures the rest of the camp, resulting in streets that are not aligned on both sides of the road. As a result, it is very hard to cross the main road in this area. The limited flow of people in this body might be the reason why there is a shift in commercial shops, from retail in the head to storage rooms and mechanical workshops in the body.

The storage rooms, mainly located in the geographical centre of the camp, are used to store retail goods, animal food and construction materials. They need to be as close as possible to the actual shops in the centre, but thereby form a rather lifeless part of the road. The eastern part of the road on the other hand, is dominated by mechanical workshops. It is the economic engine of the camp, attracting people from the whole region with their cheap and qualitative services. Because the workspaces inside the buildings are rather small, the labourers often work outside, between the facade of the building and the road. As a result, the sidewalks are reduced to a minimum.







Storage

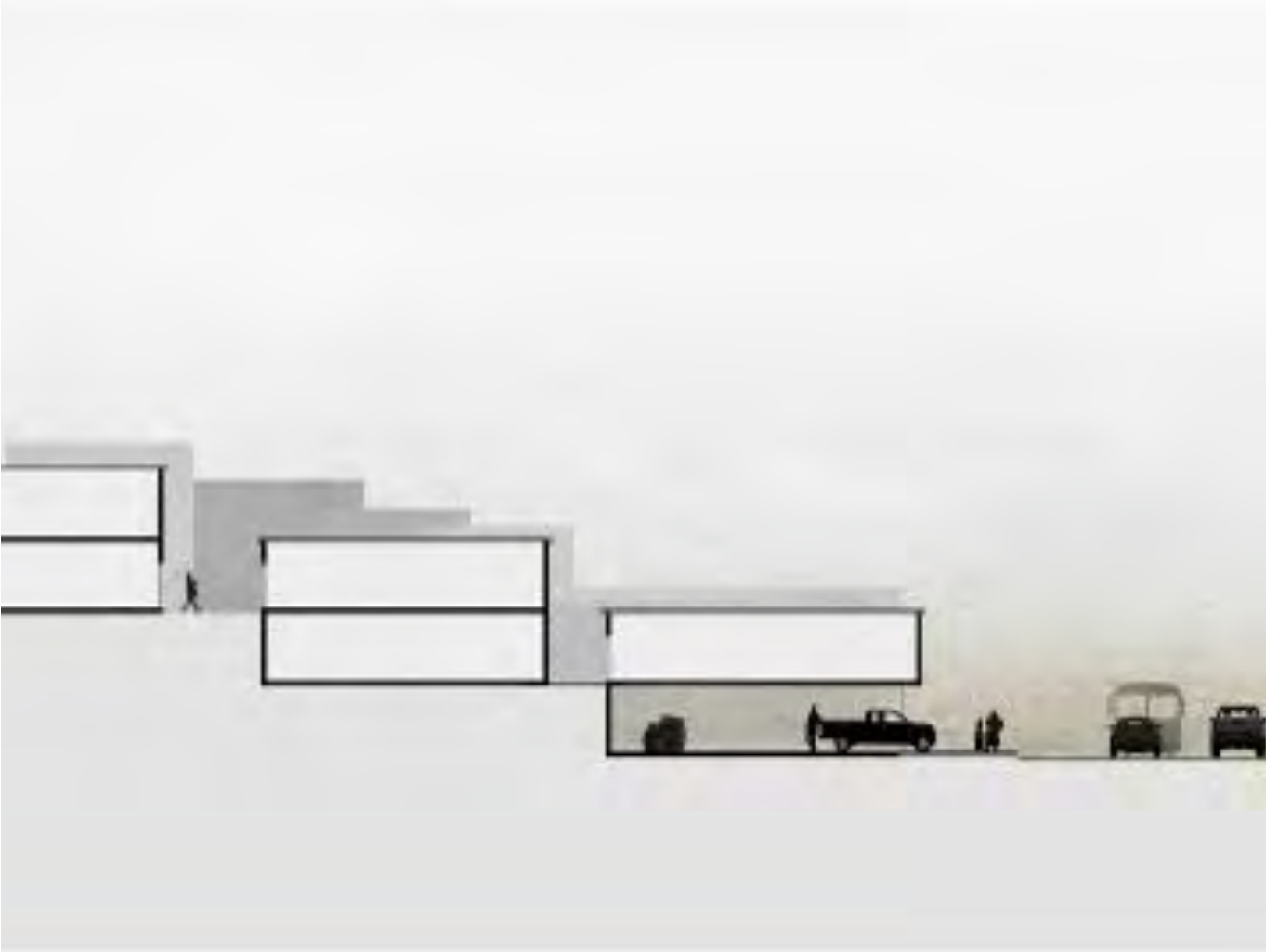


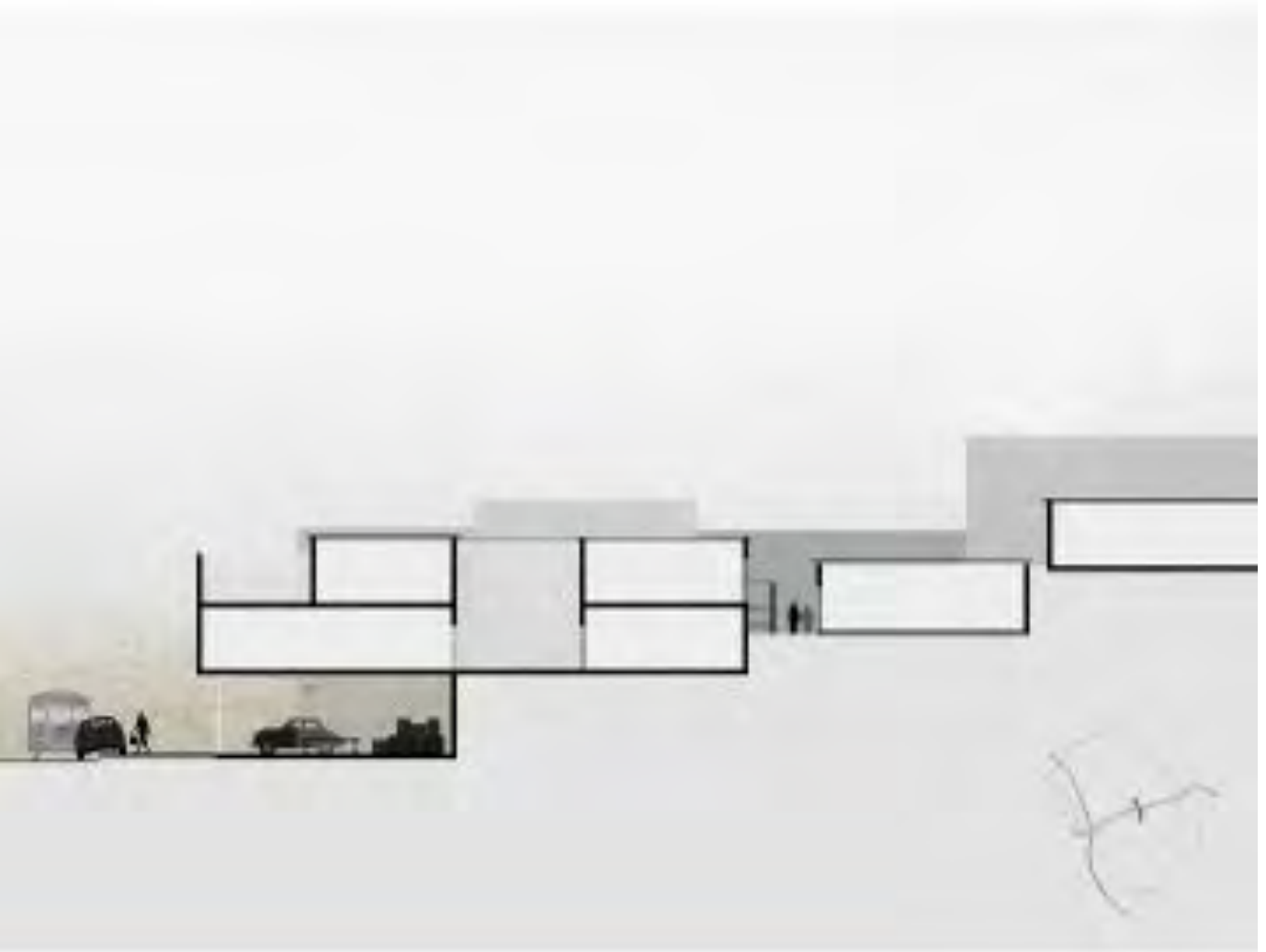
Workshops



Eastern part of the main road

The particular topographic conditions of this part of the main road define a distinct, dusty, low-lying world of labour that has very little to do with the elevated residential areas. The apartments above the workshops have their entry most of the time at the backside of the building, which enforces the separation between the main road and the residential environment. This clear distinction safeguards the delicate residential neighbourhoods from the fast and exposed atmosphere of the 'down-camp'. Therefore, the road can be considered as a space of exchange between the camp's residents and its users or visitors.





SECTION THROUGH MAIN ROAD









Along the part of the main road outside the official border of the camp, what we consider as the *tail* of the figure, the commercial activity continues all the way up to Jerash. This connection with the city of Jerash is dominated by Palestinian workshops and car mechanics, serving the fast character of the road. They are well-known for their cheaper service than their Jordanian competitors. Such as in the body, the vendors and labourers rather use the outdoor space - which is quite large outside the border - instead of the indoor workshop spaces.

 Workshops





Main road's tail, just outside the camp's border.



View on tail from wadi's southern slope.



BORDER CONDITIONS

VII.2 _____

Talking about camps, one cannot deny the important role of its borders, since both the notions of camp and its boundaries are inseparably connected to each other. As a strictly demarcated political line, the camp's edges indicate the in- and outside of these spaces of exile. They form the perimeter of an extraterritorial space that represents the refugees' struggle for the right of return. Therefore, the camp's border holds a strong symbolic value, as it can be seen as a carrier of the refugee status and the refugees' identity.

On the ground however, the physical appearance of the camp's boundary is not something that has been invariable over time, but it has endured a process evolving from being latent over strictly delineating towards the versatile conditions it presents today. At the camp's inception, this line was spatially rather invisible since the camp's fabric was not that outstretched and didn't reach so far due to authoritarian restrictions.[cfr. Historical Growth of the Camp] It was only after the horizontal expansions, which filled up the camp to the brim, that this margin became clearly discernible. As an area where the logics of the camp's authorities come together with the logics of the landscape, today's border conditions cannot be considered as unambiguous. It's on the edges that the rules imposed by both UNRWA and the DPA – such as the grid structure and approval for expansion – collide with the underlying structure of the landscape and its topography, resulting in different border conditions at different locations along the perimeter.

As a result of the slow process of spatial integration that occurred during the past two decades, the status of the camp's boundary has shifted from a membrane that holds the refugee population within the camp's perimeter, towards an element whose conditions varies in function of its location. Once as a line that strictly demarcated inside and outside, camp and non-camp, density and emptiness, the boundary has nowadays been blurred with the camp's surrounding overspill at certain areas, while at other it has remained clearly defined.





Grid unit 100m

WEST BORDER

Located on the flat ridge of the wadi, the western border is defined by the north-south axis that holds two important entrances of the camp. This road as a physical border is emphasised by the presence of several ‘walled-in islands,’ which are implemented perpendicular to the grid structure of the residential fabric that only touches the border on this side of the camp. The walls of the UNRWA-compound and those surrounding a private Jordanian land clearly demarcate the camp’s western edge, respectively along part A and part B.

This north-south connection acts as a structuring axis that links most of the camp’s amenities with each other. Coming from the hills in the north, it serves all UNRWA amenities and runs southwards along the youth club towards an apparent ‘infinite’ landscape. Where it intersects with the camp’s main road, this axis contributes to the creation of the camp’s centre in combination with the gas- and bus station and the main Abu Baker mosque. Moreover, it connects the two major forests in the north and south of the camp, which serves as the camp’s two most important recreational areas.

