From Shelters to Dwellings: The Zaatari Refugee Camp

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AYHAM DALAL

FROM SHELTERS TO DWELLINGS

THE ZAATARI REFUGEE CAMP

In Zaatari camp, Jordan, thousands of Syrian refugees were sheltered in tents and caravans, which they steadily appropriated and turned into dwellings that responded to their social and cultural needs. In this book, Ayham Dalal takes a closer look at this remarkable transformation. He draws on the tension between 'the shelter' and 'the dwelling' to unravel how new spaces unfold in between them, where refugees become architects and the camp is dismantled and reassembled.

From Shelters to Dwellings is the first study to uniquely combine ethnographic observations with new architectural research methods, to illustrate in detail how refugees inhabit shelters. It is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding how camps and shelters are transformed by the powerful act of dwelling.

RE-FIGURATION OF SPACES [transcript]

Ayham Dalal
From Shelters to Dwellings

Re-Figuration of Spaces | Volume 3

Ayham Dalal is an architect, artist and urban planner with over eight years of experience in researching refugee camps in Europe and the Middle East. He has curated two exhibitions, directed an award-winning film and edited the first book about the architecture of refugee camps in the Middle East. He has a PhD from TU Berlin and has taught in Germany, Oman and the USA.

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[transcript]

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All the names of refugees mentioned or quoted in the book have been changed for protection.

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Contents

Part One: Dismantling

Part Two: Reassembling the Social

Part Three: Reassembling the Material

'An architecture can be compared to language, and the act of dwelling to speech'
Henri Lefebvre (2014, 53)

List of Acronyms

DRC	Danish Refugee Council
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federations of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
JHCO	Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization
JRC	Jordan Red Crescent
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
QIZ	Quality Industrial Zone
PVC	Polyvinyl Chloride
SNC	Saudi National Campaign
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOSAT/UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research – Operational Satellite Applications Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VIP	Very Important Person
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

List of Arabic Words

Al-Sakan means 'the dwelling'. It is derived from the verb *Sakana*, which indicates that something has settled in place or become calm after turmoil. For example, *Sakana al-Baḥr* means that the sea has become calm. Another derivation of the word is *Sakīna*, which means tranquillity, stillness and gracefulness.

Baṭṭanīyh means an 'underlying garment or textile used to support something else'. It originates from the word *Baṭṭana*, which describes the act of supporting something by stuffing it from the inside. Derived from it is the word *Baṭīn*, which can be equated with something located inside, thus 'inner and invisible'.

Beit (or Bayt) means 'the house', 'the home' or 'the place of residence and settlement'. Etymologically, the word originates from the verb *yabīt*, which denotes 'the act of sleeping somewhere at night'. However, the verb has strong connotations of safety, security, protection and the type of generosity associated with being a host. For instance, Beit ul-Lah is the 'house of God', the mosque, and Ahmad *yabīt* at Samer would mean the former is being hosted at the house of the latter.

Beit el-'Ayleh means 'the family house'. Although it refers to a specific physical space, it also holds emotional connotations. This is because the word is used to describe the dwelling in which large family gatherings usually take place, and thus the word is linked to emotions associated with warmth and solidarity. In certain contexts, it can also be used to refer to someone's class, ethnicity or origins; for example, 'this used to be their *Beit el-'Ayleh*'.

Ḥaḍar means 'the city dwellers'. The word originates from *Ḥaḍāra*, which means 'civilization', and is connected to the early writings on urbanization and city dwellers in the works of the Tunisian philosopher Ibn Khaldun. It is nevertheless used colloquially to differentiate between city and village dwellers, or between the 'settled' populations and the 'nomadic' populations or the Bedouins. Thus, the word has

an implicit class dimension that perceives the *Ḥaḍar* as the 'civilized' and the others (the nomads) as the 'uncivilized'.

Ḥākoura means 'the farmland' or 'the garden/farm attached to a house'. In the Syrian context, the word is common among villagers and farmers, but is less frequently used among city dwellers. This is because the *Ḥākoura* constitutes an important proportion of dwellings in rural regions. Some resources consider the origins of the word *Ḥākoura* to be Phoenician, meaning 'empty land'. This may reveal historical connections between farming, land and dwellings in the region.

Jam'īyh means a 'collective body', referring to an institutional entity that has a local character, similar to a Community-Based Organization (CBO). However, in Syria, and when used without any institutional context, it refers to a circulatory monetary system, in which individuals make a monthly financial contribution. The money is then pooled and allocated to one of the participants each month.

Kafīl means 'sponsor' or 'guardian'. The *Kafīl* emerged as an important figure during the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan. The role is often taken on by a male Jordanian sponsor who fulfils certain criteria and is willing to sponsor a Syrian refugee to be 'bailed out' from the camp and subsequently relocated to an urban area. The importance of this system fluctuated over time; it has thus not been consistent, but has remained influential for many refugees.

Maḍāfa means 'the space of hospitality'. The word originates from *Ḍeyāfa*, which denotes the act of hosting others and being generous to guests and visitors. This term is particularly important in the context of Arab culture, and especially among tribes, where the act of *Ḍeyāfa* is associated and equated with dignity and pride. The establishment of *Maḍāfa* in the Arab region therefore became important, but varied according to the context and the degree of urbanization. While many villagers and nomadic populations have a specific space for the *Maḍāfa*, this space is less common in cities, but may still be found among large extended families and tribes.

Mufawaḍīyh means 'the agency'. The word comes from the Arabic translation for the UNHCR or the UN Refugees Agency. In Zaatari camp and among Syrian refugees in general, the UNHCR is colloquially referred to as the *Mufawaḍīyh*.

Mukhtar means 'the chief of a village or a locality'. It is derived from the word *ikhtāra*, which means that 'someone has made a choice'. In the Syrian context, the Mukhtar is not elected, but instead represents a form of emergent or organic leader who carries out the duty of locally governing a village or area. The Mukhtar usually has good connections

with all the residents and is familiar with their lineages, members and ownership structures (that is, land and property in the village). Therefore, a Mukhtar plays an important role in governing both the social and spatial relations in a village.

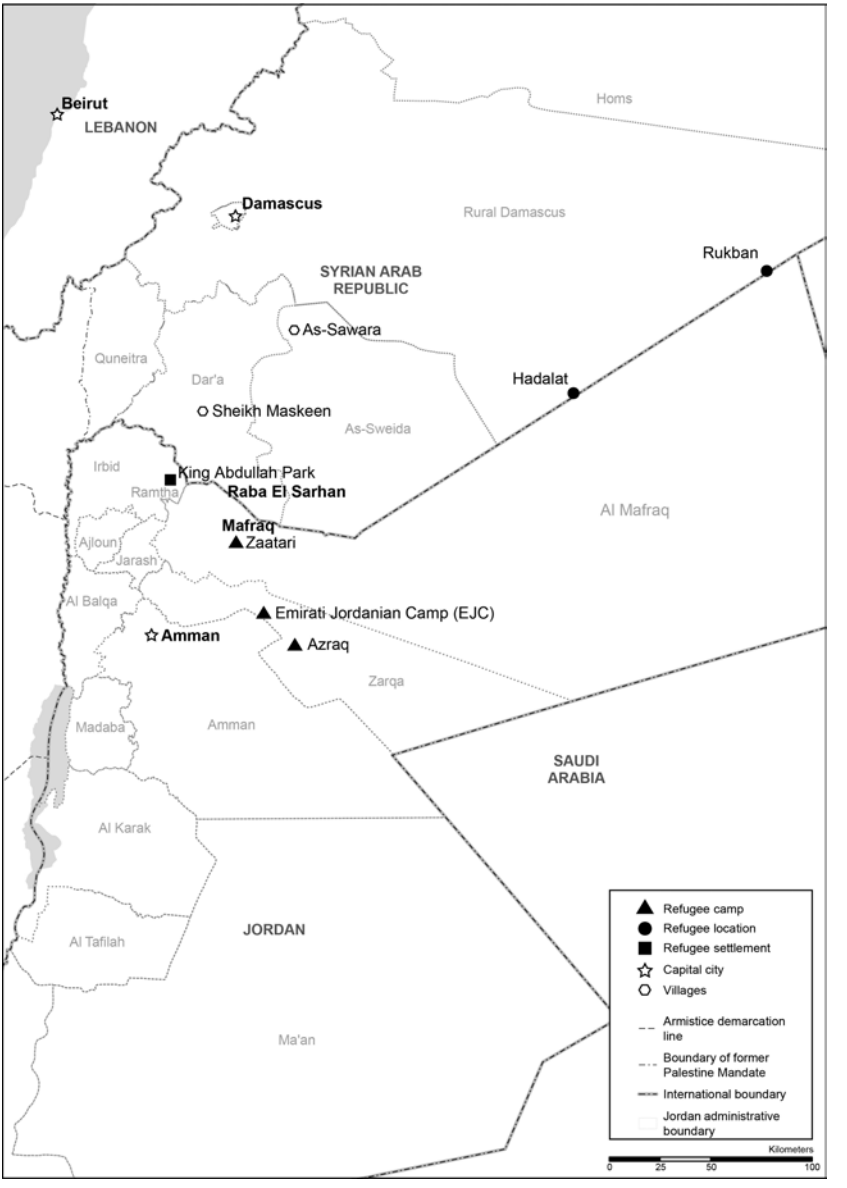
Ṭanzīm means 'the organization of something'. In the Syrian context, however, it is colloquially used to refer to a top-down planning process pursued by the government or the municipality. Usually, a *Ṭanzīm* has negative implications within the Syrian context, as it rarely takes people's views into consideration.

Sakkar a verb meaning that somebody has 'closed' something. In the Syrian context, this word is often used to describe the process of closing a door, a window, a shop, a water tap or an account. In that sense, and spatially speaking, the word *Sakkar* does not mean 'isolate' or 'enclose', but an attempt to 'gain privacy' and control access to space.

Souq means 'the shopping area' or 'marketplace'. In contemporary cities, the word can be used in reference to any marketplace. However, it was historically used to refer to certain streets within the old Arab city (Medina) where shopping activities, supplies, craftspeople and traders were found. Therefore, the Souq refers to a very distinctive urban element in the city: usually a long street with different divisions, including jewellery shops, craft shops, carpenters, textile traders and grocery stores.