The fabric that exceeds the western border represents the Jordanian village *Al-Hadadah*. Although it already existed at the camp’s establishment, the village nowadays sticks to the edge as a sort of parasite, benefiting from the camp’s assets. Its presence makes the road, that separates the camp from this village, not only act as a physical border, but also as a frontier, a latent ‘tension field’ between two identities, Jordanians and Palestinians. Although they usually live peacefully side-by-side, this ‘tension field’ became clearly visible during the riots that took place in September last year, between the Jordanian villagers and the camp inhabitants. It was at these moments that this road turned into the frontline of the conflict.



Wall of the UNRWA-compound



Wall of a private Jordanian land





Centre of the camp



Schoolstreet - Riots September 2013



Youth Club - Riots September 2013

SOUTH BORDER

While the west border coincides with the ridge, the southern border does not follow the topography but is drawn across both a wadi and a hilltop. Although the former penetrates the camp deeply, it has become inaccessible from the camp. The straight 'boulevard' that runs down from the centre seems to end up in this wadi, but is however blocked by a blind wall placed on the official border of the camp. Besides, a cluster of organically grown fabric, strongly influenced by the wadi's presence, created a physical demarcation of the camp. Apart from an informal and rather unused desire path, every connection from inside the camp to this wadi has been hindered, causing this 'green lung' to be so close yet unreachable.

More eastwards, the border is defined by several walled-in voids serving as the former and current cemeteries of the camp. Because of its outstretched walls, the old cemetery shifts the border - as physically experienced - more inwards than the actual official border. Due to the saturation of the old cemetery, a new cemetery was recently inaugurated just outside the camp, embedded on the edge of the wadi as a demarcating enclosure.

The southeast corner of the official camp is characterised by the organic filling up of the initially open belt within the camp's borders. The unplanned expansion built along the height lines created an almost impenetrable wall of shelters, which - except for a few alleys - makes it nearly impossible to get in or out of the camp, causing this area to become very introvert. In between the old cemetery and this residential organic fabric, the governmental high school for girls, together with one of the many mosques, form an enclave that spatially can be considered as strategic projects. Since the official border on this location has completely vanished, due to a continuation of the camp's fabric into the urban overspill, these public amenities have maintained two important and necessary connections between the camp and its expansion and therefore act as a crucial interface between inside and outside.



Grid unit 100m











*Southern wadi, village Al-Hadadah and Horsj Abu Zeid
[Next Page] Cemetery wall*



Walled cemetery



Governmental highschool for girls

EAST BORDER

The rather straight demarcation line that forms the eastern border holds the major entrance of the camp. Here, two empty voids cover both sides of the main road just before entering the camp perpendicularly to its edge. Despite the urban overspill in this eastern direction, these two privately owned plots have remained un-built and therefore appear as a gap within a bigger urbanised area and act as a sort of 'foyer' of the original camp. While the open space on the north side of the road is currently used for the construction of the sewage project, the southern void, as a sort of *terrain vague*, is being neglected and serves as an open-air garbage dump. Nonetheless, this terrain holds a set of circulation patterns, despite its steep topographic conditions. Especially the youngsters use this void as a short cut to get from the main road to the higher residential areas and vice versa. Although it seems like this emptiness clearly defines the camp's entrance, the official border is not clear when entering the camp along the main road. In general, the inhabitants indicate the entrance by the camp's major garbage collection point, which is located just inside the border.

In the northeast, the border has remained clearly visible since it aligns with the topographic lines defining the slope of the wadi. Branched off from the wadi that holds the main road, this wadi cuts off the expansion called *Al-Menshieh* from the camp and as such acts as a natural demarcating element. As mentioned before, the tissue along this border is strongly influenced by the presence of this wadi, which at a certain point enters the camp deeply, manipulating the camp's grid structure. Similar to the southeast corner of the camp, this organic fabric built according the height lines has caused the camp to turn its back to the wadi. Within this tissue, however, some connections between inside and outside have been maintained by means of several staircases through alleyways. Moreover, a dirt road that runs exactly on the camp's official border seems to act like a dike that prevents the camp's fabric from spilling over into the wadi. This unpaved street splits up into two roads where the wadi penetrates the camp; one road connecting with *Al-Menshieh* and the other one entering the camp.





Entrance of the camp





Informal circulation routes





Wadi cuts off Al-Menshieh from the camp









Wadi entering the camp



NORTH BORDER

The mountain in the north acts as a natural demarcating element of the camp. In addition to the UNRWA-compound in the west and the wadi in the east, the steep topography of this *jabal* caused part A to become completely enclosed, limiting its possibilities to expand. Nonetheless, a small cluster of shelters has appeared on this hill, with a panoramic view overlooking the entire camp.

Besides its role as a getaway spot for the youngsters, the forest covering the western part of the hill also houses some of the poorer refugees living in self-constructed shelters, close to the camp's border. Because of the presence of open shaded spaces between the trees, this forest is also used for holding animals, predominantly goats and sheep. In contrast to this green western part of the mountain, the eastern part consist of an arid rocky surface, which is used as a playground for kids.

Regarding the camp's fabric on the inside of the border, the spatial conditions are similar to the other edges. An unstructured organic tissue, due to a steeper topography, makes the edge difficult to permeate here as well.



Grid unit 100m















WADIS

VII.3 _____

- Wadi -

NOUN (plural wadis)

(In certain Arabic-speaking countries) a valley, ravine, or channel that is dry except in the rainy season.

[Oxford Dictionary]

As stated before, today's appearance of a Palestinian refugee camp is strongly determined by its site-specific relation with the immediate surroundings. Different landscape conditions result in different spatial conditions, which define each camp's physical characteristics. From this perspective and with regard to Gaza camp, one cannot deny the major role of the wadis in the constitution of the camp's morphological identity today. [cfr. logics of the camp] Among the three wadis that enter the camp's perimeter and remarkably influenced the way the camp has grown, a distinction has to be made. As discussed before, the central wadi holds the main road that constitutes the 'artery' of the camp as a place of exchange, commerce, business, etc. The two other 'valleys', on the contrary, should be looked upon differently. They form discharging spaces for the densely packed camp, green lungs as to say, that lay right along its border.

Highlighting one of the topographic lines shows how one wadi is penetrating Gaza camp, while two others lay just beside it.











ROLE OF THE WADIS

While the overcrowding of the camp and the density of its fabric present a high sense of compression, the two wadis in the northeast and the south appear as valuable zones of 'decompression'. As outstretched, open and green areas, right next to this densely packed 'camp city', these wadis - and the surrounding landscape in general - constitute a strong asset of the camp. However, their presence as an advantage is not being considered as such by the camp's inhabitants. As a result of its morphological evolution, the camp has gradually turned its back on these wadis, transforming them into 'the backsides of the camp', both literally and metaphorically. Once fertile and cultivated with a wide range of crops, varying from olive groves to even orange trees, these 'green lungs' nowadays suffer from heavy contaminations, due to the prolonged presence of the camp and its increasing population.

The pollution consists of both solid waste and sewage. Originating from the refugees' shelters, this sewage - predominantly grey water, but in some cases even black water - drains through the open channels in the streets and ends up in the wadis, according to the logics of gravity. This contamination by the camp's wastewater is something that should be resolved within a few months, when the construction of the camp's underground sewerage, conducted by the SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), will be completed.¹ The problem of solid waste, on the contrary, is an issue that will be harder to tackle, since its origin is not unambiguous. Firstly, a significant part of the rubbish that characterizes the soil of the wadis, results from an act of direct depositing by people - living near the wadi and faraway from an official garbage collection point-, who

consider these kinds of 'backsides' as suitable areas to get rid off their waste. The open spaces surrounding the camp's border are also often used for the incineration of solid wastes.

In addition, a lot of the solid waste polluting the wadis originates indirectly from different places in the camp, predominantly from the streets. As places that are everybody's - and therefore nobody's- no responsibility for this public realm is being born by whosoever in the camp. Hence, every street, road or alley holds a certain degree of refuse that won't be taken care of. This general unconcern by the refugees, combined with the physical appearance of the camp as a 'concrete carpet' - an area completely paved and impervious for rainwater - causes this rubbish to be carried along with the urban runoff towards the topographic lowest areas, i.e. the wadis. Consequently, this process of rubbish sedimentation has, throughout time, caused the soil of the once fertile valleys to become polluted to a significant depth, resulting in today's inability to cultivate these lands, which led to great dissatisfaction of the Jordanian owners.

As stated in its definition, both wadis collect a considerable amount of rainwater in winter and have therefore been safeguarded from urbanization processes. Hence, these 'green fingers' touching the camp have persisted as clearly distinguishable landscape figures, notwithstanding the camp's urban overspill.

[1] www.sdc-water.ch

NORTHEAST WADI



Village of Al-Menshieh

Especially the wadi in the northeast, being gradually enclosed by recently emerging fabric of the expanding overspill *Al-Menshieh*, nowadays constitutes an open, however neglected emptiness within a bigger urbanised Palestinian area; a backside and a front side at the same time. As a result of its central location, informal circulation routes started to appear within this wadi, such as the several desire paths, predominantly created by kids who cross this wadi transversal as a shortcut on their way to the UNRWA schools or back home. These informal connections coincide with the piles of rocks that subdivide the wadi into a sequence of terraces, a technique applied in order to prevent the soil from eroding. Before the wadi touches the main street, it is cut off by several private properties, causing the green area to become even more a 'backside space'. During winter, severe stability and hygienic problems occur as a result of water and garbage assembling in masses just behind the properties.

Heavily polluted area

Private Palestinian property



SOUTHERN WADI

Unlike the northeast wadi, the southern wadi is not being traversed by pedestrian routes that come and go from the camp. The main reason for this is of course the inaccessibility of the wadi, as discussed before. [cfr. South Border] Besides, the former wadi is located between the camp and its overspill and therefore serves a connecting, though separating natural element between both Palestinian urban entities. The southern wadi on the contrary, is framed by the refugees' shelters on one side and a row of Jordanian villas of *Al-Hadadah* on the other side. Hence, this unreachable area acts as a buffer zone, presenting a certain tension field between the two identities living opposite to each other and almost competing for the area that separates them. However, while this tension can be sensed strongly on the Palestinian side where shelters are turned inward to the camp - neglecting the space of the wadi -, most Jordanian villas are surrounded by gardens that reach deep into the valley. The wadi and its advantageous and openness are much more used on this Jordanian hillside.

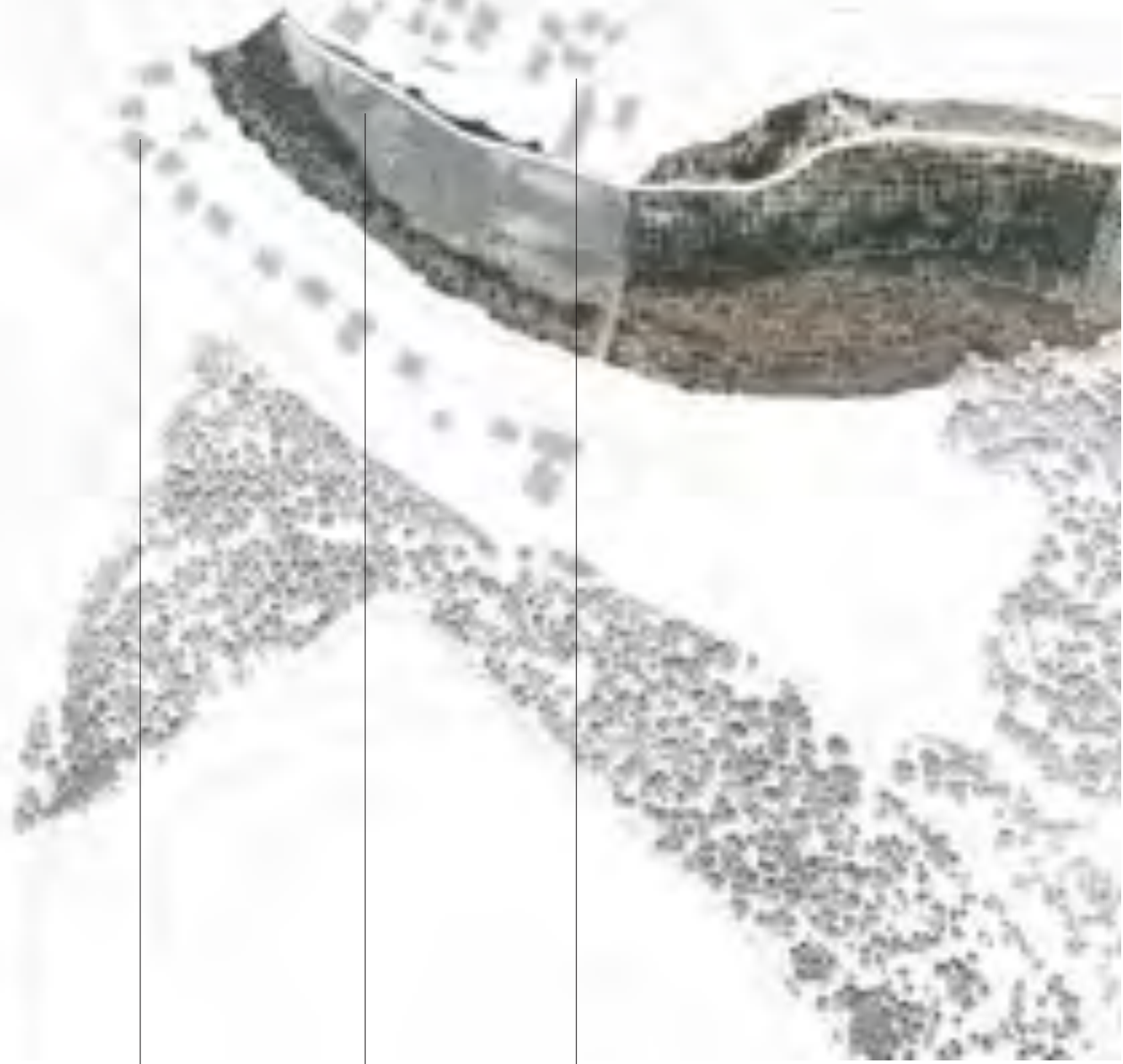
As is still the case in the northern wadi, the tip of this southern 'green finger' used to be completely Jordanian owned as well. But it was 25 years ago when the Jordanian owner sold the upper part of this wadi to Palestinians residing in the camp. He explained the reason for this disposal as follows: "Twenty-five years ago, fifteen Jordanian families lived of the vegetables we grew in this wadi. But the garbage coming from the camp has made agriculture on this land impossible." [Brahim Rwashda]

Thus due to the camp's sewage and the garbage it brings along, the upper part of the wadi became contaminated in such a way that the value of the land decreased heavily, which of course led to frustrations and tensions between the Jordanian owner and 'the camp'. Rumours from the camp's inhabitants even told us that the Jordanian farmer sued UNRWA for the destruction of his land forcing UNRWA to provide for a compensation of 60 000 JD. In any case, due to the deterioration of this former agricultural land, the farmer sold the upper part for 3000 JD per donum to two Palestinian families, who intend to build housing units in this part of the wadi.

As no agricultural activity is possible anymore in the wadi, it is currently under threat of being used as building land.

The Jordanian village and the camp (from which this picture was taken) are clearly separated by the empty space of the wadi.

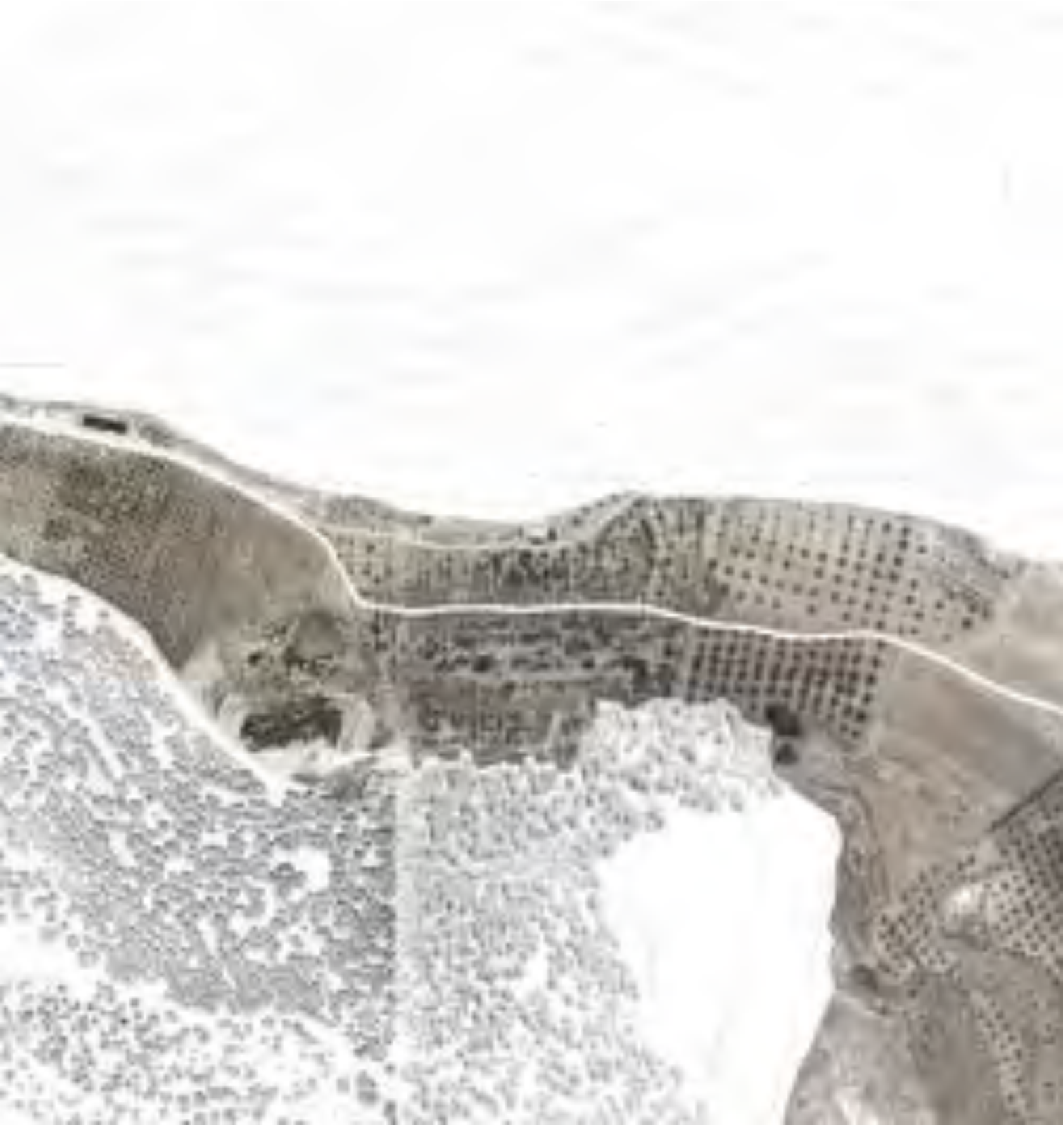




Jordanian village

Heavily polluted area

Refugee shelters



Agricultural area

Seasonal stream

The wadi clearly consists of two parts, of which the top one is in worst condition as a result of heavy pollution.



TISSUE

VII.4 _____

THE CAMP'S TISSUE

A VS. B (~ DECENTRALISATION)

The northern part A has strongly articulated borders due to the adjoining elements and local topography. It is surrounded by the UNRWA-compound in the West, the *Jabal* (mountain) in the North and the starting *Wadi* in the East, which make it difficult for the tissue to expand in these directions.

Part A is characterised by its grouped functions (UNRWA, market, main road) which form a clear body in the tissue, hence the crowded, downtown character. This body is located on the west side of the camp, creating a decentralised commercial centre for the camp.

Part B, on the south of the main road, has less strict borders than A. Especially on the east, where the border has become vague because of the overspill. The majority of the overspill occurs here since it is the most logical consequence of the topography, simply following the hill outwards. It is therefore naturally to include this overspill with part B when speaking of such.

Part B's functions, in contrast to part A, are spread over the tissue. These functions are therefore more diverse, but still marking strict zones spread over the area, which insinuates a suburban character. Since these functions are located inside the official borders, it is still problematic for the overspill because of their lack of public functions, especially commercial ones. Hence, the functions in part B don't compete with the commercial body of A, neither do they complement to serve the expansions.









GRID VS. ORGANIC

Following the logics of the development of the camp, there is an obvious distinction between the rigid structure of the grid and the organic growth towards the borders and beyond.

The grid was organised by UNRWA when establishing the camp. It is a typical outcome of “humanitarian” planning practices which created an efficient, ‘democratic’ and organised distribution of plot subdivision for the refugees.[Sheikh Hassan, unpublished] The grid consists out of plots of 8 by 12 m² in blocks of 6 by 2 plots. These blocks were generally separated by West-East streets of approximately 6m wide and North-South streets of approximately 4m wide. Yet the grid was also an instrument of control over the refugee population by both the international humanitarian government and the security apparatus of the nation-state.[Sheikh Hassan, unpublished]

Nowadays, we can see minimal expansions of the shelter outside its plotlines. We can thus start to read that the small individual refugee acts of breaking a portion of the grid are acts of resistance to an enforced spatiality that is manifested through their forced emplacement within the borders of the camp and the rigid structures of its internal grids. Every physical transgression of a few square meters symbolises a miniscule liberation in a context of minimal human control over space and destiny.[Sheikh Hassan, unpublished]

When it was allowed to expand outside the grid in the early ’80s, this mostly happened according to oral agreements between the future neighbours.

At first, the new shelters tried to follow the organization of the grid, following its lines, but when the topography became too dominant, the grid lines transformed towards the topography lines (cfr. terraces). The space that a family could claim for their shelter was agreed upon together with their new neighbours, with the concept of privacy as the driving force. In this way, the public space was determined by whether or not a wall or window was on a safe distance from the opposing shelter. Therefore, there is more playfulness in the shape of the shelter and the public space in these organic areas.

Hence ingrained within this wide variety of urban and spatial form are the narratives and outcomes of the different negotiations, confrontations and battles between the refugees and the forces that consistently tried to order and control them.[Sheikh Hassan, unpublished]

Since the grid is planted on the flattest and best accessible part of the area, the organic parts are characterised by the difficult topography, resulting in different types of shelters.[cfr. The building block]

CAMP VS. OVERSPILL

Due to population growth, the camp area has become too small to house all the refugees. But because of the limitations in the UNRWA services, the Jordanian politics and personal financial autonomy, it is not always convenient to move outside the official camp borders.

The public facilities of UNRWA are always accessible for everybody, but certain services like food distribution, shelter improvement, scholarships etc. are only provided for the most disadvantaged refugees. These limitations are not strictly related to the location of the shelter -inside or outside the border-, but rather to the assumption that if you are able to move outside the camp, you are able to support yourself.

Besides the provided services, there is also the Jordanian law which prevents the refugees from moving out, since it prohibits them to officially buy land. Due to changing governments, there have been short periods when they were allowed, so there are a few families who were able to officially buy land. In the other periods, informal ways were constructed in cooperation with local Jordanians to buy land. This happened with the belief that if they would ever be officially allowed, an official document would be established, however there is a high suspicion towards their loyalty.

But of course, because of the high poverty rate in the camp, only a select group of the current camp inhabitants is actually able to migrate.

Furthermore, moving to the expansions does not always imply an improvement of the shelter quality and its construction. In general, it can be noticed that the same construction techniques and respective errors are retained. There is merely an improvement regarding privacy and usage of the outdoor space within their land borders. However, a distinction needs to be made with the occasional villas.