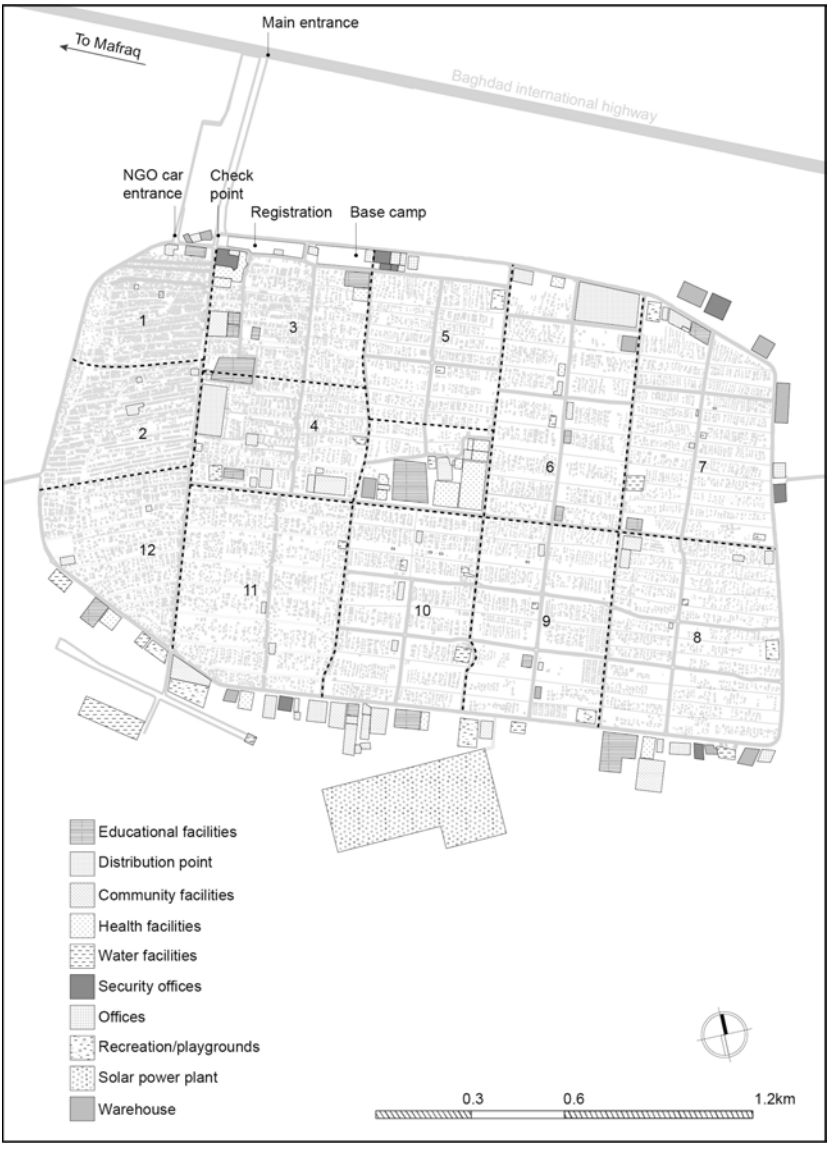
Ṣybāṭ is a colloquial term that in the Syrian context means a 'covered passage'. In the architecture of the old city of Homs, for instance, the *Ṣybāṭ* refers to a covered passage that usually has a pointed roof from below, allowing commuters to pass through, while connecting two households at the top. It is an architectural element that was extensively used in old cities and villages but is a rare sight in the new parts of cities.

Map of Jordan and Syria



Source: Author's own, based on the UNHCR 'Jordan Situation Map, June 2017'

General map of Zaatari camp



Source: Author's own, based on the UNHCR 'Zaatari Refugee Camp – Infrastructure and Facilities Map, May 2019'.

Introduction

This is not just another book about Zaatari camp or the Syrian refugee crisis. This is also not a text by another Westerner — often a white, male scholar, studying or speaking on behalf of refugees. It is a personal account of how displacement as an individual experience, exile as an intellectual state of being, and a passion for science and discovery all intertwine. Many scholars speak about home and homemaking, increasingly today in the context of refugees and displaced populations. Many Western scholars — some of the most well-known such as Bourdieu, Levi-Strauss and Rapoport — have ethnographically examined the conditions in which communities that are considered different or 'primitive' live. Yet how many of these writers have actually endured displacement and can speak about the loss of 'home' from personal experience? When is it the time for those who have experienced the loss of home — and by that I particularly mean displaced scholars from the Global South — to narrate their experiences and explain, based on their positionality, what 'home' means?

When I left what used to be home in Homs, Syria, I was barely aware of the significance of such a place. Now when I count the places, there were seven that provided shelter for me until I settled in Berlin. After finishing my master's studies and focusing on my research, I was still little concerned about the need to search for lodgings. For a few nights, I slept on a table in a workroom, stowing my luggage away underneath it and hoping that the cleaner would not notice my presence when she came to the room in the morning. Little did I realise the psychological suffering that the lack of such a space could cause. The frustration of having to finish my research in order to be able to stay in Germany put additional pressure on me. Trips to Zaatari camp in Jordan — which was opened in July 2012, yet emerged as one of the largest refugee camps in the world — enabled me to collect many types of data. On returning to the Technical University Berlin and presenting the work to my colleagues, I was asked, 'so your research is about homemaking?' I was surprised. Perhaps the research had become an opportunity for me to subconsciously investigate what I was personally looking for.

At that point, I decided to take 'homemaking' as a starting point. 'Is this what I am experiencing and looking for?' I asked myself while looking at my desk and

the piles of paper covered with sketches gathered from the camp. In Zaatari camp, refugees referred to the structures that they had built and developed out of shelters and other materials as '*beit*', which in Arabic literally means 'a house'. In Arabic, there is little difference between what constitutes a home and a house, unlike in the Anglophone tradition. A *beit* perfectly combines the physical and the emotional at the same time, and it blurs the boundaries between the two. Yet in the Western tradition, a home and a house can have different meanings: a home is more emotional, imaginative and individual, whereas a house is more technical, physical and material.

Looking at the sketches, and reading the literature on home, house, domestic space and so on, my anxiety increased. None of these terms, at least in the way they are shaped and presented in the literature, managed to encompass what I was looking for. Having experienced displacement and the sudden loss of home, I always sensed that I had a better understanding of what refugees go through. There was a point that was absent from the discussion about homing, housing and the domestic situation. A deeper meaning was missing — one that touched on the essence of life; not life as a man-made construct, not life as property, tenure, belonging, identity, memory, emotions, family relations or cultures. Those who lose their home are placed on the threshold of a powerful tension and contradiction. On the one hand, life tells you that you have lost your home or house, but on the other, it says that you still exist — so what can be done about that?

To search for new homes and to construct houses, we first need to dwell

The deep state of loss that refugees experience presents them with a simple question: what can we do? This is not an intellectual question, but one driven by necessity. Yet in the discussion on homing and housing, necessity takes a back seat. We suddenly speak of a right to housing. In that sense, we understand that there is a necessity for it, but that it is often treated as a managerial matter: nation states are obliged to offer their citizens adequate access to housing that fulfils certain conditions (economic, cultural, environmental and psychological). However, in the case of displacement, we are speaking of a bare state of being — a rupture that cuts through all the criteria and features of what adequate housing is and can be. A displaced person is confronted with the most basic state of being on this earth: dwelling.

I still remember the myriad of emotions I experienced while reading the work of Martin Heidegger. There is a poignancy to his texts that stems from similar circumstances and troubled human conditions. At the time he was writing, Germany and Europe were waking up to the aftermath of the Second World War, and millions of people found themselves suddenly homeless. Back then, no one was

talking about the right to adequate housing. They recognized the significance of a dwelling: a space that is so common and familiar, similar to the body, that we forget about it only to suddenly remember it at times of war and destruction (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995b).

Indeed, Heidegger's approach to the 'problem' or the notion that I was restlessly searching for in my sketches, as well as in my life, revolves around dwelling. Dwelling is about feeling safe, settled and secure. I was relieved. Heidegger spoke to the bare presence that I experienced, as did many refugees in Zaatari camp. To talk about imagination, belonging, culture, social relations, identity, politics, economics, ethnographies and the anthropologies of housing, homing and the domestic environment is to attempt to examine, and thus explain, a very advanced stage — one that refugees arriving to find a tent may never think of. What happened in Zaatari camp of course includes all of the above. Yet to take homemaking or housing as a starting point — and I am talking academically here, and in relation to the scholarly literature — is akin to attempting to explain a tree solely through one of its leaves.

There is power to the Heideggerian notion of dwelling that is absent in other concepts, such as homemaking, housing and domestic space. By situating the idea of dwelling as an equivalent to being on earth, Heidegger reaches an unprecedented depth — one that transcends crises, emergencies, constructions and deconstructions, cultures and global trends, gentrification and frameworks of production. Dwelling is not a right that needs to be asked for; it is the de facto state of existence in which we experience life on earth. The recurrent process of sleeping, waking up, eating and engaging with life is the present reality in which we all exist, yet it is less acknowledged and sometimes unspoken of. It is this type of fundamental principle that is associated with dwelling; both in concept and in practice. Based on this, in the current book, I speak of dwelling both in terms of a process and a structure. Here, dwelling is referred to interchangeably as the built physical structures for living in, and the process of dwelling as a manifestation of existence. The use of this term reminds us that a dwelling (the sheltering of the physical body) and dwelling (the process, with its spontaneity and complexity) are interlinked subjects. My intention in this regard is not to undermine the importance of more common terms such as housing, the home and the domestic space, but to shed light on the deeper — yet slightly neglected — reality in which we exist; a reality from which we cannot escape, a reality that transcends all emergencies and concepts, and a reality that is immediate and present everywhere, at any given time and for everyone.

In order to search for a home, to construct a house and to experience domestic space, one must first dwell. For displaced communities, for the exiled, and for refugees and migrants, the world constructs an illusionary distinction. People on the move do not dwell. They are deprived of this, since they are unsettled. For them, a shelter is sufficient. It is in our understanding of life that the notion of dwelling

vanishes and is replaced with emergency housing or images of the home charged with emotions and intimacy. To experience life, we need both thoughts and emotions — we need the house and the home. Yet even before that, we need to be present. We need to dwell. The depth of this notion is indispensable in the context of displacement.

In the Theoretical Overview, I delve deeper into this conceptual discussion by explaining how the house, the home and the domestic space are all interlinked, but slightly distinctive dimensions of dwelling. While this could constitute a research project in itself, worthy of its own book, I will attempt to clarify the main concepts and ideas encapsulated by each of these terms. Perhaps controversially, I show that the production, shaping and representation of these key terms — home, house and domestic space — are arguably little more than scholarly constructs, with traceable limits stemming from the different ways in which various academic disciplines have approached the phenomenon of dwelling. In that sense, dwelling is the beating heart that unites all these definitions and brings them back to their starting point. For this reason, the chapter includes a more in-depth exploration of the notion of dwelling in Heidegger's thoughts. What are the main characteristics of dwelling as a phenomenon and as a process? Here, and in addition to a semiotic reading of the term both in German and Arabic, I stress the importance of creativity and resistance in dwelling. Both concepts appear subtly in Heidegger's less commonly read text *Poetically Man Dwells*, which formed a basis for Lefebvre to build his conceptual distinction between 'inhabiting'[1] and 'habitat'. For him, the 'habitat' is a 'concept or rather a caricatural pseudo-concept' that breaks down the spontaneity and complexity of human being into a 'handful of basic acts: eating, sleeping, and re-producing' (Lefebvre 2003, 81). Thus, during the nineteenth century, the use of 'habitat' aimed to eclipse the 'inhabiting' that is closer to Heidegger's concept of 'dwelling'.

This contemporary reading of dwelling as a situated practice between top-down ideologies and bottom-up appropriations is a common thread that ties this whole book together. While these concepts will be further discussed in the conclusion, the first chapter gives an extensive overview of current debates, and explains why dwelling, both as a process and a product, is used in this book.

1 In the English translation of *The Urban Revolution*, 'inhabiting' is translated from French as 'habiting'. However, in the current book I use 'habiting', but also 'inhabiting', as being more familiar to English readers.

The dilemma of shelters

Displaced people face an immediate and little-mentioned challenge: how do they dwell, now that they have been deprived of their home and thus, their original dwelling space? Refugees seek accommodation in cities, informal areas, villages and camps. They utilize their social networks to find lodgings, when and wherever possible. Families share flats in cities, settle in neighbourhoods, occupy vacant buildings, construct makeshift housing on leased land or are accommodated in shelters provided by relief organizations in camps. The term 'shelter' can in fact be relatively broad and can include a variety of spaces and structures (see for instance Scott-Smith and Breeze 2020). It can, for instance, refer not only to tents and prefabricated buildings offered to refugees, but also to housing provided by the state for homeless people in need, or even to flats offered to refugees by relief actors in cities. However, a shelter always encompasses a sense of *loss* and *emergency*. Both notions are important to address here. *Loss* is intrinsically associated with displacement. To be displaced is to be uprooted, and therefore, no longer settled. In Arabic, the word for dwelling, *Sakana*, implies staying in place. To be on the move, thus hypothetically suggests the absence of dwelling. Displaced people are not settled and are accordingly seen as *non-dwellers*. When the notion of dwelling — in all its complexity — is in decline, it can be easily replaced with an empty room; a roof with four walls. After all, the purpose of shelter is 'protection' (see Scott-Smith and Breeze 2020).

The need to protect brings us to the second point, which is *emergency*. It is unlikely that someone would choose to live in a shelter. The notion of shelter signifies a state of emergency and exception. In that sense, shelters are architectonic responses to emergencies. For instance, shelters are usually offered in the context of natural crises, such as floods and earthquakes; in the context of war and the destruction of cities for IDPs; in spaces that experience a sudden rush of incoming populations, such as construction sites and neighbourhoods settled by migrants and the working classes; and of course, in refugee camps. In that sense, a shelter is always situated between an emergency need for a dwelling space and the lack thereof. Between loss and emergency, the shelter becomes a space of temporariness, *a space where the body is protected, but dwelling is suspended*. Yet if dwelling is an inevitable manifestation of being, then what happens to the shelter? What kind of relationships emerge between the dwelling and the shelter? In other words, how do refugees manage to dwell within a space that has been designed with no consideration given to social relations, culture, identity, socioeconomics, gender, history, time, intimacy and sex? How can such 'abstract spaces', as Lefebvre would call them, be transformed as dwelling occurs in them? These are some of the core questions addressed in this book.

The refugee camp as a disciplinary machine

Discipline is one of the most expected, yet least explored, notions in the context of refugee camps. Studies into camps are usually interested in topics such as exceptionality and 'bare life' (Agamben 1998), the camp-city (Agier 2002), the ambivalence of the camp (Martin 2015; Oesch 2017) or refugees' agency (Sanyal 2010; Ramadan 2013). Little research is dedicated to uncovering the camp as the machinery of discipline. In this book, I focus on unravelling the ways in which the shelter is situated within a network of power relations that are disciplinary at their core. In his book *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault (1979) explains the characteristics of the disciplinary space: the use of a 'cellular unit' to design and organize the space around it, the attempt to organize these units across space so they can be observed and the people within them can be managed, the introduction of hierarchies and rankings into the space so it is well divided and easily observed by those who govern the space, and lastly, the attention paid to the human body as the focus of these disciplinary practices. All these strategies for managing the space of a camp are implemented through planning. In this process, the shelter plays an important role. Not only does it become the 'cellular unit' around which the camp is planned, but it also plays a role in enforcing discipline on refugees. It is widely known that shelters are standardized units hosting refugee families distributed across the surface of the camp. However, little is known about how they are woven as part of a camp's disciplinary machinery.

A shelter becomes a part of this disciplinary machinery through the ability to organize bodies in space. Picture this: in a camp, refugees are brought together from different locations, backgrounds and family structures. In addition to single travellers, there are extended families, often with complex and dynamic relations. In a camp, the shelter is moreover usually a single space, substituting for both living and sleeping areas. It is rarely composed of many spaces, and often does not include separate facilities for functions such as bathing and cooking. When looking at a planned camp, one may imagine how the spatial structures attempt to reorganize the human body: families with different family structures all squeezed into a single space, and areas planned as residential zones, with communal kitchens and toilets placed in different areas. What used to be one composition — the dwelling — is now scattered across the camp in multiple measurable and standardized units. The shelter, which can be seen as 'too material, too banal, too small-scale and technical' (Scott-Smith 2020, 4), is entangled in a web of power relations that produce and reproduce discipline and control in the camp. In Chapter 1, I show how the camp and the shelter are intertwined. In particular, I show how spatial relations and arrangements, introduced into the camp as 'planning', have the ability to produce a disciplinary space. To understand the camp and the shelter as interconnected and intertwined spaces, and to situate the shelter within the camp machinery are

highly important considerations. This is because such an understanding allows us to perceive the transition from shelters to dwellings, which this book is concerned with; not as a small-scale appropriation limited to the boundaries of the shelter, but as a multi-scalar process that has the ability to transform the camp as a whole. Dwelling — which was initially repressed within the shelter design and camp planning — begins to induce change. It fractures the machinery of the camp and the shelter, dismantles its enforcement and uses its fragments to construct dwellings. This process I refer to as *dismantling and reassembling* the camp.

Dismantling and reassembling

Dismantling and reassembling is an emerging concept that seeks to theorize the relationship between the dwelling and the camp. It starts from the fact that there is no camp without dwelling. Every camp, no matter how temporary, constitutes a sort of residence; a dwelling space. Regardless of how planned it is, each camp also resembles an alienation from dwelling, and a repression of the dwelling space. The camp and the dwelling are entrapped in cycles of contradictions, with each wanting to vanquish the other. The camp wants to remain temporary, manageable and a sign of emergency, whereas the dwelling wants to be permanent, and a sign of settlement, stillness and presence. This *initially* conflictual relationship starts to fade away as the need for dwelling prevails over any other imposed logic or considerations. The camp starts to disappear, and dwellings start to emerge. To face the domination of the camp, the force of the dwelling begins to crack up its fortification, to break it down into pieces and separate it into elements. Breaking down the camp into its elements, both physically and metaphorically, is the process of *dismantling*. By dismantling the camp, refugees — whose need for dwelling is imperative, overlooked or reduced to 'shelter' — begin to put back together the elements extracted from the camp. In other words, the camp as a politico-spatial vision, materialized as an apparatus of discipline, is broken down into pieces, and these pieces are put back together to produce dwellings. Thus, dwellings are *reassembled* from the camp and its dismantled parts. In this process, refugees – the dwellers, become the architects; the masters of the space. They mediate between the different needs, the potential and the limitations arising from two worlds: the social and the material.

In Chapter 1, I look closely at the process of *dismantling*, which as a practice, can be directly linked to the (planned) construction of refugee camps as the machinery for survival. This is why it may be less visible in spontaneous camps that are built by refugees. In planned camps, however, dwelling is meant to be suspended, and refugees are turned into manageable objects within its disciplinary space. Under such conditions, dwelling begins by taking apart the enforcement capacities of the camp. This process is tied to the level of control exercised by those who govern

the camp to maintain its order and structure, and therefore differs in its intensity. In some cases, such as the one presented in this book, dismantling the camp can be a comprehensive process that spans various dimensions including the spatial organization of shelter, communal infrastructures, the shelters themselves, and the economy. All these elements, once dismantled, are reintegrated within the dwelling space. The result is a hybrid assemblage that is neither fully a camp, a shelter nor a dwelling, but something in between. These practices of reassembling are explored in two parts: the first is dedicated to exploring the dynamics of the social world, and the second to examining the dynamics induced by the material world.

In Part 2, I look at the social dynamics of reassembling. Socially, dwelling is structured around the needs for privacy and protection. These basic functions produce a specific structure, in which dwellings are enclosed and certain openings with the surroundings, such as doors and windows, are located. Dwelling is a way of creating a specific socio-spatial arrangement, where the boundaries and gradients of public and private spaces are ordered. This is why reassembling the camp is first and foremost a process of introducing a socio-spatial order; an order that was initially supressed and replaced with disciplinary spaces. Therefore, the need for privacy orchestrates the first sketches of the dwellings. It drives the reassembling process, especially at the beginning. Yet soon after, other social dynamics starts to appear. While the dwelling spaces delineate the boundaries between what is inside and what is outside, what is familiar and what is strange, family relations begin to instruct the process of dwelling. The family brings hierarchy and social order to the space of the dwelling. It informs the process about who can use which spaces, when, and for what purpose, and thereby gives the dwelling its inner form and order. The complexity and richness of family relations, and how dynamic they can be, clashes with the abstract space of the shelter. The standardized and limited space of the shelter becomes perpetuated by dynamic social relations, differing from one family to another and from one culture to another. The need to accommodate these social relations inside the emerging space of the dwelling breaks the shelter apart. It moves it, rotates it, reorganizes its elements, and gives it direction and purpose. The camp, and the shelter as part of it, are being dismantled and reassembled.

Dwelling forms the resistance to the hegemony of the camp, and knowledge plays an important role in this process. In the camp, refugees gradually begin to cultivate a form of emerging knowledge about how to dismantle and reassemble the space. This knowledge is local, relating to the features of the camp itself: its structure, materiality and modes of organization and governance. To give an example, the ways in which shelters can be moved or used for building, comprise a form of knowledge that spread specifically in Zaatari camp and played a major role in enabling refugees to dwell. Yet in contrast to this type of knowledge, there are also other forms that can be used for the same purpose. These are often related to individuals or groups, and include the knowledge they have accumulated

before coming to the camp. This includes knowledge about dwelling within the previous context, or even observed and seen in other contexts. This translocality of knowledge empowers refugees as architects. It informs their decisions about how to reassemble, and allows them to give the dwelling space a further meaning — one related to identity.

Part 3 of the book looks at the material dynamics of reassembling. As mentioned earlier, in order to dwell, refugees become the architects, mediating between the needs and limitations of the social and the material worlds. While the social dynamics of dwelling may be more universal and shared among many people around the world — such as the need for privacy, and the requirement to shape space according to family structures — the material dynamics are more camp specific. They bring us back to the confrontation between the camp and the dwelling, which remains the central *problématique* of this book. The power of dwelling forces the materiality of the camp to circulate, to change order and to be constantly replaced according to needs of the dwellers. Yet there are boundaries to this movement. The space of the camp is conditioned by temporariness, which becomes challenged over time by the very process of dwelling. The tensions between temporariness and permanency in the camp produce boundaries that the material reassembling process has to respect. Chapter 6 reflects on this aspect, by showing how the different materials in the camp are reassembled within the dwellings. By comparison, Chapter 5 highlights the role of other material dynamics, such as prices, sizes and the quality of materials. To do so, the chapter explores the world of caravans, around which the entire space of Zaatari camp was built. It shows how caravans were turned from a standardized element, a shelter, into a construction material, thereby emphasizing further how shelters become dismantled and reassembled for the purpose of dwelling.

What is new about this study?

This book enables us to take a fresh look at the refugee camp. It gives us a new perspective, this time through the practice of dwelling, and underlines the fact that the camp and the dwelling are inseparable. In each camp, there is a need to dwell that finds a way to manifest and be practiced. To date, there are two streams of thought in this regard: first, the camp as a space of exception, biopolitics and bare life (Agamben 1998); and second, the camp as an ambiguous urban space, which for a lack of proper terms has been described as a 'camp-city' (Agier 2002). Over the years, researchers have criticized the former concept for failing to embed refugees' agency (Martin 2015; Oesch 2017; Ramadan 2013), and the latter for provoking problematic questions about the relationship between the city and the camp (Alsayyad and Roy 2006; Grbac 2013; Malkki 2002). Recently, however, it has been argued that

there is an urgent need to 'bring the camp from the periphery to the core of Urban Studies' (Picker and Pasquetti 2015, 686). Topics and processes such as bordering, partitioning and closures, racial and ethnic ordering, the inclusion or exclusion of citizenship, and various regimes of temporariness, are claimed to be crucial for bringing the camp into the urban debate.