THE SHELTER

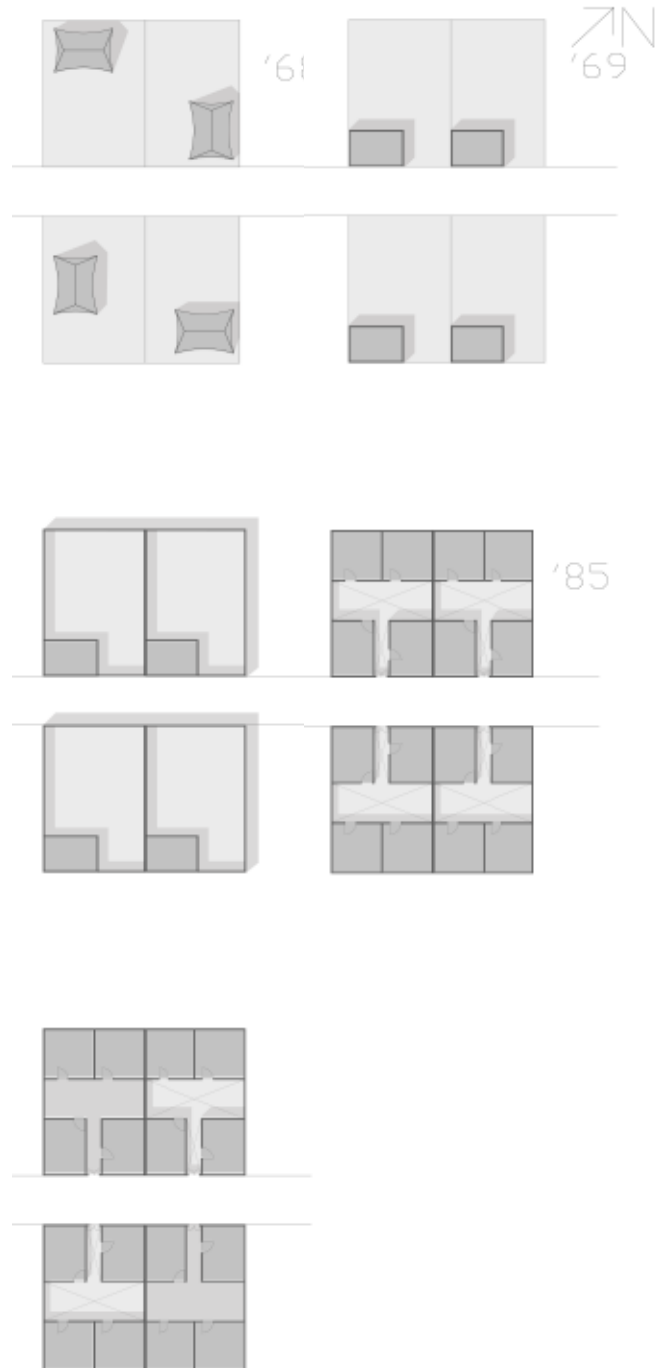
EVOLUTION OF THE SHELTER

Upon arrival, the refugees were assigned a plot of 8 by 12 m². They grouped and constructed their tent received by UNRWA with families, clans, and groups of people from the same villages to form clusters and quarters based on their traditional, rural hosh concepts. [UNRWA, 2012]

After about two years UNRWA provided them with asbestos units. They were positioned according to the grid, always in the South-West corner of the plot. The units were all 3m by 4.5m. As soon as they could, the refugees built a wall around their plot, providing themselves more privacy and safety, and started expanding within that wall.

Around 1985, awareness regarding asbestos arose resulting in demolishing this unit and rebuilding it with rocks, concrete and other locally found construction materials. Nevertheless, there are still some asbestos units left in the camp.

The majority of the shelters expanded according to the archetype, with an open patio. Afterwards, some shelters covered the patio with corrugated sheets. During this process, some shift appeared in the shelter borders. Some shelters expanded to almost 150% of the original size and others shrank to half the size. Some families received a bigger plot at arrival because of their family size. In the early '90s, UNRWA allowed to build a second story, resulting in a verticalisation trend in the commercial zones and seldomly in the residential areas. However, only a minority of the shelters were built completely in concrete with concrete slabs, following in high structural risks when building this second story.



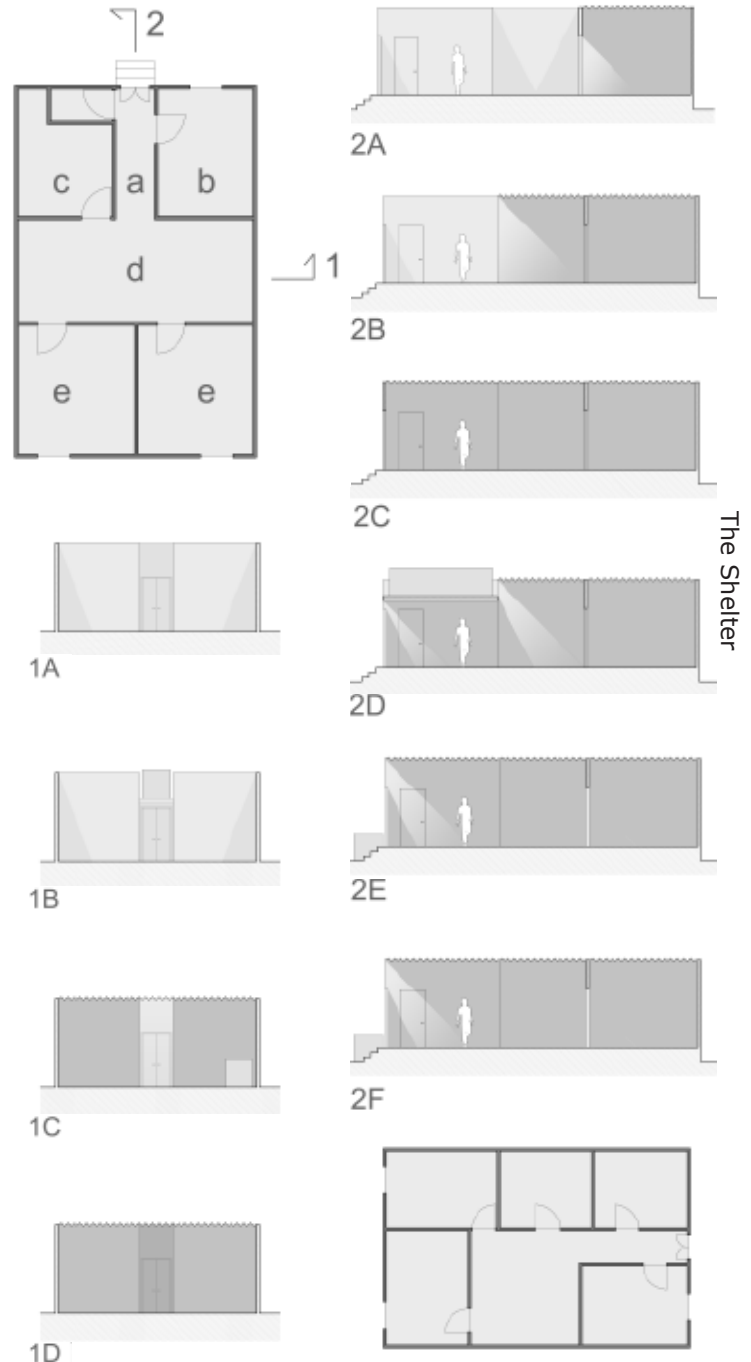
THE ARCHETYPE

It is possible to recognize a general organisation in the shelters in Gaza Camp. The entrance leads to a hall (a) which is often separated from the patio (d) by a curtain. Guests are received in the guestroom (b). Passing the curtain, we enter the family-zone; a patio (d), a kitchen and/or bathroom (c) and the sleeping rooms (e) in the back of the plot.

This model knows several variations regarding the roofing. The primitive example, shown in sections 1A and 2A, has an open patio and entrance hall. These areas are gradually closed, as shown in sections 1C and 2B, where the patio is covered with a corrugated sheet, and 1D and 2C where both patio and hall have a corrugated sheet roofing. The majority of the shelters consist of corrugated sheet roofs. Only few have concrete slabs.

The water tank knows several locations in the shelters, and is determining for the character of the space. It is often placed on the street, section 2E, in the patio, sections 1C and 2F, or on the roof, sections 1B and 2D. In the last case, the roof is strengthened by a small concrete slab, just enough to carry the tank. Most shelters are able to store 2 to 3 m³ of water which should be refilled every month.

This plan knows a variant which is also rather common. The entrance hall and patio remain central, while the other rooms undergo a shift. The bedrooms are located along the long axis next to the entrance, however the room on the street side is often primarily a guestroom. The kitchen lies on the back of the plot and the bathroom lies along the street, on the other side of the bedrooms.





An example of one of the remaining asbestos units.



PRIVACY

Through the course of time, the street knows a lot of changes. To anticipate this, the shelters are built on an elevation, see section 1. On the one hand, this prevents dirt from the street to flow into the shelter and it provides a flat base to build on, and on the other hand, it increases the privacy.

This socle introduces steps on the street, which are actively used as a hang out place for men and children. Not everybody can use these steps, usually it is only meant for the owner and his friends and family. It is rather seldom that a stranger will sit on someone else's step. So this could be seen as a slight expansion of the shelter and thus the private zone. It allows a smooth transition from the public street to the private shelter.

These steps often evolve towards an actual entrance area, surrounded by a wall, see section 2 and the left photo below. In this way, the inhabitant claims a part of the street and makes it more private, until it becomes an actual expansion of the shelter, as can be seen on the photo on the next page.



Another less drastic, though often applied way is the usage of a curtain between the entrance hall and the patio. This also symbolises the border between rather public and rather private. See section 2 and the photo on the previous page.

The windows are generally located high in the facade. Together with the elevation of the shelter, this prevents passers-by from looking inside, but it is still possible to look at the street when standing up straight in the shelter. To ensure that nobody can visually penetrate the private atmosphere, a lot of windows are covered with curtains, cardboard, wood, etc. Besides this, it is also avoided to have two windows of individual shelters in front of each other.

The local tradition is very strict regarding privacy, so we can see a gradual and logical increase through the section of the shelter. Toward the public street, the guestroom is located, so that visitors don't necessarily have to enter the private atmosphere. The more acquainted with the family, the further you can enter the shelter.









THE BUILDING BLOCK

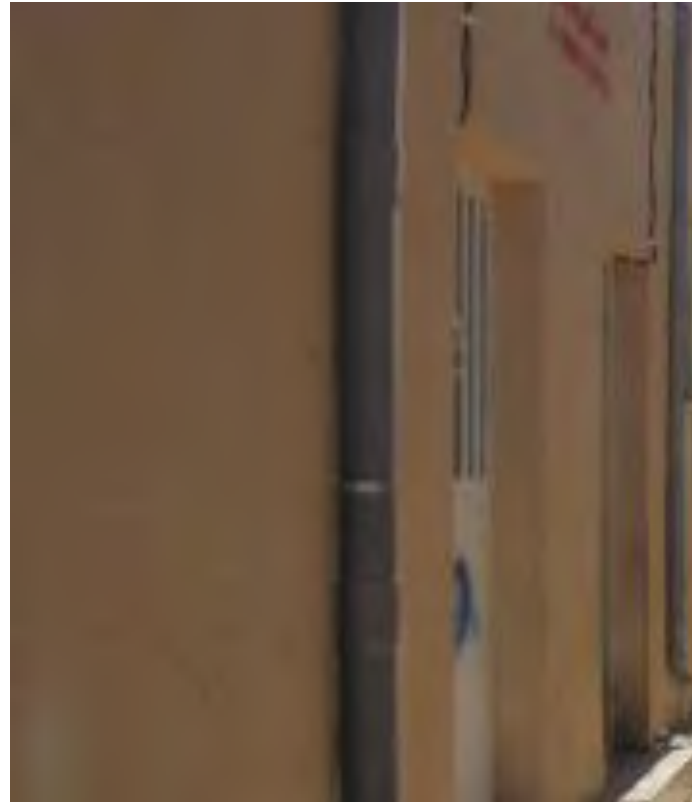
A number of building blocks were investigated in order to determine certain block typologies linked to different parameters. Hoping to find diversity, all blocks were chosen on a different location in the camp.

The information was gained with the help of the hospitable inhabitants of the respective shelters, who provided data regarding the evolution and construction of the shelter and the building block in general. In this way, information about the current state of the shelter, the construction methods, the used materials, the building process, the relationship with the neighbours, the location within the camp, the usage of the public space, etc. could be gathered.