The book illustrates that dwelling in refugee camps is a not a mere process of constructing makeshift housing or combining shelters. It is the very logic through which the camp, the 'nomos of the modern' (Agamben 1998), is deconstructed, dissolved, dismantled and reassembled. This perspective brings a solid contribution to the emerging discourse on refugee camps. Social scientists have for long struggled to describe the ambiguity of the camps, but have rarely paid attention to refugees' main concern within these places, which is their need to dwell and to be able to inhabit the space in which they suddenly find themselves. The need to dwell is imperative, beyond any political discourse on rights and belonging, or imposed temporaries of emergency. It is a manifestation of *being* (Heidegger 1971), and thus precedes all other thoughts, limitations and considerations. While refugees are accommodated temporarily in the camp, its whole structure starts to change: shelters change location, or their architecture starts to take a different appearance, spaces change purpose, infrastructures are reused, empty spaces become occupied, markets emerge and social infrastructures begin to infiltrate the initially empty spaces in the camp. The camp is gradually dismantled and reassembled through the act of dwelling. Anthropologists such as Julie Peteet (2005) have noted that Palestinian refugee camps were urbanized around what she calls the 'nexus of domesticity', and others have stated that cement has played a role in gluing the camp together into a hybrid politico-spatial assemblage (Abourahme 2015). My suggestion here extends these observations. I argue that dwelling is the very process that introduces a new spatial order in camps. It is the process that fragments and glues hybrid worlds together, yet in a different order than initially planned: coloured rugs, ornamental furniture, logos of UNHCR and the EU, flags of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, combined with lots of zinc, metal sheets and tents manufactured in China, washing lines, mattresses and concrete blocks taken from a rundown WASH facility.

To understand dwelling as the *force* through which multiple worlds are brought together, negotiated and intertwined, is not only of significance to the camp, but also to urban studies. Colin McFarlane (2011) argues that dwelling is a process of assembling that gradually leads to the production of the urban and the city (building on Deleuze and Guttari 1987). Arguing along the same lines, I suggest that dwelling is not a mere process of assembling, but is instead a force of resistance that breaks, cracks and dismantles the monumental when it needs to. It is the force that manoeuvres possibilities and negotiates options towards manifestation and realization. Being a force in an already existing field of forces implies that the dwellers need to become architects, and thus, mediate. In the context of refugee

camp, the humanitarian regime plays the role of a repressive dominant force. This force not only dictates to refugees how they should live and where, and in what ways their life is structured during their stay in the camp; but it also renders the space of the camp and the shelter as empty of social relations. This explains why shelter is always the first battlefield. In the urban context, people are also forced to dwell in standardized, ideology-driven and modernist housing that fails to incorporate social relations and limits the dwellers in their space. Socialist housing and the modernist ideas of Le Corbusier are good examples of such dwelling conditions. Within urban literature, these were distinguished by Lefebvre (2003b) as 'habitat' in contrast to the 'inhabiting' that gradually began to disappear in modern life. My suggestion is that this 'habitat' can be turned into 'inhabiting' through gradual processes of dismantling and reassembling. This dismantling may not be as stark as in Zaatari camp, but can be visible through successive processes of appropriation — whether invisible (for example rearranging the inside of a dwelling) or visible (such as the spatial appropriation of balconies).

To understand the camp as a dismantled and reassembled space through dwelling is therefore to underline a phenomenological dimension between Agamben's often criticized 'state of exception' and Agier's problematic 'camp-cities'. This theory also emphasizes the importance and centrality of dwelling as a cross-cutting process between camps and cities, and thus has the potential to bring these two bodies of knowledge together.

The right to appropriate

The 'right to appropriate' emerged as a concept by Mark Purcell (2002) in the attempt to provide a more practical interpretation of the 'right to the city' as suggested by Lefebvre. In the same manner, and in this book, I extend this notion further towards the process of dwelling, arguing that a 'right to dwell' should be universal, and that it can be better practiced in camps when refugees are granted the 'right to appropriate' the camp and the shelter. Further, while Purcell sees this process as the result of manoeuvring the relationship between a 'far order' and a 'near order' in cities, it can be similarly put as the practice emerging between the 'habitat' and 'inhabiting' as put by Lefebvre (2003c).

As this book will show, refugees transform their shelters into dwellings. Here, the shelter is a form of habitat, an imposed or pre-given way of living, and a top-down, predesigned way of housing that aims to shelter groups of people for an unknown period of time. While it shelters people, it also seeks to contain them and often to discipline them. In his book *The Minimum Dwelling*, Karel Teige (2002) draws attention to shifting trends in architecture in the early 1900s, and the way habitats were produced for the working class under the conditions of an ongoing

economic and social crisis. He noted that the city 'has become the concentration camp of the proletariat, for whom there is no housing there' (Teige 2002, 30). Instead, the working class is squeezed into shelters, as 'dwelling in the true sense of the word is in effect reserved only for the well-to-do segments of the population' (Teige 2002, 158). Teige's critique is not solely driven by an economic-political vision of housing but is deeply rooted in architecture. Comparing different types of architectural floorplans and designs, he begins to unveil the nature of the habitat that Lefebvre (2003a) talked about. Although Teige suggests that the concentration of the working class in cities can lead to resistance against their living conditions, his message primarily addresses architects and suggests ways in which better housing could be provided. This book, by contrast, does not offer practical tips on how to design better shelters. Instead, it offers important insights into a central paradoxical tension — one that needs to be better understood in order to grasp the deeper implications of 'habitat' and 'inhabiting' — namely the tension between two realities: the shelter and the dwelling.

The suggestion here is that while one of the basic functions of any dwelling is to provide protection — and thus shelter — during emergencies, the shelter and the dwelling become two opposite sides. The shelter is a mentally devised response to an emergency: an imagined suggestion of how a crisis and threat could be remedied. Dwelling, on the other hand, is a lived practice. It is a manifestation of presence and its challenges within the realm of everyday life. It is an individual practice in which the dweller has to manoeuvre between social, economic and cultural needs. It is a process of problem solving. Here, the problem is the imposed habitat, or the shelter in the case of camps. In order to bridge the gap between habitat and inhabiting, between shelter and dwelling, a variety of appropriations come into effect. These appropriations are informal, tactical, creative and negotiable. They allow dwellers to seek solutions and carve out new spaces in which dwelling can become possible.

If dwelling is a phenomenon that is intrinsically embedded within us, then appropriation is the practice in which the *right to dwelling* is reclaimed. Today, many countries and treaties mention the right to adequate housing. Housing is an attempt to produce dwellings collectively. It is an induced form of inhabiting that will always be challenged by the dynamic and shifting ways in which our world is shaped. Thus, to speak of a 'right to housing' does not automatically mean that dwelling can be achieved. Governments certainly struggle to ensure that housing needs are met. In Egypt, some of the public housing was built in the desert or was left abandoned in ruins as people refused to live there. Within these contradictions between habitat and inhabiting, we need to speak of the *right to appropriate*. The difficulty in bridging the gap between the two is increasing. Thus, to speak of a right to dwell and to appropriate means to acknowledge the nature of the human struggle in today's world — a world that is built on the verge of social, economic

and political collapse. Within the cracks of this collapsing world, we will need to learn how to dwell, as Heidegger suggested. However, to do so, we need to perceive dwelling as a process in which new forms of space — possibly more fragmented, hybrid and untraditional ones — are produced. Indeed, these may well be spaces in which the boundaries between shelter and dwelling become unrecognizable, and where habitat and inhabiting merge. From this perspective, the book is a call to extend the 'right to appropriate' from the city (Purcell 2002) to the very space of the dwelling. Next, I turn to the ethnographic site to which this book is dedicated, and present some of the main and new methods used to answer the main question here: How did refugees transform their shelters into dwellings?

The Zaatari refugee camp

When I started the research for this book at the end of 2013, Zaatari camp was still relatively young. The world was beginning to learn about a newly emerging space, often through breathtaking aerial views: a carpet of small structures, stretching endlessly into the desert and covered in dust. 'The second biggest refugee camp in the world' and 'Jordan's fourth biggest city' were among the titles that Zaatari camp earned over the years. At the time, I was being exposed to some of the literature on refugee camps through my friend, Athar Mufreh, who had taken part in the camp rehabilitation programme in Palestine, the West Bank. The urbanization of the Palestinian camps and the paradoxical relations with the future and the past, the here and the there, the now and the then, were intriguing to me as an architect. In fact, I was amazed by the nature of the political discourses emerging around these camps, and how entangled they were with space and architecture. The space of the camp reveals the ruptures of our modern world. As if a mirror, it reflects what we have constructed outside of its space, but in an inverted way. There, the disciplines of architecture and planning were challenged in ways that I had not thought of before, despite my father spending his working life as a laboratory specialist in Al-Aydoon Palestinian camp, and my having studied in Al-Baath university, bordering this camp.

In one of his writings, Michel Agier (2010, 33) suggests that camps, due to their distance from the state and its structures, resemble a 'lonely world stranded in a desert'. Yet thanks to social media, Zaatari camp was not that lonely. After its opening in July 2012, it gradually grew to become *the star of all camps*. Its fame not only made it a destination for a range of visitors, including relief workers, IT programmers, engineers, architects, designers, volunteers, artists, scientists, actors, film makers, donors, politicians, football players and other VIPs from all over the world, but also enabled it to overshadow other camps built for Syrian refugees in Jordan and the region. In the Interlude in this book, I contextualize the produc-

tion of Zaatari camp by situating it amidst the landscape of other Syrian camps in Jordan. Many of these camps were experimental and smaller than Zaatari, yet the way they were constructed and managed shows the importance of this particular camp and why it is the most suitable for this study.

Zaatari camp during one of the first field visits in February 2014

There are two main reasons behind the selection of Zaatari camp as a site for this study. The first relates to my own trajectory and the second to the nature of the camp itself. Belonging to a Palestinian-Jordanian family and having fled the war in Syria before managing to join a master's programme on Integrated Urbanism and Sustainable Design, my role as an architect made me feel a responsibility with regard to what was happening in Zaatari camp. At that time, the camp was being portrayed in the news as a *symbol of the Syrian refugee crisis*, where the misery of the Syrian people was 'being cured' by the collaborative efforts of the international aid sector. Syrians were being *spoken of* but rarely *spoken with*. Even when spoken with, Syrians were represented through topics that would interest donors, and the Western audience. I felt a strong urge to be in the camp, to understand what was happening there, to document it and to voice it to the world. In this respect, I was driven by a sense of responsibility to explain to the world how Zaatari camp was evolving and how it was inhabited, using my enacted local knowledge of Syrian

culture and its way of life — in the knowledge, of course, that Syrians could never be subsumed under one overarching cultural category. Having lived in Syria before the war at least gave me a better chance of understanding the struggle and the sense of loss Syrians were, and are, experiencing, and the way they attempt to cope with a new life constructed within the boundaries of a camp such as Zaatari.

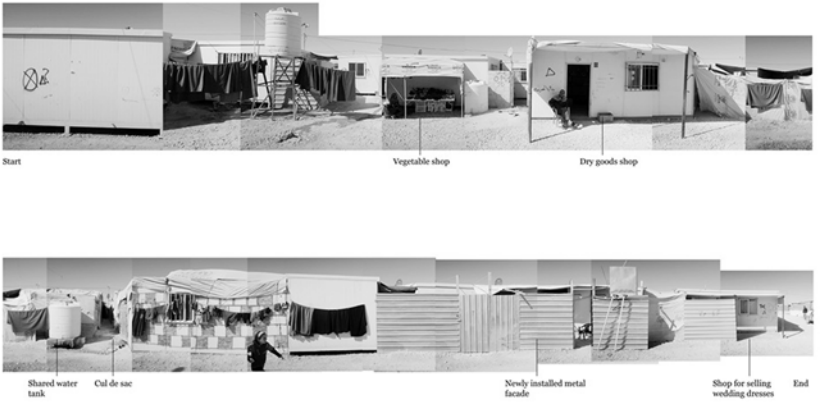
The other reason for choosing Zaatari camp to answer the main question posed in this book lies in the particularity of the camp itself, as it allowed refugees to excessively and rapidly transform their shelters into dwellings. Refugee camps vary in the ways they are managed and structured. Some are built entirely by refugees and are known as spontaneous camps. Others are planned by relief organizations, but have evolved into parts of cities. These are known as urbanized camps. Again others are smaller and have basic geometrical layouts. They are termed emergency camps and tend to be closed after a short time as refugees relocate or repatriate. Zaatari camp corresponds to none of these types, but at the same time it is, in a way, all of them put together. Zaatari camp has distinctive qualities that manage to enable refugees to appropriate space rapidly. In a way, one could make out 'sketches of a city' (Agier 2002, 324), but the camp did not appear as urbanized as Palestinian camps in Jordan, for instance. The particular case of this camp also illustrates elements of formal and informal planning. On the one hand, relief organizations attempted to plan the camp based on their criteria and in line with their standards, but on the other, this planning practice was challenged by the ways in which refugees began to construct their dwellings. Moreover, Zaatari camp represents a unique case, in which materials and people have accumulated over time. Its substantial size and rapid growth mitigated the often-strict humanitarian management of camps and allowed refugees to practice more control over how to shape the space. This happened while different types of shelters were being distributed in the camp: tents, movable prefabs (caravans) and fixed ones with advanced designs, including their own kitchenettes and bathing areas. From that perspective, Zaatari camp not only presents a unique opportunity to examine how shelters transform into dwellings over time, but also how this transformation relates to camp planning, social structures, cultures and materiality.

Fieldwork

Between 2014 and 2018, my visits to Zaatari camp varied in their purpose and frequency. It should be mentioned here that unlike other camps that are more open to visitors, Zaatari camp requires special permits from the Jordanian government in order to be accessed. As a researcher, these visits can be limited to two or four within one month, and for a limited time window (from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.). Up to 2016, my visits were exploratory in nature, aiming to understand the new envi-

ronment constructed within the camp. Unlike other spaces, Zaatari camp had its own spatial, economic and managerial system, which needed to be understood before delving into the transition from shelters to dwellings (see for instance Dalal 2015a, 2015b). These visits were very important, because they enabled me to observe and document the various appropriations taking place in Zaatari camp before its structure became entirely crystalized. In 2014 in particular, many refugees were struggling with the caravanization process, which resulted in hybrid forms of dwelling that combined tents and caravans. At this time, I was able to sketch and map an entire cluster of units inhabited by 27 households. Additionally, I was able to conduct many in-depth interviews with refugees and relief workers, including Kilian Kleinschmidt, the manager of Zaatari, who became a famous figure due to his provocative statements and untraditional approach to humanitarian relief. Interestingly, during 2014, it was obvious that both refugees and relief actors felt the urge and the need to narrate and explain the spatial transformation occurring within the camp. It was obvious that both types of actors were experiencing *something new* and were therefore eager to tell the story of the place and explain what was happening around them.

The façades of the cluster studied in 2014



Floor plans of the first studied cluster, showing the diversity of the designs and arrangements of dwellings

In 2015, I visited Zaatari camp as the main protagonist for one of Al Jazeera's documentaries. While this gave me the opportunity to follow up on the spatial transitions occurring in the camp, and to conduct interviews and collect data for my PhD research, it was also obvious that refugees and relief workers were becoming worn out by the pressure of external visitors to the camp. The camp was turning into a field of 'innovative' operations, inviting projects from all over the world.[2] This was exhausting for the camp management, and the refugees there were turning into another 'over-researched community' (see Sukarieh and Tannock 2019). These new conditions impacted on the way I could access the field, and instead of visiting, I enrolled as a volunteer in one of the NGOs in the camp, where many young Syrians from different origins were also working as volunteers. This, in turn, made me aware of the importance of identity and its relationship to the urban environment in my research (see Dalal 2017). This period lasted from October 2016 to April 2017. Later, I conducted a follow up visit to Zaatari camp in 2018, and had the opportunity to lead a small and short research mission in Azraq camp. This offered me a wider perspective on the spatial nature of camps. Additionally, between 2015 and 2021, this perspective was enhanced by various visits, teaching work and research periods in several Palestinian camps in Jordan, in addition to the newly built camps in Berlin called 'Tempohomes'. Thus, in the later periods of my research, I was able to revisit and develop the new theoretical concept of *dismantling and reassembling* and to understand the impact of camps — their planning, management and layout — on the transitional process *from shelters to dwelling* within Zaatari camp and at large.

Data collection

During the volunteering period, I was able to visit 21 dwellings and conduct semi-structured interviews with refugees (men and women) from different backgrounds and origins in Syria, including both villagers and city dwellers. Due to security measures, my access to refugees was limited to the volunteers working at the same NGO. Yet my previous experience in the camp allowed me to conduct selective sampling, in which priority was given to origins and culture, family conditions and lo-

2 The attention that refugee camps were paid varied significantly from one camp to another. As a site planner who worked in Zaatari camp and then was relocated to another camp in Asia noted during an interview: 'In Zaatari, I used to receive proposals and requests for collaborations almost every day … Here, it rarely happens … possibly every two weeks or so I may receive an email from a researcher'. In Zaatari camp, this has resulted into a very long list of projects proposed to the camp's management prior to the year 2016, which I had the chance to scroll through during a workshop in Berlin. These included numerous different suggestions from universities, individuals, architects and designers, as well as from the business sector.

cation in the camp, as shown in the case studies presented in Part 2. The diversity of Syrian refugees working there enabled such an approach. Semi-structured interviews are important to this study, because they 'epistemologically privilege the participant as a knower' (McIntosh and Morse 2015, 4), and thus allowed refugees' subjective knowledge to enhance my understanding of the studied phenomenon. Some of the main findings were then reflected on with the volunteers as a group during shared meals. These informal interviews were important, and functioned as 'validity check on information gathered in a one-to-one interview' (Frey 1991, 183).

Additionally, collecting the necessary data for this research relied on participatory observation and walk-along interviews. Through observations, I was able to understand how space was used and how it functioned during the day. Unfortunately, these observations were limited to the time of the visits, which lasted about one or two hours during which I was hosted as a guest. Thus, the space of the dwelling would be used in the context of this guest-host relationship, to which I am well accustomed within Syrian traditions. Some of the interviews would actually start after a long breakfast, and in some cases I was able to join men's gatherings in one of the *Maḍāfa* (guest spaces) attached to one of the dwellings. While food was being served, I was able to observe how the space was used and asked questions about other parts of the dwellings that I did not enter, such as the sleeping rooms. The importance of this method lies in its ability to uncover things that at times diverged from the stories presented by the interviewees. As Barbara Kuwalich (2005) notes: 'participant observations allow the researcher to check definitions of terms that participants use in interviews, observe events that informants may be unable or unwilling to share when doing so would be implicit, impolite, or insensitive'. These observations extend from the dwelling space to its surroundings. On many occasions, refugees would offer me the opportunity to walk with them around the dwelling they had constructed and to introduce me to their neighbours. These visits, which were always accompanied by an obligatory cup of coffee, allowed refugees to speak to me about their direct environment and to explain how it had been constructed. It sometimes forced them to compare and elaborate on certain spaces in a way that would be almost impossible to understand solely based on interviews conducted inside their living rooms. These spaces included collectively managed storage areas and gaps between rooms, reserved for water tanks and other functions. While these methods are highly valuable for this study, they also have their limitations. The short duration of the visits, and sometimes the inability to revisit the sites, presented some problems in this regard. To compensate, I was able to rely on documents released by the UNHCR in Zaatari camp, such as surveys and satellite images. In many cases, the dwellings had to be searched for using Google Earth, which allowed me to observe how the site had developed, although the images were relatively very poor quality. Thus, new research methods had to be developed specifically for this research. While I documented some of my observations

using a camera, on other occasions I would quickly sketch them, especially in instances when refugees were appropriating space and redesigning their dwellings.

An in-between space used as a storage area, and managed collectively between two households, shown to me during a walk-along interview

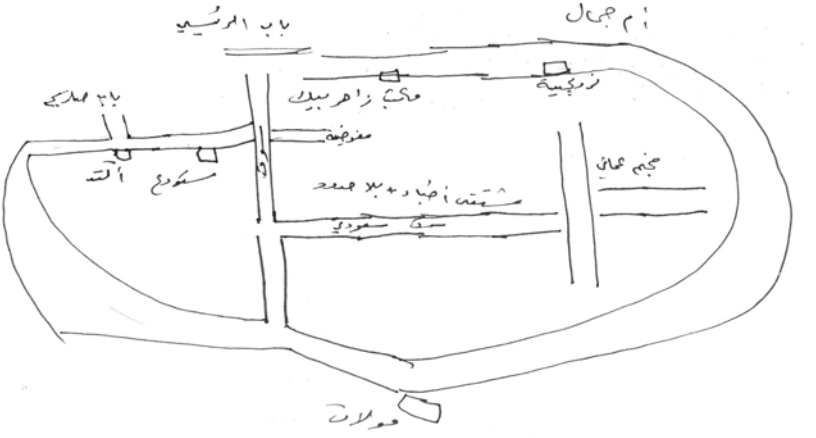
A quick sketch showing how a caravan was being lifted up and rotated into place using empty gas cylinders and a metal ladder

Co-mapping: a new research method

One status I always had on my field visits, besides being known as 'the Syrian PhD student from Germany', was my training as an architect. In the realm of research methods developed by social scientists, architects can easily get lost. This is because their implicit abilities to understand, analyse and build arguments using visuals and drawings are not reckoned with, or sufficiently developed within schools of architecture worldwide. Faced with the challenge of understanding how refugees transformed their shelters into dwellings, I had to develop new research methods that combined narratives with mapping techniques. This new research method, which I term *co-mapping*, is different from mental mapping, which is widely used in social research and was also utilized in this research whenever refugees were asked to draw floor plans of their previous dwellings in Syria. To produce mental maps, participants are asked to draw a spatial representation of a space or a process from their memory while being guided by the researcher (Gieseking 2013). Consequently, the outcome relies on the participant's drawing skills. While other research projects are interested in the way participants imagine and represent space, individually or collectively, on a blank piece of paper, such an approach was not required for my research. Instead, it was important to understand the sequence of spatial and material arrangements and how they had been used by families before the dwelling construction was finished. The details and drawings of this process were combined with narratives, as presented in Part 2 as an example of what the outcome of co-mapping can look like.

Generally speaking, co-mapping is a research method that relies on the researcher's ability to first visualize and then illustrate a space while it is being described by the interviewee. The paper placed in front of the researcher and interviewee becomes a means of *co-production*; a canvas for articulating ideas, visualizing relationships and examining arrangements and compositions of space. The empty canvas — or occasionally a piece of paper containing initial drawings or a site plan — becomes a medium of conversation between the interviewee and the researcher. It provokes feelings, tensions, fears, hopes and aspirations. Further, just as memory can be manipulated and politicized by its owner (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013), a co-map is a result of these impulses of memory and what the interviewee wants the researcher to know and document. Thus, a co-map is not a precise document of a space or an architectural constellation, but a manipulated vision of how a space was perceived, experienced and lived. The results are never entirely precise, but they are approximations of how interviewees construct space in their memory and how they want it to be represented.