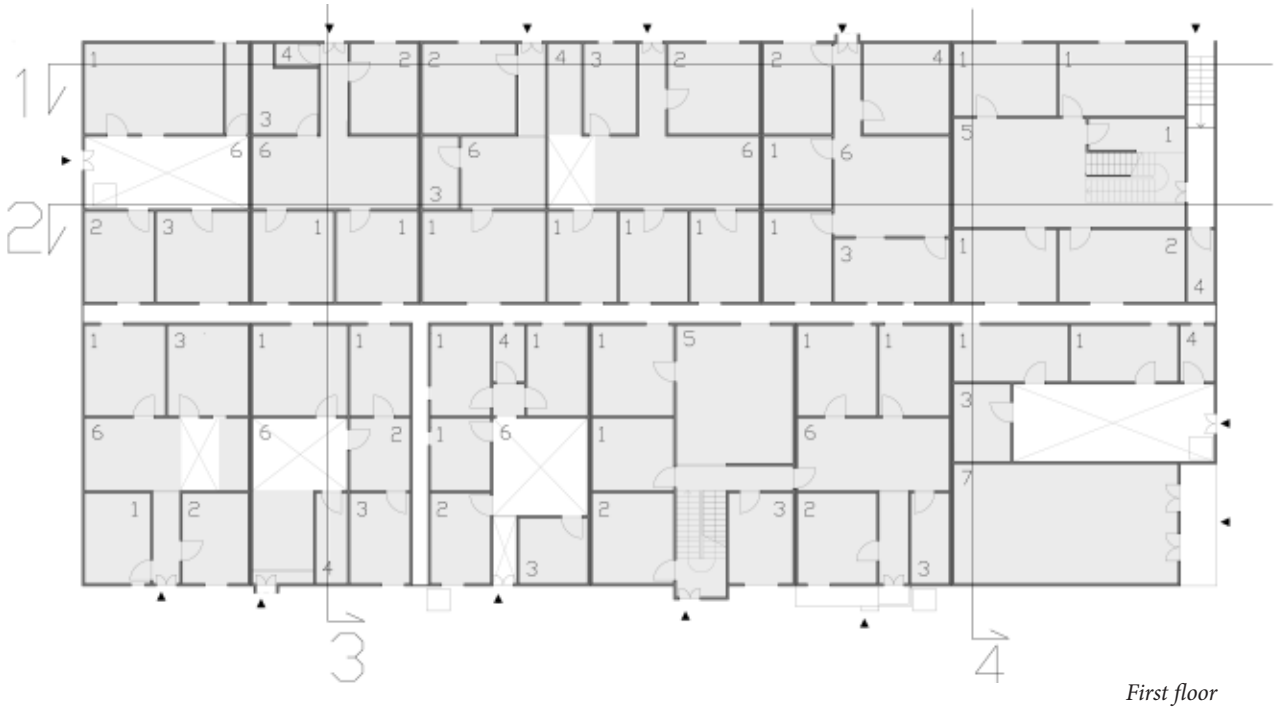
COMMON EXAMPLE

This example of a building block can be considered typical for the camp. It can be found in the residential part -and thus the majority- of the camp. It consists mostly out of single storey shelters since multiple storey shelters are the exception. Sometimes a shelter expands in plot area while others shrink to the “half shelter” size. This happens because of family growth or the exceptional increasing financial situation.

The public space in front of the blocks which is shared by all the neighbours is generally left untouched. Besides the steps and some expansions towards the street discussed under “Shelter”, there are only few appropriations of the street. One common but minimal example is hanging up wet laundry on the façade or decorating the front door. When people have the means, they sometimes decorate their façade too. But even when it is just slightly or not appropriated, it is the playground of all the children.







First floor



Groundfloor

COMMON EXAMPLE - ZOOM IN

In this example, the majority of the shelters evolved towards the typical arrangement as discussed in “The archetype”. There are two shelters of half the size, “half house”, which still follows this arrangement but then split in half as if they were cut on the mirroring axis. Three other shelters deviate a little from this model and two shelters have a second story. One shelter uses half of this second story as an “apartment” for the daughter with her husband and son, while the other half is used as an enclosed terrace for breeding pigeons. For the other shelter, the second story functions merely as an expansion of the shelter.

The main complaints about the shelter are due to the zinc roof. In winter this causes problems regarding moist, leakages and heat loss. In summer this causes overheating. Another huge problem is the lack of privacy between the shelters. The thin walls let through all the noise.

The relationship with neighbours is generally described as good. Some even see their neighbours as family. This grows in most cases because of the lack of privacy. Some neighbours are actually family and some share the same family roots. However, there are still some traditional rules to be respected between the neighbours as if would be the case with other people.

This building block is located on a steeper part of the slope. The total height difference is estimated around 2 meter. However, the slope doesn't change gradually. At some parts it is steeper than on others and sometimes it is even flat.

The overall height of one story of a shelter remains the same, so the change in slope can be recognized in the roofs as well. The roofs are never connected to each other, as every house is treated individually. Besides this, the roof is a simple corrugated sheet which is not even

mounted but only secured by the weight of some bricks and tires. So an actual connection between this zinc roof and anything else is nowhere to be found.

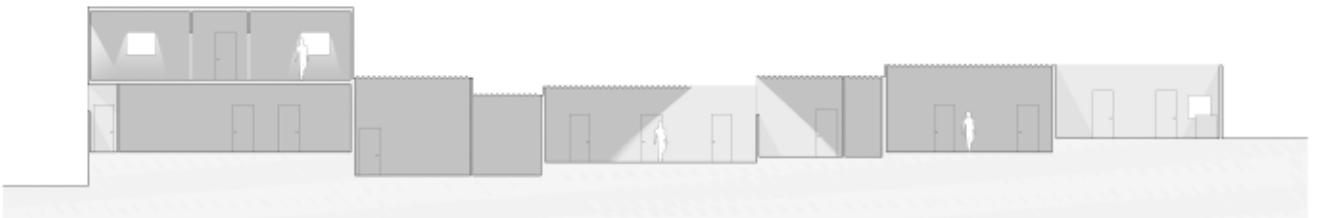
Windows are mostly situated high in the wall, to prevent people from looking inside. Most windows are even blinded by all kinds of materials. It goes from normal curtains to cardboard or wood. For the same reason, windows should never be located right in front of each other. These are very strict rules that are supposed to be respected. That's why it is often an issue if shelters want to build extra stories. Because the privacy issue evolves from a horizontal problem to a vertical problem as it becomes possible to look downwards inside a shelter.

We see these rules also applied in the small alley in the middle of the building block. For reasons like privacy and safety, this alley is blocked on both sides. It isn't used, but it is full of trash which causes bad odour.

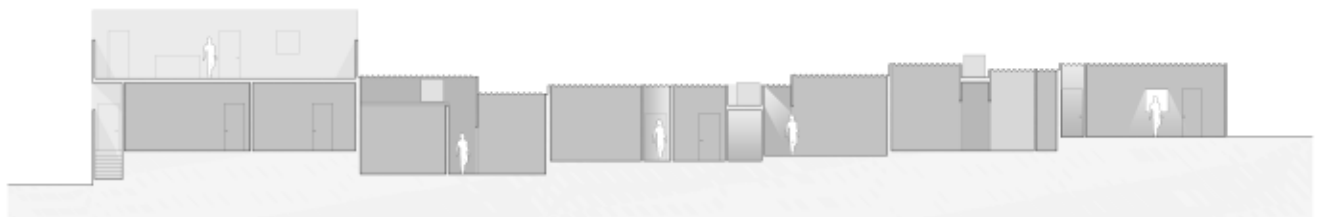
The main streets surrounding the block are the playgrounds for the children. It is also a gathering place for the men and for the construction workers in the street. Besides this, the streets are occasionally used for other activities such as weddings, funerals, etc. They are held in tents outside in front of the shelter.

On the corner of the building block, there is a small grocery shop. However, when we asked, nobody goes there, everybody goes to the market. Other activities in the neighbourhood are visiting the mosque, Omar.

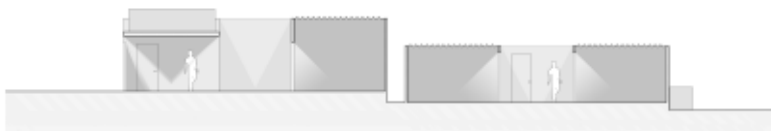
1 Bedroom	4 Bathroom
2 Guestroom	5 Living room
3 Kitchen	6 Open patio



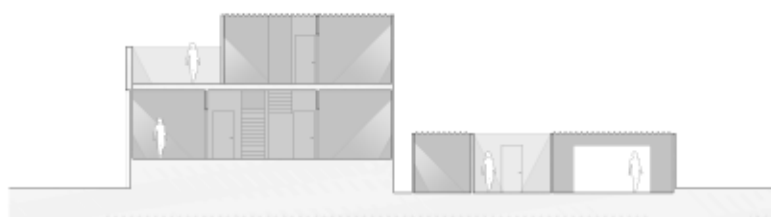
Section 1



Section 2



Section 3



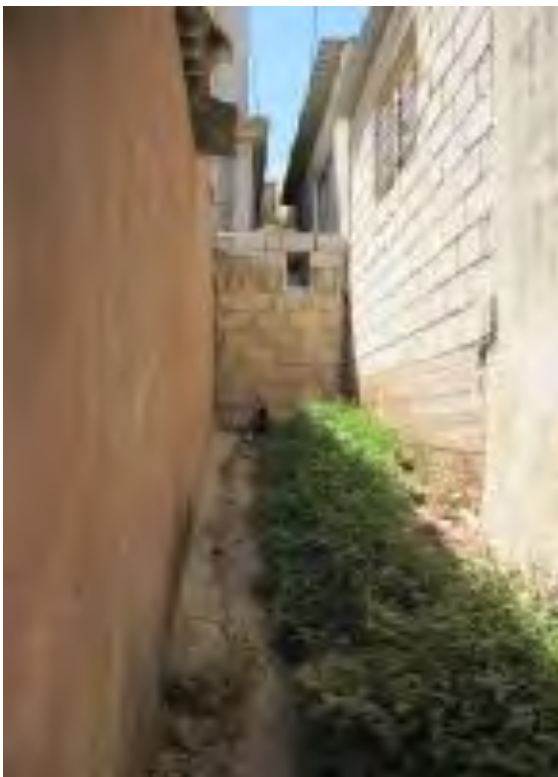
Section 4

COMMON EXAMPLE - THE ALLEY

Every block was originally planned with an alley separating the two rows of plots, in order to provide proper ventilation in the back rooms of the shelters. During the expansion process of the shelters, the refugees realised this quality too and agreed until which point the shelter could expand in order to maintain this alley. The same rules for windows regarding privacy were applied here.

In the past, these alleys were often misused, so for safety reasons most of the alleys are blocked off on both sides by a wall, resulting in unmaintained spaces or even unofficial dumps. This has severe consequences on the quality of the air that is meant to ventilate the shelters.

Some situations were observed where one shelter expanded towards this alley anyways, closing it off or splitting it in two. This causes grave consequences for the adjoining shelter regarding lighting and ventilation of the back rooms resulting in unhealthy conditions.



COMMON EXAMPLE - THE ALLEY: EXCEPTIONS

Two situations in the camp were observed where the alley was upgraded in its usage.

The first example is located in Part B, next to an official garbage dump - which will be removed in the near future. Two shelters next to this dump experienced too much discomforts by the smell and the accompanying vermin of this dump, which made them decide to simply rotate their shelter by turning their main entrance towards the alley. In this way they could close off the smells and still use the light from the dumpster-side, and open up on the side of the alley. This situation made the alley evolve towards a private entrance of these two shelters, providing more privacy - nobody can peek inside. In this way the alley became more privatised and was used by both families - who didn't know each other that well before - to spend time in together. See upper photos.

The second example is located in Part A. Here, a whole row of shelters decided to rotate their shelter towards the alley because of quarrels with the neighbours on the other side of the street. This resulted in a widening of the alley which transformed into a maintained space. Also in this case, the residents saw great advantages regarding privacy and the social relations with their neighbours. See lower photos.



TRANSFORMATIONS: COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

In the commercial area the building block transforms vertically. The shop is in one of the rooms on the street side, taking about half of the floor space. This makes it necessary to build an extra storey to provide enough room for living. Very often the grandparents are still living on the ground floor, and the son who took over the shop is living on the top floor with his family. This storey is accessible by a staircase inside the shelter, or, if the shelter is located on the corner of the street, it is often accessible by an exterior staircase, connected to their private front door.