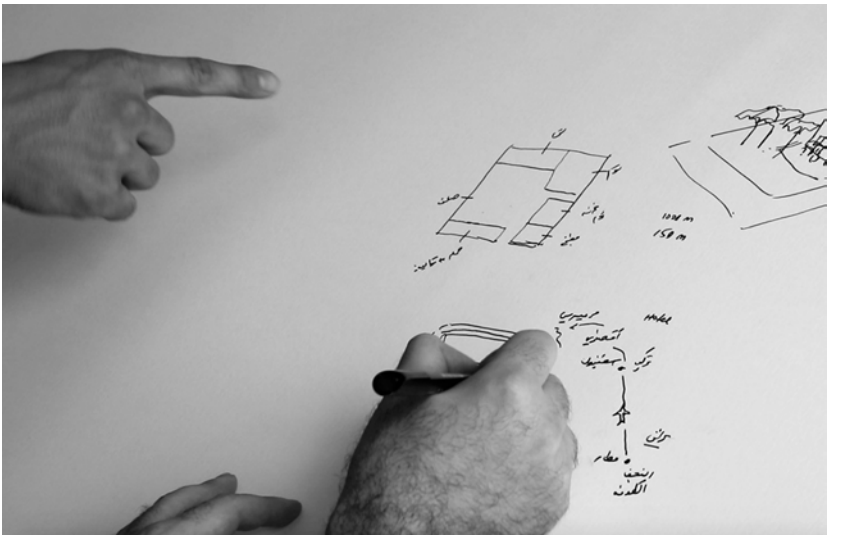
A mental map of the camp, as perceived by a 32-year-old man in Zaatari camp during 2014



The co-mapping method allows buried images and visions of space to come to the surface again. It allows interviewees to formulate new thoughts and reflect directly on the space as it is being drawn and visualized in front of them. Co-mapping unleashes the power of visualization as a medium to access thoughts and ideas that are often only recorded through text (field notes), voice (recordings) or images (cameras). Co-mapping allows the participants to co-produce and re-produce their imagination of a space. While these processes can be empowering for interviewees, they can also be shocking and traumatic. The accuracy of the drawing and the in-depth investigation of the spatial arrangements can sometimes trigger nostalgia and can cause interviewees to cry or even to stop an interview. During one of the sessions in Berlin, where I was conducting research for a different project, the interviewee asked for the interview to be stopped. This was because the narrated story and how it was spatialized on the canvas had worked as a mirror to reflect and *visualize* his living conditions in Berlin. This suddenly became upsetting and he thus wanted to have the part omitted from the interview. Of course, in such cases researchers need to rely on their ethical reflexivity (Guillemin and Gillam 2004) and act according to the demands of the moment. The method therefore needs to be employed sensitively, while prioritizing the interviewee's emotional and psychological well-being. By contrast, however, co-mapping can also be very empowering, as it allows interviewees to articulate their political agency and thereby shape the outcome of the research. Spaces are never entirely accurate: spaces can be stretched, neighbourhoods can expand or become smaller, and some parts of the examined space can be entirely forgotten. Nevertheless, in contrast to mental mapping, the researcher here plays an important role in inquiring about the architecture that is being drawn. Enacted spatial knowledge and access to local culture can therefore be important, as it facilitates the process of producing more precise outcomes.

Co-mapping is accordingly a method that requires a balance between on the one hand, the ability to sketch rapidly and efficiently, and on the other hand, to follow the narrative of the interviewee. This could lead to challenging situations, where a great deal of focus and repetition is required. For instance, an interviewee may need to be interrupted with questions such as 'was it placed like this?', 'how much distance was there between this and this?', 'was the door here?', 'how did you connect these spaces together?', 'was this covered with sheets? and so on. In this case, the result is a series of sketches in which dwelling arrangements are explained in relation to time. Most of these drawings became very complex and messy during the interview, and thus required re-drawing, which was carried out after the field visit had finished. Moreover, most of the described and co-mapped constellations were revisited using available Google satellite images or photographs whenever possible. The corrected drawings were then shared with the interviewees on the next visit, if possible, to make sure that they were correct.

Photograph of a co-mapping session taken from a film documentary project



Outlook: opportunities and challenges

This book should be seen as an opening for different research agendas — a call for enhanced research efforts on different levels and subjects. For instance, the co-mapping method demonstrates the need to develop new research techniques derived from the field of architecture itself. Architects today deal with a range of topics within the discipline, many of which are interdisciplinary and rely on methods and tools developed in the realm of social science. While these are important and certainly cannot be discounted, there is a power in architectural research that is still waiting to be unleashed. This power stems from the magical and surprising dimension that visuals can add to research — whether during the process of data collection or when presenting its outcomes. Visuals can be used to build arguments and analyse space in ways that architects may automatically gravitate towards, as they are trained to do so. Yet a proper research agenda still requires committed efforts in this direction. In fact, many colleagues pursuing their PhD research shared their frustration with me, as they were struggling to find the right language and medium to convey their thoughts, outcomes and analytical approach. These were often perceived as not scientific enough by colleagues who used text as the main gateway and medium for researching and building arguments.

In addition to such methodological deliberations, this book issues a strong call to revisit the meaning of dwelling, and how it is represented and conceptually con-

structed across different disciplines. 'It is very confusing to research the meaning of home', a friend of mine confessed with embarrassment. Home, dwelling, housing, habitat, domestic space and many other such terms seem, at times, to be indistinguishable from each other. In order to advance studies in this area, we need more grounded definitions and distinctions between these terms and how they are being researched. In this book, I propose a potent way in which these terms could be understood, by highlighting the centrality of dwelling as a phenomenon and its current entrapment between two practices: inhabiting and the production of habitat. We need to re-centre dwelling as the core process from which all other definitions and terminologies branch off. Adding to this discussion, I present a unique case in this book of how dwelling occurs in steps, and how rigid empty containers are gradually transformed into lively dwellings. This transformation highlights the distinction between habitat (shelter) and inhabiting (dwelling), and shows that only appropriations can bridge the gap between them — a gap that is probably at its widest in the case of refugee shelters. These appropriations are tactical, informal, creative and negotiable in nature. While all these dimensions are reflected in this book, they will require further investigations and assessments, using different case studies from around the world. Dwelling has become exceedingly difficult today, in a world torn apart by wars, famines, pandemics and unsettling transformations of space. This book represents the personal journey of an author who himself became displaced and eventually found home and courage through the many ways in which refugees showed strength and resilience in the most absurd, heartbreaking and inhumane spaces, such as those found in an emergency refugee camp.

Theoretical Overview
Dwelling and the Birth of Shelter

When I started this research, I was unaware of how complex it would be to discuss dwelling. Although it may appear very tangible and immediate, this topic is probably the most challenging to grasp linguistically, and thus also conceptually. What exactly do we mean by 'dwelling', and how can it be that different from homemaking and housing? The nature of this project offers an advantage here, because I explore an extreme form of dwelling: dwelling on the edge, as it could be termed.

Imagine a one-room space — a covered space, sometimes with four walls, sometimes rounded like a dome or even hexagonally shaped — of about 15 square metres, with a door and one or two windows. A space made from textile or metal sheets and beams, or a combination of them. This space is meant to be temporary; a conditional space. It is intended to offer protection, a place to sleep and eat, to stay warm at night and to store a few belongings. Yet you cannot feel settled there. The space is temporary, so you could be asked to leave it at any time. It is also provisional in the sense that you have to share it with others — members of your family or even people you do not know. The space offers protection, but it also makes you feel uncomfortable. Privacy is not a priority here, nor are your lifestyle, preferences and culture. The important thing is that you are protected and covered, that you are alive, or to put it more bluntly: *not dead*. Protection here is also conditional. In order to be protected, you are required to partially give up your sense of individuality, your privacy and your everyday needs. You have to accept what is offered. The space protects from a hostile event or situation you were exposed to, but this protection comes at a cost. Let us call this space *shelter*.

Shelter is a form of temporary accommodation for people who have lost their home under different circumstances. Wars can leave millions of people homeless, as can economic hardship and hostile environmental conditions. Shelters are offered as an act of care, and in response to such emergencies. Thus, shelters — whether as units or in the form of buildings — often fall outside of discussions about housing and homemaking. Such spaces can be so marginal, so exceptional, that they appear irrelevant to dominant topics such as the house and the home. A shelter could not be viewed as being any further removed from a house or a home.

A shelter could even be seen as an inversion: The flipside of a house, a home or a dwelling. A shelter appears to be their opposite.

Having been involved in a research project that explored the appropriations of refugee camps in Berlin and Jordan, one reality always felt very compelling: there is an ongoing transformation that takes place within shelters offered to refugees in camps. Space is transformed and refigured. From the outset, this transformation appears to be an attempt to increase privacy. Curtains are added to cover up entrances and windows, while bed sheets are stretched between bunkbeds in gym halls. Refugees reclaim their privacy and seek to create pockets of space that can be used differently throughout the day. Refugees thereby seek to dwell within shelters. They try to re-establish a sense of normality within these temporary spaces of protection. Yet can these spaces be called homes? Can these processes of appropriation, such as adding curtains for privacy, dividing space, reusing furniture, or hanging flags and pictures on walls, be called homemaking? Further, once these empty rooms have been appropriated — that is, once they have undergone the process of homemaking — have they become homes? What are the boundaries between homes, shelters, houses and even dwellings? It is clearly a linguistic matter, and there is no doubt that refugees in shelters try in one way or another to reproduce a sense of the home they have lost. With this in mind, why then is it important to draw a line between terms such as 'home' and 'shelter'? How do these terms even relate to housing and domestic space? To clarify these points, I primarily draw on two fundamental theories: *Dwelling* by Martin Heidegger and *Habitat/Habiting* by Henri Lefebvre.

Dwelling as a phenomenon

It is no coincidence that Heidegger's text, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, is highly relevant to the context of this study and to the conditions of housing worldwide. During World War II, Heidegger was exposed to immense human tragedy, and to an apparatus of war that destroyed one fifth of all the houses in Germany and rendered over two million Germans homeless (Sharr 2007). It has even been suggested that 'the philosopher and his family were compelled to share their house with one or two further families for some years' (Sharr 2007, 21). Thus, when Heidegger spoke of dwelling, it was through his experience of the impact of displacement and war on people and space.[1] At the 1951 Darmstadt conference, he presented his idea of

1 Many scholars consider Heidegger an intellectual figure associated with the rise of the Nazi movement in Germany. It is even argued that his wish to live in a small hut in the forest of Freiburg was an attempt to 'flee the city' from the others, who were mainly Jews at that time (see for instance Sennett 2019, 126-134).

dwelling to a group of architects: it was not a building, but a phenomenon. The interesting dimension of this approach lay in Heidegger's recognition of the complexity of dwelling, which includes buildings, people, architecture, connection to the world and connection to life, as well as his decision to situate *dwelling* as an equivalent to *being*. This has certain implications: first, by existing on earth, humans implicitly dwell; second, dwelling cannot be limited solely to architecture, buildings, spaces, cultures and lifestyles, or cognitively constructed notions such as the house, the home and the domestic space, but instead refers to a deeper dimension of presence. *Being* is argued to be a phenomenon that can only be fully comprehended not by thought, but by the absence of thought (Tolle 2003, 2004). The same can be said for *dwelling*: it can be felt, experienced and manifested, but any attempt to express it or understand it through thinking would only be partial. Dwelling is like the human body: both are always present, but we are barely aware of them in everyday life. Or in other words, they are 'so commonplace, so familiar, so much part of the way things are, that we often hardly notice them' (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995b, 4). The understanding of dwelling as a phenomenon that is intrinsically *beyond thought* is very important to underline here. This is because, as I will show later, notions of the house, the home and the domestic space are indeed important; however, as they are *intellectual constructs*, shaped by their relations to certain ideas or emotions, they fail to fully grasp dwelling and can only ever achieve a partial representation. These partial representations are important, and part of the way things are, but they are of little help in the context of this study — especially if we are to consider the shelter as a space that can neither be a house nor a home, but that is still a space where dwelling can occur.