TRANSFORMATIONS: TOPOGRAPHY

The areas of the camp where the topography is dominant were developed later, as discussed before. These areas are therefore characterised by their organic structure.

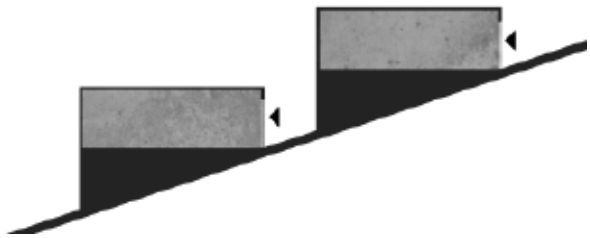
Two different transformations because of topography within the organic tissue can be determined.

The first kind happens along the main street. This area is an important commercial zone and it knows an increasing steep topography towards the East border. These are two determining reasons for verticalising the block. In this situation the owners chose to dig the shelter into the slope, meaning that the ground floor only has one active façade, namely the one along the main road. This causes a lack of fresh air and light.

In order to have extra and sufficient surface, they decided to build a second storey. This storey is accessible by a central staircase facing the main street, or when it is next to one of the steep alleys, it is provided by a door on the side, to provide access from the back side of the block.

What is remarkable in this case, is that the inhabitants here have no social relationship with the people on the other side of the street. They only use the street for commercial purposes. The private shelter is completely turned away from it, rotated towards the tissue on the other side.

The second kind can be found in the organic expansions along the camp borders. The new blocks started by following the grid pattern, but because of the topography they were forced to follow the terraces. In section we can see that they chose another way of building the shelter on the slope compared to the main road. They learned from the main road and saw several errors like moist problems and bad air quality on the ground floor. So instead of digging the shelter in the slope, they built it on top of it. They made a base which they filled up with dirt and concrete and built the shelter on top of that. Because of the weak materials and the steep slopes, these shelters are often in a bad state. When water flows down, a lot of the soil of their base flows away, causing structural problems.





TRANSFORMATIONS: CAMP VS. OVERSPILL

A typical shelter formation can be determined in the southern overspill. It is a purified way of the common life of a family with emphasis on privacy, which they lacked in the camp. Therefore, the desire for privacy is one of the most important motives to move outside the camp.

These communities are characterised by their big surrounding wall, enclosing all the shelters of one family, hence gated communities. It is usually the pater familias who buys this big plot and builds his shelter in the centre after building the wall. Later, when his sons get married, they build their own shelter on the same plot within the wall. The inner courtyard becomes the ultimate example of an appropriated outdoor space where families get together for social purposes. The women maintain this space, in order to facilitate these casual events of meeting each other and to provide a safe playground for their children. Very often, these plots are open towards the wadi, providing extra playground for the children and an opportunity to grow olive trees and to keep animals. This privatised, social and communal life within the wall is a huge contrast with what we find outside the wall. Since there is no further need for qualitative outdoor space, the streets are left untouched, they are only used for transportation.[cfr. Use of the public space]

A variant of this typology can be found in the areas of the overspill which are not adjacent to the Wadi. These plots are often smaller and occupied by only one household. Even though they keep the wall, the outdoor space is mostly used for agricultural activities such as keeping some animals and growing olive trees.

A less purified example, but still based on the same principles can be found in the northern overspill. Basically the same typology is used, but without the application of the surrounding wall. Different families live next to each other and the space in between the dwellings is upgraded to a social platform for the adjacent families.



PROBLEMS AND OBSERVATIONS

During the fieldwork some obvious and less obvious problems regarding the tissue were observed, which involve different target groups and different levels of the community.

COMMUNAL

Densification (vs. Migration)

Through the course of time there is an obvious densification process registered. Not only a of the camp in general, but also a densification of the shelter should be noticed.

“Palestine refugee camps are among the most densely inhabited urban areas in the world. The lack of regulatory frameworks due to the official temporariness of the camps, coupled with severe demographic pressure (high birth rates) and finite space restrictions (i.e. the fixed official border demarcations of camps) has meant that the camps have exponentially grown into dense, overcrowded, and hyper-urbanised settings.”[UNRWA, 2012]

The densification of the camp started by building a second storey and expanding outside the grid. Nowadays this process has come to a point where some streets are reduced to alleys which are only accessible on foot and even then it is sometimes a challenge. Some people have started to expand their shelter towards the street and especially in the organic part this creates problems. Since the regulations in the grid are rather strict, only subtle shelter expansions are noted here, creating less problems in the main streets. In general, this densification leads towards a dramatic reduction of the open areas. [UNRWA, 2012]

The densification of the shelter is one of the worst effects of the population growth, but it is the

most logical consequence of the contradiction between a high population growth and a permanent camp border.

While families grow, their financial status mostly remains the same. This takes away the opportunity for new households to move out of the parental shelter, forcing them to densify the current shelter. When the financial situation is problematic, this means that the new household can occupy one room of the shelter and share all the other functional rooms. When possible, some families build an extra story on top of the current shelter, providing the new household a little more privacy and space.

“Verticalisation can be measured through the Floor Space Index (FSI) indicator, which is calculated by multiplying the built-up area by the average number of levels and then dividing the result by the total camp area. (...) Building density however is not evenly distributed throughout the camp. (...) Verticalisation can have an alarming impact on natural ventilation, natural light, and access and has produced many unsafe structures that risk collapse (...).”[UNRWA, 2012]

While migration towards the expansions is a fact, it is still only a small minority of the current camp residents who can afford this. So at this point, this has not yet offered a solution for the densification.







Uniformity and wayfinding

Since the camp is organised in a grid with a general layout for the streets, this already implicates a uniform environment, causing problems for wayfinding. Wayfinding can be summed up into 5 simple points: orientation, locating information, determining your path, keeping the path and access or denial.

Orientation is a term used involving directional awareness. Wayfinding orientation is ultimately a spatial condition intimately linked to the arrangement of an area's layout. While spatial layouts in wayfinding are defined by certain characteristics, such as content, form, circulation and organization, environmental communication provides the additional, architectural and graphic essentials for effective wayfinding. [Abrams, 2012]

The environmental communication is not generally organised. Besides the general layout of the camp, also the façade appearance of the shelters knows little variations. Only few shelters and/or streets are personalised/appropriated with decoration. These elements, together with the occasional public function such as *Souq*, mosques, ... can contribute to this environmental communication. But because these are the minority, they don't generally improve the camp's wayfinding.



Awareness and maintenance

By the establishment of the camp and the formation of the grid, streets are typically not thought of as social places, but rather as a means to efficiently move automotive traffic. So no open spaces are intentionally provided to host social interactions, nevertheless they have grown naturally in some areas.[cfr. Use of the public space]

In the Arab culture there is a distinction between common land and public land. When a land is governmentally owned, it is immediately assumed to be public and public equals “not ours”. The whole idea of the commons is that they should be available for everyone but without any ownership label.¹ Since the refugees in Gaza camp identify themselves as Palestinians and their stay in Jordan to be temporary, they don't perceive the land as theirs and sometimes they see their temporary stay as a reason not to appropriate and maintain this land. This results in non-appropriated public spaces, dirty Wadi's, dirty streets, clogged sewage, a lack of social control, etc. When a space is not maintained,

and thus not desirable to spend time in, no significant social activities will take place. The environment of these unlivable streets discourages social interaction. And since no social activities are held here, there is no reason to maintain it. Commons, in order to continue to be commons, need to be preserved, taken care of, maintained, protected.¹

This vicious circle is hard to break for an individual. Nevertheless, it happens sometimes, especially where strong social relations are formed across these public spaces. Here, these people who share family bonds or social relations use their shared space and make it a pleasant environment to spend time in together. They are aware of the potential of this space and put a lot of efforts in order to facilitate these social purposes. This results in clean and pleasant spaces. Thus the commons need to be activated by people – in a sense, they need to “function”. The community and its activities are key to the creation, conservation and expansion of commons of any sort.¹

[1] Campus in Camps, Common¹







Two examples of appropriated and maintained public space - a common space.



Accessibility (Shelter and functions ~ expansion)

The main street constitutes the main access to the camp in general. Since this street is the main and only genuine entrance to the camp's tissue, this means that if this one is blocked, the tissue is inaccessible. No other alternatives are available when coming from Jerash.

Because transportation along this road is mostly done by car or bus and because of the eccentric centre, the walking distances between this informal entrance in the centre and the different shelters are very diverse. This means that only few shelters are reachable within a limited walking time, while others require a long hike.

Taking into account the topography and the hyper-dense areas, many lanes have shrunk to the bare minimum required for pedestrians to pass. Or they have disappeared altogether. Large parts of the camp are no longer accessible to private cars or emergency vehicles such as fire engines or ambulances. Streets are closed off by house extensions, or passage is made impossible through obstacles such as steps or light spots. [UNRWA, 2012]

Since shelters along and across the border face two difficulties regarding accessibility, namely distance and topography, accessing important functions is often problematic, especially for those with physical limitations.

This accessibility problem constitutes one of the main reasons for the separation between the camp and its expansions.

LOCAL

“There is no privacy in the camp. In the education and rearing of your kids you want privacy. In everything that is related to you, you want privacy. (In our camp) this doesn't exist. Everyone intervenes, offers an opinion, wants to participate in everything. Nothing is yours solely, or independent, not even your home. True, it's my house but my in-laws are downstairs and I'm up. Everything is shared – the laundry lines, the water, the stairs, the front door.

Of course, your house is your property, but only if you can lock the door behind you and take the key with you, right? To be able to come back and find everything as you left it. With us, no! everything is shared between me and my in-laws. The situation is dire. The situation of the camp, the houses, is really dire.

When you think that you have to spend your whole life in such a situation... it's really depressing. And tiring.”[UNRWA, 2012]

Horizontal privacy

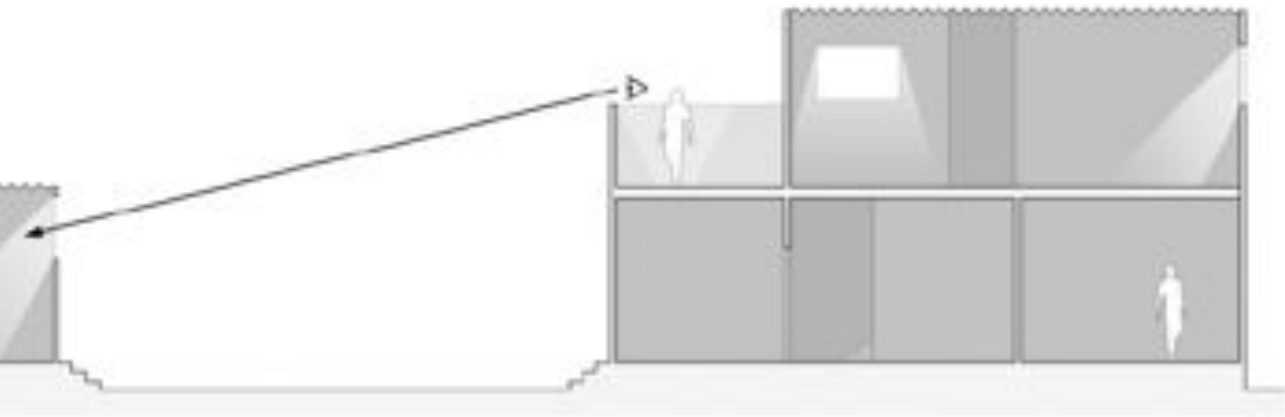
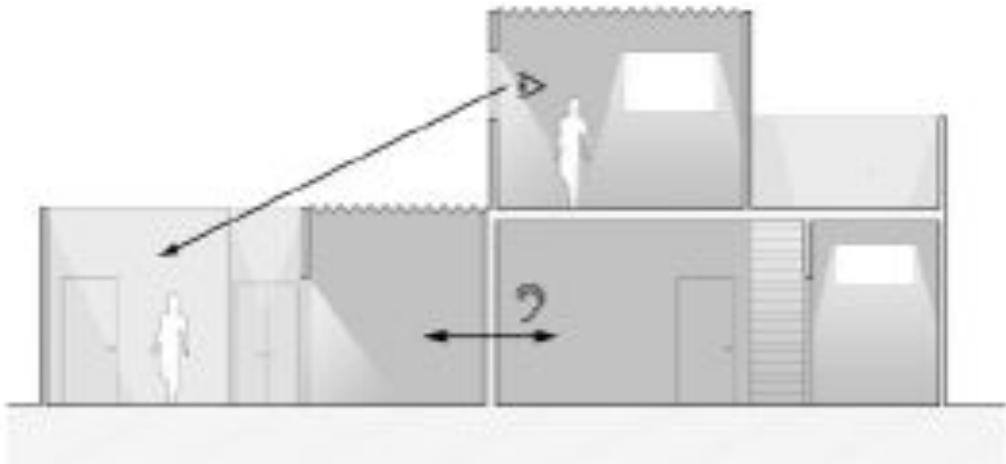
As stated before, privacy is a very important matter in the Arabic culture. Horizontal privacy can be considered in relation to the public street, discussed above, and the direct relation with one's neighbours. One's privacy can be invaded due to visual penetrations, transmitted sounds, smells, etc. The unwanted views in someone's shelter are mostly coming from the public street. This relationship is thoroughly discussed above and it is mostly handled with care by the inhabitants themselves. But this has severe consequences regarding lighting and natural ventilation inside the shelter. By blocking off the windows with cardboard, wood, fixed curtains, ... air can't easily flow in, causing bad air quality.