To bring Heidegger's concept closer to the aim and context of this book, there are two points I would like to address: first, the connection between dwelling and movement, and second, the connection between dwelling and creativity. In his text, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, Heidegger traces the origins of the word *bauen*: 'The Old English and High German word for building, *buan*, means to dwell. This signifies: to remain, to stay in a place. The real meaning of the verb *bauen*, namely, to dwell, has been lost to us [...] The old word *bauen* however also means at the same time, to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, especially to till the soil, to cultivate the vine' (Heidegger 1971a, 145). There is an intrinsic connection between dwelling and the stopping of movement. To dwell, one needs to settle; by settling, a space is gradually inhabited. The same meanings are associated with the word *Sakana* in Arabic. *Al-Sakan* denotes 'the dwelling', but also the process of becoming static after turmoil. *Sakīna* also means stillness, quietness and a feeling of serenity (Ibn Manzour 1998, 2052). To dwell is to have these qualities fulfilled, yet when refugees are being managed during wars, little attention is paid to these aspects. Dwelling is intrinsically psychological. It requires the dweller to feel settled; not only in a place, but within the body and the self. From this point of view, dwelling constitutes

reclaiming the right to survive and to be resilient. Without being able to dwell, a person is destined to become mentally ill and to lose the ability to persist and be present on earth. These dimensions are important when thinking about how refugees are managed and sheltered today.

The second dimension that appears in Heidegger's writings on dwelling involves creativity and its relationships to power and resistance. In his text, *Poetically Man Dwells*, he argues that dwelling requires creativity, similar to that needed for poetry. For poetry to be beautiful and creative, Heidegger argues, it needs to resist forces and hegemonies such as those contained in language. He explains: 'Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man. When this relation of dominance gets inverted, man hits upon strange maneuvers. Language becomes the means of expression' (Heidegger 1971c, 215). By that, Heidegger suggests that dwelling implies resistance to certain hegemonies within a specific context. The implicit inclusion of creativity and resistance in the Heideggerian notion of dwelling is important in refugee camps, where humanitarian control is practiced and political restrictions are exercised, but it can also be difficult to grasp in everyday life. What is meant by creativity? What could a dweller be resisting in a normal house? Lefebvre offers some further interpretations to address these questions.

Dwelling between top-down and bottom-up practices

In his book, *The Urban Revolution*, Lefebvre (2003b) sheds light on what he sees as the core of the dwelling dilemma — a dilemma he considers as related to the structure, dynamics and conditions of modern life. Drawing on Heidegger's phenomenological reading of dwelling, Lefebvre recognizes two forces at play: The first is a top-down force; a set of rules, ideologies and measures according to which contemporary housing is shaped, providing accommodation to populations across the globe. This he calls 'habitat'. The second is a bottom-up force; an attempt to self-realize, to adapt and thus to construct dwelling spaces that respond to the immediate conditions of living, as well as to personal aspirations. This he calls 'habiting'. He further notes that while 'habiting' was the norm before industrialization, it gradually became degraded by today's industry and was replaced by 'habitat' — an engineered form of 'habiting'. He writes:

> Habitat, as ideology and practice, repulsed or buried habiting in the unconscious. Before habitat became commonplace, habiting was an age-old practice, poorly expressed, poorly articulated linguistically or conceptually, seen sometimes as vital and sometimes as degraded, but always concrete, that is, simultaneously functional, multifunctional, and transfunctional. During the reign of habitat, habiting

> disappeared from thought and deteriorated strongly in practice. (Lefebvre 2003, 81)

From this perspective, dwelling as a phenomenon is always situated between ideology and everyday practice — between a top-down force that dictates and creates living spaces, and a bottom-up force that recreates and appropriates these spaces. The contradiction appears very clearly in this book as the tension between *the shelter*, constituting a form of habitat, and *the dwelling*, constituting a form of habiting.

On the one hand, modernist architects were among the first to embrace their roles as 'habitat producers'. Le Corbusier did not shy away from describing old European cities as ill-shaped and poorly constructed, with bad hygiene conditions and little natural light. As an alternative, he came to construct the *Ville Vertical* and the *Unité d'Habitation*, as bold and clear expressions of what dwelling should be like. Dwelling was dragged from its position as a *practice* and turned into a *vision*. It was no longer a living space filled with complexities, contradictions and social dynamics, but became simply a 'machine for living'. This architectural vision, along with many others, contributed to shaping the habitats of cities today.

This is one side of the equation. On the other hand, however, recent years have shown a growing fascination with how the urban poor around the world construct their dwellings almost entirely from scratch, with little or no help from the state, from engineers or from architects. The ghetto, the favela, the '*Ashwa'īyāt*, the *habitat spontané*, the squatter settlement and the camp, are all territories distanced from the state. They are all spaces where people take refuge from the hostilities of the nation state and the neoliberal economy (Agier 2011), and thus where 'habiting' practices are strongly present. In such places, dwelling is a bottom-up practice that builds on a reservoir of local knowledge — knowledge that has accumulated over the years and is shaped by the daily practices of dwellers. Dwelling here is a process of trial and error, stemming from everyday life and its direct needs. It is not a vision imposed from the top. Such spaces never fail to surprise us, for they reveal another face, a different possibility, of what dwelling can be. It is along these lines that the transition from shelters to dwellings will be explored in this book.

To reiterate, the notion of dwelling presented in this book is situated between two theoretical positions: *dwelling* as a phenomenon described by Heidegger (1971c, 1971a) and *habitat/habiting* as outlined by Lefebvre (2003b). This theoretical framework has several advantages: First, it allows us to separate dwelling — as an existential reality — from spatial forms, architecture and terminologies such as those of the house and the home, as I will outline in more detail below. Second, it allows us to perceive dwelling as an inevitable process that cannot be separated from the nature of being, and can thus take place in camps and shelters where 'being' is conditional and time is suspended. Lastly, it allows us to understand dwelling as a global challenge, positioned between two forces: one from the top that wants to

shape dwelling according to politics, economics, ideologies and institutional power relations, and one from the bottom that aims to construct dwellings out of the necessities of everyday life and individuals' needs and desires. In keeping with this particular view on *dwelling*, I use the term to refer to both a process and a product. This book thereby seeks to unfurl a world of spatial practices, tensions and negotiations between the shelter as a form of 'habitat' and the dwelling as a form of 'habiting'. In that sense, dwelling is inevitable in camps and beyond, within both the shelter and the house, but it is within the camp that the subtle dimensions of power and conflict appear most starkly. Moreover, there is a linguistic reason for choosing to speak of *dwelling* as both a process and a product, rather than using other terminologies such as the house and the home: the latter remain partial in their ability to express and describe dwelling as a phenomenon and practice.

The house and the home

It would nevertheless be preposterous to attempt to dismiss terms like *house* and *home* in our everyday life. Such terms are not only commonly used, but evoke a spontaneous and immediate reaction to the nature of dwelling. When observing what refugees do inside a shelter and how they try to construct a 'home' there, one is immediately tempted to refer to this process as 'homemaking' — which in some ways does hold true. However, in this book I have made the conscious decision to use the term dwelling, due to its connection to Heidegger's theory and the aforementioned connotations it provokes (as discussed earlier). To use the term dwelling is to free oneself from the limitations and shortcomings that intrinsically come with using other terms, such as house and home.

For instance, the *house* is a very institutional, physical and even mechanical concept. It is only in the wake of the consolidation of nation states and capitalism that we came to speak of housing — its laws, regulations, industries, manufacturing, engineering, economy, management, design, architecture and politics. In 1966, the United Nations declared 'access to adequate housing' a human right. Yet it was first evidently important to justify this step: 'At first glance, it might seem unusual that a subject such as housing would constitute an issue of human rights. However, a closer look at international and national laws, as well as at the significance of a secure place to live for human dignity, physical and mental health and overall quality of life, begins to reveal some of the human rights implications of housing' (OHCHR 2009, 2). While the need for housing started to appear on national agendas, and to challenge the capacities of countries to *provide lodging for its citizens* — mainly in cities — it was gradually influenced by various aspects such as ideologies (modernism, neoliberalism, communism and socialism), institutional powers (political or economic) and architectural technologies (the production of precast concrete

slabs, metal structures and prefabs). The notion of the house therefore entails a shift from the human to the technical: or in other words, from a manifestation of human presence on earth, a human-centred and inevitable phenomenon, to gradually becoming a technical skill and a managerial question. It is, per se, the habitat that Lefebvre talked about earlier. The early 1900s is an interesting time to trace the evolution of housing in contemporary cities. For example, another architect, Karel Teige (2002), saw housing as a class dilemma. While privileged communities could enjoy larger houses with unique designs and styles, the working class were being squeezed into housing that, to him, seemed not much different from shelters. Interestingly, when the house was reduced to its bare minimum qualities, it became reminiscent of the shelter. This is because both the house and the shelter are a form of habitat: a dwelling space produced from the top down. A house is rarely built by those who dwell in it — a notion that is important to keep in mind while reading this book.

The second concept that is often used to describe a dwelling is 'home'. Yet in contrast to a house, which is a more physical, tangible and technical concept, *home* is a metaphysical, intangible and emotional concept. The mere mention of the word 'home' can evoke strong feelings of security, warmth, belonging and familiarity (see Bachelard 1954). Accordingly, the definition of a home is connected to the personal experience of the dweller, and is therefore much more subjective in terms of what it means and where it is located. For instance, in everyday life, one could say, 'I am going home', 'I am at home', 'I feel at home', 'this is my home' and so on, though these spaces may not directly refer to the immediate space of the dwelling. The school is your second home, we were taught, but this did not mean that we were allowed to sleep there. The dilemma of the home as a subjective, yet common term makes it both easy and difficult to grasp at the same time. When searching for 'A Home is…' on Google, there are a myriad of definitions. Interestingly, they all aim to capture the individual experience of the dweller: 'A home is not a place it is a feeling', 'home is where the heart is', 'home is where my mum is', 'home is where the wine is', 'home is where your family lives' or even 'home is where your Wi-Fi connects automatically'. The meaning and the location of the home, therefore, vary from one person to another and from one context to another. Moreover, reference to a 'home' does not necessarily imply a precise match or even a resemblance to a 'house'. In fact, a home can mean an entire city or a country; that is, a homeland (see for instance Anderson 1983). These multi-scalar dimensions of the home have been observed to be deeply relevant to refugees, who struggle to find a balance between the various scales and levels of the home: from the immediate, to the institutional and the national (Brun and Fábos 2015). Indeed, many scholars have followed this reactive and almost automatic terminology, and refugees' appropriations have consequently often been addressed as 'homemaking' practices (Steigemann and Misselwitz 2020; Hart, Paszkiewicz and Albadra 2018). This is of

course valid and serves a purpose, yet it can prove challenging when attempting to scale up the findings: What does the home then mean in relation to housing and its architecture? How do refugees' practices of homemaking relate to the wider production of mass housing in cities? Can a shelter space such as a tent or a container be called a 'home'? In this regard, I recall the emotional dilemma that this question once provoked when posed to a refugee in their shelter: 'This is never my home, and I don't consider it as such. My home is back there in Syria, which I am waiting to go back to once the borders are opened'. What is 'home' is thus highly political. To call a place home brings an immediate feeling of warmth and confidence, but a sense of rightfulness and belonging that could lead to violence and the dispossession of others. For instance, in her book *The Colonizing Self: Or Home and Homelessness in Israel/Palestine*, Hagar Kotef (2020) shows how practices of 'homemaking' cannot be seen in isolation from the violence of the colonial settler project in Israel. The emotional attachment and imagination of a Jewish homeland have led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, whose previous 'homes' were occupied by Israelis. The conceptual nature of the home is entangled with the construction of the self, and therefore, with a sense of ownership and rightfulness. To have a 'home' implies a sense of one's *imposition on space*, and as Kotef showed, a process that could consequently lead to violence. While the levels of this violence vary from one context to another — probably with colonialism being the starkest — it should not be forgotten that 'creating a home' or 'homemaking' can therefore potentially justify the abuse of nature and resources for that purpose. The violence of the home is an extension of the brutality, madness and injustice of the world today. The marginality of camps within this world — that is, their *intended* isolation from the world — reveals the differences between what is homemaking and what is dwelling. Creating a 'home' requires adopting a colonial mindset; to harness resources, and to survive by pushing through the brutality of the world. Dwelling, especially in camps, is an escape from this brutality. It is an attempt to find peace, harmony and grace in a space that is close to nothingness.