This results in an unhealthy environment often producing bad odours. Combined with keeping animals and poor bathrooms, these smells can aggravate and affect the inhabitants and their neighbours. Due to the poor quality of building materials, the transmission of sound towards the direct neighbours is problematic. Private discussions or intimacy are unintentionally shared with the neighbours. This can cause tensions between neighbours or it can result in feeling limited in expressing yourself in your own home.

Vertical privacy

The issue of privacy evolves towards a vertical problem when it was allowed to build a second storey. From then on, it became possible to look into one's shelter from above, for example when there is an open patio. Hence, most of these vertical expansions happen based on oral agreement between neighbours. This is mostly done to protect the privacy of women.





SHELTER

Dense shelter, lack of open air space, need and lack of privatised common space

“Space is a precious and often contested resource in refugee camps. The widths of roads or alleyways shrunk as shelters were expanded. (...) The rapidly growing camp population uses every square metre to satisfy its thirst for more space. It is therefore all the more surprising to find that (some) camp quarters have one or several open spaces, which are kept free from encroaching buildings. Such open spaces have been employed by consecutive generations of refugees to host social events such as weddings, celebrations, and mourning gatherings. This is because crowded households make it very difficult to host indoor events. Many of the refugees regard those open spaces as the sole breathing space for their children in the crowded environment of the camp.”[UNRWA, 2012]

Because of the limited plot size and the overcrowded situation, the plots are fully built, leaving no space for greenery and/or patios. Besides its consequences regarding air quality and lighting, it takes away the opportunity to take a breath of fresh air within the protected private domain. Together with the density of the camp itself, this means that there is a serious lack of accommodated outdoor spaces, which could be linked to the private shelter.

Stability and construction

The majority of the shelters are built on a base made from low quality concrete, filled with dirt and rocks. The walls consist out of bricks made of sand, or just simple rocks fixed with mortar. Corrugated sheets are used as roofing material, causing overheating in summer because of the bad insulations properties, and a lot of noise during rainfall. The lack of proper joints with the wall causes gaps, which causes leakages in winter. Most roofs are simply laid on the wall and reinforced with the weight of a simple brick that's lying on top of it. The walls should not carry more than the corrugated sheets, but too often a water tank is placed on top of it, or even a concrete slab followed by an extra storey. These are very risky situations regarding the stability of the shelter.

Air quality

The lack of natural ventilations has a great effects on the indoor air quality. The air gets easily polluted because of the dense population and the lack of cleanliness of the public areas. Covering the windows for privacy reasons has negative effects on the indoor air quality. However, some gaps (eg. alleys) between the different building elements are kept on purpose for these reasons.





GAZA©WORKSHOP

VIII

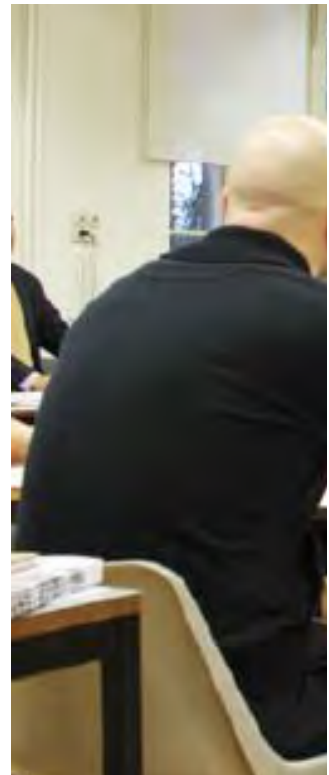
By now, a reasonably complete picture of Gaza camp has been given to you. It is doubtlessly possible that some insights are still missing, but then, this work has to a great extent been our rather personal interpretation of the amassed knowledge. The picture we have drawn of Gaza camp until now is also the one that was presented at the kickoff of the Gaza©Workshop. From here, the step was taken during the workshop towards defining a vision for the camp and developing some design proposals. Although the workshop should not be seen as an inseparable part of this work, it has indicated the transition from mere research and readings towards our own design proposals. For that reason, it is of importance that the ambitions, the process, but most of all the outcome of the workshop are touched and clarified. A concise, critical reflection on this outcome will finally indicate the conclusion of this first book and the introduction to the second phase of design.

JOINING FORCES, EXCHANGING EXPERTISE

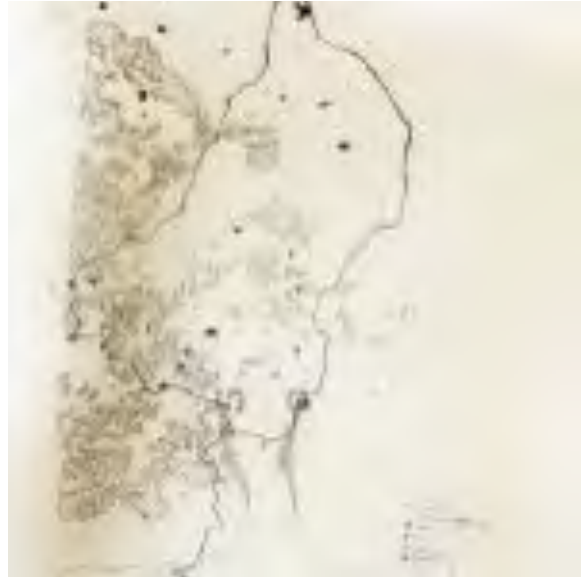
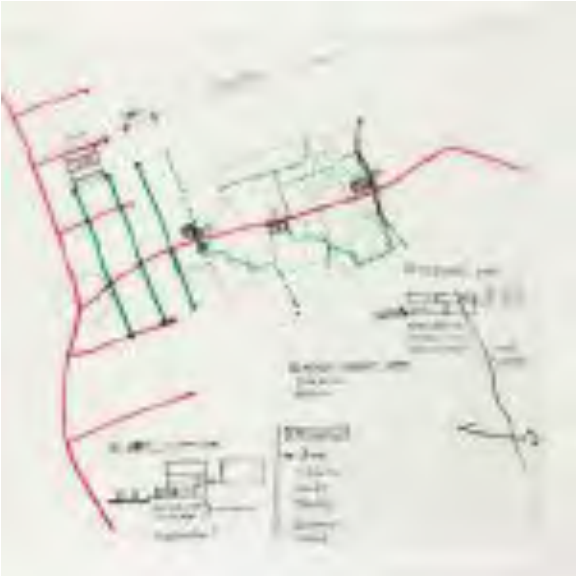
Gaza©Workshop was a means to maintain the involvement of UNRWA and its Camp Improvement team in the research and design proposals made on Gaza camp. Even though this work is, in first instance, a master-thesis project, it remains important that the significance of the work towards UNRWA and the camp does not get lost in unfeasible, purely architectural, academic design. Therefore, the workshop week formed an ideal recapitulation and redirection of what had already been achieved. Apart from that, the ambition of the week was to go beyond analyses and to use the now available material - provided by the CI-team as well as us - to dive freely into actual design. Rather than starting from predetermined ideas and concepts, a vision was set out through designing, through trial.

A primary asset of the workshop was its versatile team of participants, which consisted of a combination of people with different expertise and background. Architects, students, UNRWA-employees, ..., Palestinians, Belgians, and many more nationalities - with or without expertise on Palestinian refugee camps - added their knowledge and insights to the design process.

The actual work was conducted in five mixed groups of approximately four to five people. The division into the teams came to a great extent from the spatial analyses that had already been done; the groups worked on the main road, the border, mobility and streets, tissue and public spaces, and the larger surroundings of the camp. Though all teams worked separately, there was a constant exchange of ideas between the groups. This quickly led to the emergence of four frames, that integrated all observations and objectives - defined during that week - into one, integrating vision for Gaza camp. It was primarily this vision that was presented at the end of the workshop to delegates from the Jordanian embassy, the European Commission, the KULeuven and all who were interested in the topic.









A physical model of the camp and its surroundings proved to be very useful to better master the specific topography in and around Gaza camp.





Some rough drawings, sketches and images were made to display the ideas that came out of the

VISIONS FOR GAZA CAMP

FOUR FRAMES

The four defined frames can be seen as different large scale figures of the camp, each with its specific character. They are based upon the way the camp functions today and how different public spaces are already used, in combination with a strong focus on a desired function and use of space. As a matter of fact, the frames could be considered as a guiding vision for the camp on the basis of several conceptual projects of which the frames are composed.

*An image of all four
frames drawn together as
complementary visions for
future Gaza camp.*









one. Main street

A certain verticalisation of the tissue along the main road would be accepted, keeping the lower topographic location of the road and its adjacent buildings in mind. Moreover, there proved to be many interstitial, open and green spaces in the adjacent organic tissue, which can complement a higher overall building height.

There would be further anticipated on the separation between the commercial main road level and the more protected residential areas, connected to the upper floors of the road's adjacent buildings. By anticipating on this interesting condition, the main road could be further developed as a place of distribution and exchange between the camp and its surroundings, as the main collector and divider of the camp.





two. Ridge

Distinguished from the rest of the border, the ridge is considered as a connection between fast passage - from and to Jerash city - and slower passage - to the surrounding landscape and the forests of Dibeen. The ridge functions as a counterpart of the main road, a filter between heavy traffic and the fine network of residential streets.

Simultaneously, this edge, a physical connection between the green areas just outside the camp borders - north and south of Gaza camp - is to become a green spine in itself. Through a sequence of green interventions such as public pockets and greened streets, the ridge should be more of a crowded pedestrian boulevard - it was even once called 'the Champs Elysees' of Gaza camp - than a busy arterial road. Not just the road, but in addition also the primary pedestrian areas would be included and involved in this boulevard, such as Palestinian street, the souq and the centre. Within this figure, key-problems that were indicated - such as the overcrowded centre, the unsafe Schoolstreet, and so on - could be solved.





three. Edge conditions

The importance of the remaining part of the border is considered to be the connective role it plays between the official camp and its overspill. Furthermore, it is along the border that some of the only open, green spaces can still be found, at a small distance from the dense neighborhoods. These valuable spaces should be defined in the future to prevent them from disappearing.

Along the border, more ambitious, program oriented, strategic interventions could be implemented, projects that create places for the community, where people could meet or gather and where activities could be done that can not really find place inside the actual camp. Additionally, border projects ought to be capable of anticipating on the characteristics and the potentiality of the wadis as public, green and discharging spaces.





four. Tissue

Regarding the camp's tissue, work focussed mainly on mobility and public spaces; how mobility inside and towards the tissue could be guided and which roads, spaces and public buildings should whether or not play a more important role. At the same time it was explored how improvement of public space could intelligently be combined with a solution for priority problems in the camp such as water scarcity.

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Out of the former frames six priority projects were determined by the UNRWA team. They are a kind of first executive phase. These specific interventions were chosen among many others on the basis of a 'list of needs' - composed by the camp's community and UNRWA -, on the basis of feasibility and of the impact the project will have on the camp and its residents.





1. BLOCK ADJUSTMENTS

smaller block footprints
42' wide area for neighborhood
retention circulation - independence

2. OPTIMIZE COMMUNITY BLOCKS

re-configure blocks
generate a street area
streetscape -> growing the school compound
between streets

3. STREET UPGRADES

analysis of specific streets
to add storage of goods / deliveries
growing adjacent easement for cleaning
and fire management

4. PUBLIC SPACE

enhance green
vegetation - generate
fire safety
growing the community block

5. LABORATORY INTERIOR

interior space
& office organization
year planning

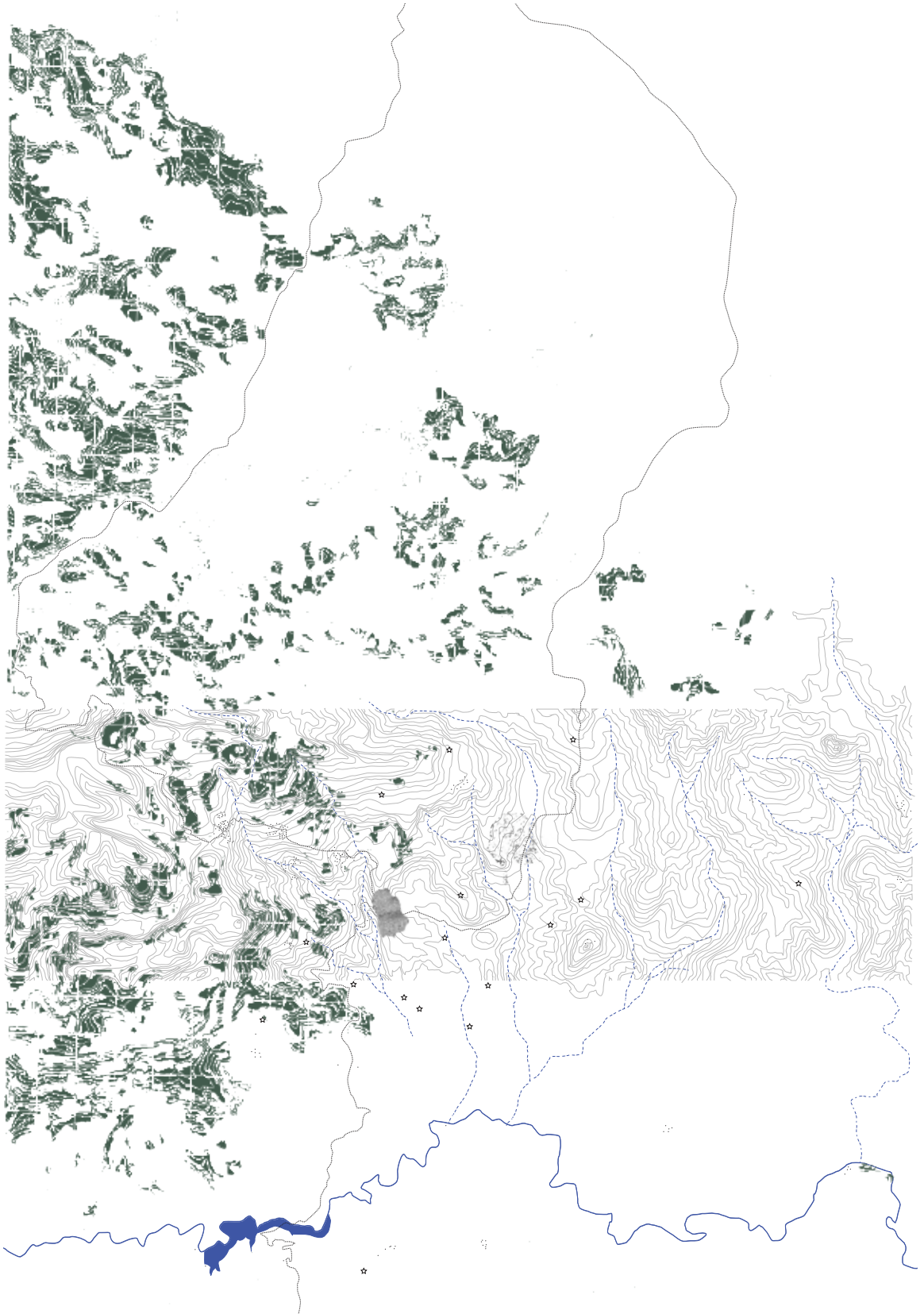
6. CLARIFY CIRCULATION / MARKING



REGIONAL SCALE

Lastly, during the workshop, another theme - or rather another scale - was touched, one that had not been researched and discussed as much until then. On the regional scale, historical as well as current maps were studied and compared. In contrast to the frames, the research did not (yet) lead to any design proposals, it did however, produce some interesting new insights on the logics of several elements in the landscape around Gaza camp, confirming the findings made earlier on the logics of the camp itself.





BEYOND THE WORKSHOP

The Gaza©Workshop formed a true turning point in the thesis work and gave the kick-off for the design phase. Starting from the four frames that have taken form and the possible projects and interventions that have been discussed, we will attempt to, while critically reviewing them, develop these frames more profoundly. Focussing on three substantively different issues - along the border, within the tissue and outside the official camp - we attempt to cover a wide range of diverse spatial, social, economical situations that each have their own influences on (parts of) the camp.

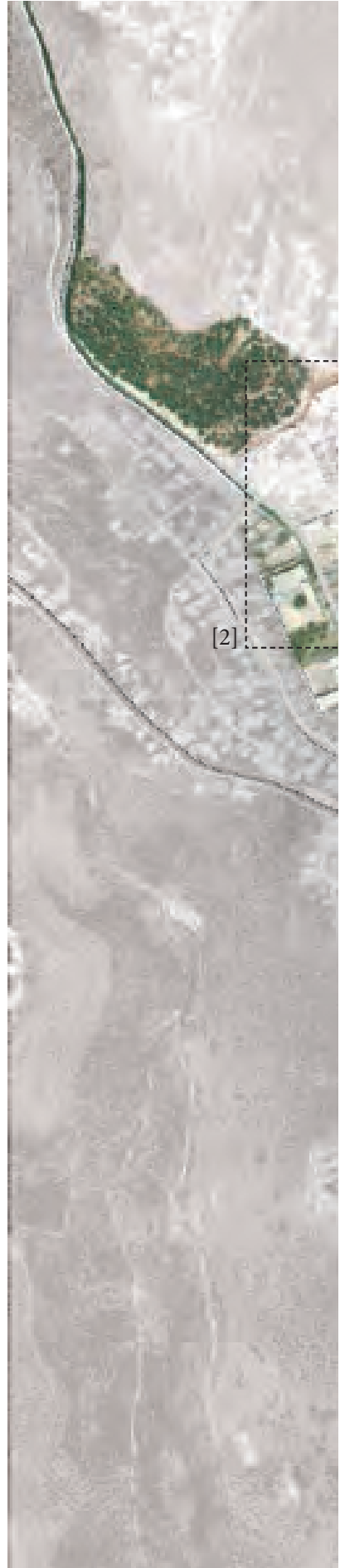
By translating the conceptual framework into physical interventions that are to be regarded either as tools or as very specifically positioned key-structures, the potentialities of these four spatial frames are made clear.

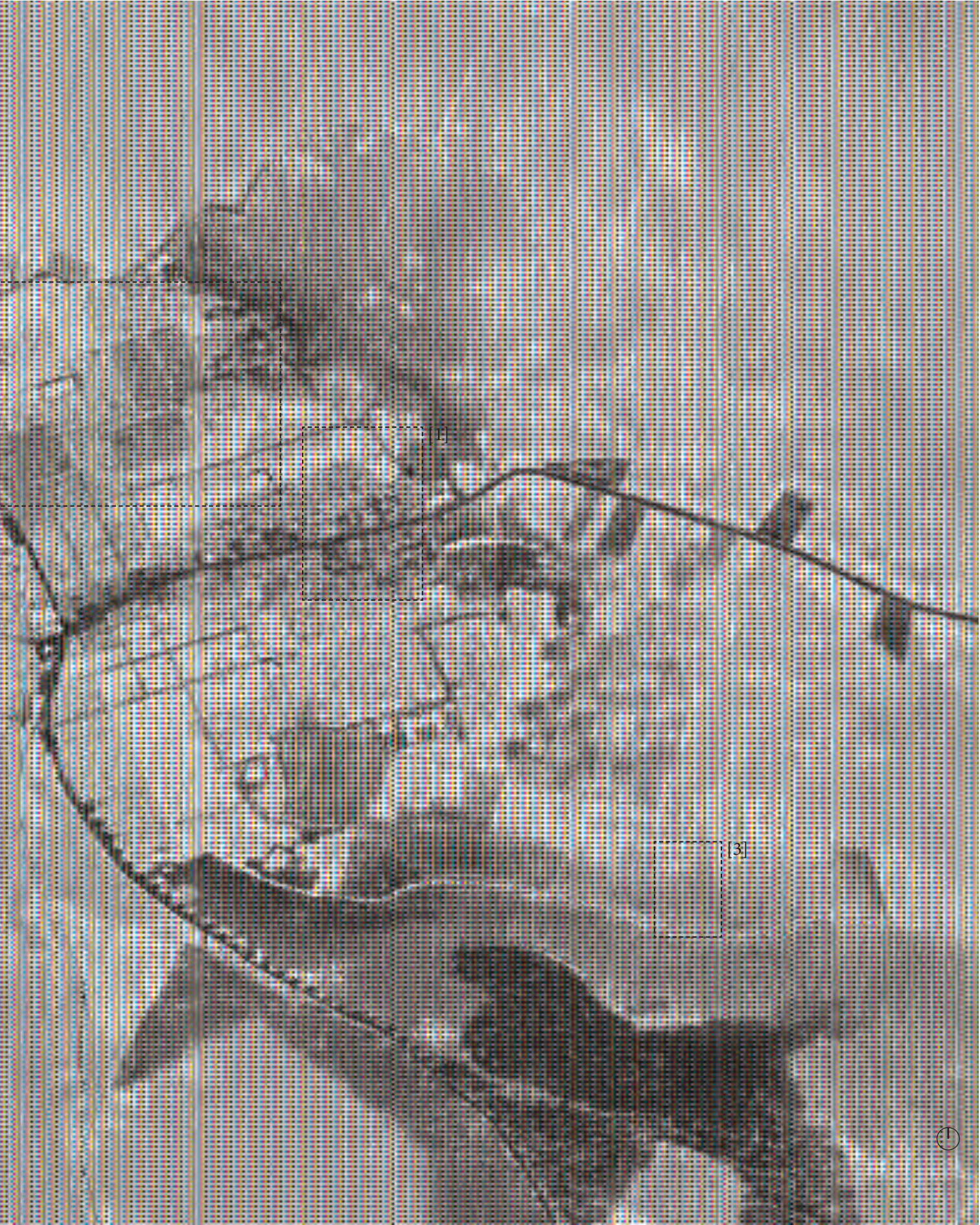
Along the border, more specifically where the sequence of voids in the urban fabric meets the vital artery of the camp, where a natural passageway between Gaza camp and its overspill has grown, where the wadi is abruptly cut off by the scene of the main road and where the official camp entrance has faded out into a blurry, unrecognizable edge, a new space of centrality will be introduced as an attempt to activate the voids flanking the camp entrance. [1]

Within the tissue of the camp a combination of a structurally poor built environment and limited possibilities regarding usage of public space are the consequences of both the specific topography and the lack of variety and interruptions within this tissue. Through the search for a set of public interventions serving as tools, one of the more specifically characterized areas of the camp - between the suq and the wadi - will be more strongly colored and its tissue more delicately refined. [2]

Finally outside the camp, but relatively close to its border, new dynamics between the camp and its surroundings will be searched for in an attempt to address the undefined, yet problematic relation between camp, overspill and valley and to anticipate the historically layered and by tourism characterized context of greater Jerash and Northern Jordan. [3]

Although very diverse in context, ambition and spatial translation, all of these interventions contribute to the strengthening and exploration of the frames that both represent the logics of the camp and form a guideline for its future development.





1]

3]





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