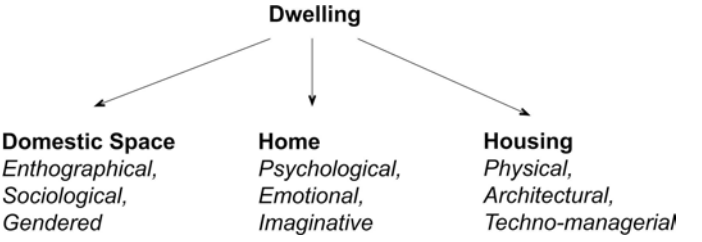
This is not meant to romanticize dwelling conceptually, and thus, again fall into the trap of establishing firm concepts, but instead to recognize the impact of concepts on reality. In addition, in the last example, understanding how the perception of home and homeland leads to the displacement and *homelessness* of others, stripping them of their right to dwell in a certain territory. This combination of politics, emotions and a disciplinary view of 'home' (see for example the detailed analysis by Mallett 2004; Somerville 1997), makes it shaky ground for trying to understand how shelters turn into dwellings, and especially in a camp where belonging is politically manipulated,[2] and in a space that is deemed temporary and thus extraterritorial.

2 Examples of this appear in attempts to revitalize and rehabilitate refugee camps (see for example Misselwitz 2009; Al-Nammari 2014).

Another human-centred representation of the dwelling frequently discussed in relevant literature is the domestic space. As a term, *domestic space* engages with the social dimension of space — its symbolism, gendered nature, and relationship to social hierarchies and order, which have also been expressed artistically in the paintings of Louise Bourgois and others. Studies along similar lines are often conducted by anthropologists and ethnographers, who are especially interested in the way social structures and their dynamics manifest within the domestic space. This includes for instance the social organization of tribes and 'primitive' communities within the domestic space (Antoun 1972; Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995a; Lévi-Strauss 1963); how culturally-informed practices like cooking, food preparation, intimacy and sexual intercourse, privacy and cleanliness influence the design and use of domestic space (Bourdieu 1970; Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995a; Janowski 1995; Lawrence 1982; Ozaki 2002; Ozaki and Rees Lewis 2006); and how dichotomies such as masculinity/femininity, day/night, cold/warm, familiar/strange and life/death are symbolically present within the structuring of domestic spaces (see the analysis of the Berber house by Bourdieu 1970).

Based on the preceding discussion, there is a challenge faced by every researcher attempting to address the phenomenon of dwelling: their use of language and their disciplinary background implicitly and indirectly dictate certain directions that guide them during the research process. Thus, there is an undeniable connection between dwelling — how it is represented and the terms used to describe it — and the medium in which an academic discipline is specialized. Architects may be more interested in speaking about 'housing' and its techniques, design trends and styles. An activist may also speak of the right to housing, while sociologists and ethnographers see the dwelling as an articulation of social dynamics, gender and cultural practices. In my short analysis, my intention was not to deter from or dismiss any of these established terms and the way they are used, but to shed light on the different lines of inquiry that emerge when using the terms. My proposal is that dwelling, as a phenomenon strongly tied to human existence, has most often been conceptualized through terms such as the house, the home and the domestic space. While each of these terms has an important role to play within the relevant literature, I suggest that they are only partial *representations*. Using these terms to study the process of dwelling is very important, but comes with specific costs and limitations tied to the dimension in which the term attempts to address the phenomenon. Thus, dwelling can be best perceived as an ongoing, unstoppable phenomenon, at present entangled between two forces: one that aims to shape it externally (habitat) and one that resists this externalization (habiting). This leads to a question that brings us closer to the camp and to the case study explored in this book: Where is the shelter situated along these lines, and how is it produced today?

The representations of dwelling



Shelter as a global phenomenon

Shelter has received little scholarly attention to date. In the 1960s, the Oxford based architect, Ian Davis (1977, see also 2011), engaged with the notion of emergency shelter, arguing for the need to consider it as a process rather than a product. He thus called for the term 'sheltering', instead of 'providing shelter'. The recent refugee crisis, however, has brought shelter as a typology to the forefront: in conferences, scholarly debates, exhibitions, architectural curriculums and design magazines. Although these have allowed researchers to share experiences about what a shelter means, a groundbreaking and fundamental theorization of the shelter is still lacking to date.

In their edited book, *Structures of Protection? Rethinking Refugee Shelter*, Tom Scott-Smith and Mark Breeze (2020, 5), made an invaluable contribution to the debate by bringing together various voices. They eventually showed not only the diversity of the physical forms of shelter, but also that 'the word "shelter" is dynamic as well as general', and that its underlying logic is to provide protection that is 'only ever partial'. Indeed, a shelter can be many things: a tent, a prefab, a caravan, a mud house or a bamboo hut, and thus an architectural unit (element). However, it can also be a composition, a group of containers designed as shelter units, a two-floor shelter accommodation or even an entire concrete building, not to mention the areas that people could find shelter in, such as underneath a bridge or in a parking lot. A shelter is not constrained by a material or physical layout. Therefore, and very much like the representations of the dwelling, a shelter constitutes first and foremost an intellectual construct. By that, I mean that a shelter is a concept before it is a particular form of space, and the concept can be applied to various forms of spaces. This appears strikingly in the case of Syrian refugees in Jordan: once those who managed to settle in urban areas started to receive funding from humanitarian agencies to renovate their apartments, the space was immediately termed 'shelter'. Thus, there are institutional and physical meanings to the word. Institutionally, the

shelter *contains* people. It seeks to impose a form of protection or spatial custody on a certain group of people. This is not limited to refugees, but also includes the homeless, migrant workers, IDPs and the urban poor. In addition, the shelter is not only provided by relief actors, but shows increasing diversification in terms of its design and its provider. Today, even the Swedish furniture agglomerate IKEA is interested in producing shelters, let alone the many small NGOs, design firms and architects that want to contribute with new visions as to how shelters can be designed and built. Shelter also varies with regard to cause (including natural disasters, wars and urban relocation programmes), and can be provided by NGOs, CBOs and government institutions. Shelter can also differ in terms of its expected timespan: emergency, durable, transitional and so on. Indeed, there is much more to shelter than has been already studied and explored. However, in this book, the shelter is understood as a micro-space that seeks to manage and organize peoples' movement in space, and more bluntly, to limit it and contain it. Based on that, the shelter is not only a camp element, but a global phenomenon that represents a form of micromanagement of unwanted populations within urban space and across cities and frontiers.

Shelter and the dwelling

Considering the shelter as a 'concept' helps us to unpack the ways in which it is entangled with the dwelling. Historically, people inhabited caves because they offered protection from danger and the hostile environment outside. The evolution of dwelling typologies worldwide, from before the era of industrialization (cf. Rapoport 1969) up to today, had this notion at its core. In other words, we dwell because we seek safety and protection: to dwell is to be sheltered. A shelter has its basic function in a dwelling. It aims to provide safety and protection from the hostile elements of nature, from animals of prey and from the risks of strangers. Therefore, the dwelling and the shelter are practically and intrinsically one. During emergencies, dwelling is suspended, and only its shell is deemed important for survival. This emaciated version of dwelling is reduced to the function of shelter — a space that offers temporary protection but suspends the full capacity of dwelling.

Lefebvre's analysis can be eminently suitable in order to situate the shelter in regard to 'habitat' and 'habiting'. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, he suggested that dwelling in the Heideggerian sense was conceptualized into 'habitat', which is an abstraction of the dwelling in a top-down techno-managerial manner. Once dwelling was controlled from the top, its components and functions — including 'sheltering' — also became manageable. Governments, donors, INGOs such as the UNHCR and UNRWA, and other institutions considered that it was within their remit to provide shelter for those in need. Therefore, shelter was a no-

tion associated not only with protection (Scott-Smith and Breeze 2020), but also with survival, death and life. As the UNHCR (2019) states in its shelter programme online: 'On cold nights or hot days, our help can be the difference between life and death'. Therefore, the shelter can be also seen as a 'space of exception', just like the camp.

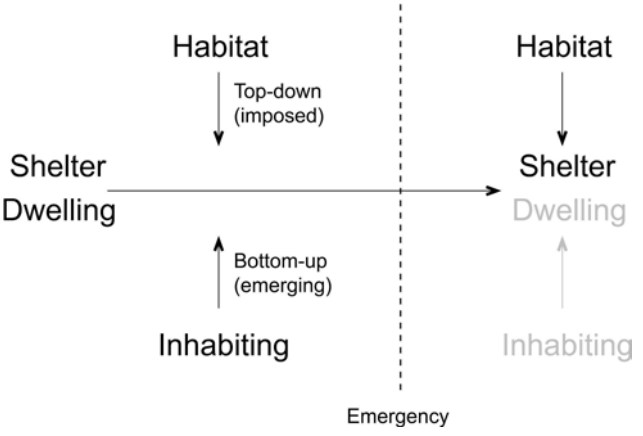
Shelter and emergency

The shelter and the refugee camp are very much alike. In fact, they can be considered as spatial representations of the same concept, although differing in size and scale. One of the main theories about the camp concerns its exceptionality. The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1998, 96) suggested that: 'The camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule. In the camp, the state of exception, which was essentially a temporary suspension of the rule of law on the basis of a factual state of danger, is now given a permanent spatial arrangement, which as such nevertheless remains outside the normal order'. Therefore, the idea of the camp was on the one hand criticized for lacking any acknowledgement of refugees' agency (Sanyal 2010; Ramadan 2013), and on the other hand was seen as tightly interlinked with the nation state (Ramadan and Fregonese 2017), and thus, an embedded dimension of its politics (Minca 2005). This allows us to perceive the camp not only as a space, but also as an idea that represents the suspension of law and emergency.

To return to our analytical framework: when there is an emergency situation, the state of exception is enforced by political entities that seek to manage populations within a given context. At that time, the dwelling and the shelter drift apart from each other, in the same way as the city and the camp (Agier 2002). During emergencies, the city is distanced, and only the logic of the camp prevails; similarly, the logic of dwelling is suspended and only the logic of the shelter prevails. The camp is an extension of the war (Foucault 1979), and so is the shelter: a word that is believed to have its etymological roots in the term 'shield' (OED n.d.). During emergencies, and at times when states need to manage unwanted groups of people (refugees, homeless persons, IDPs, migrant workers and the like), the notion of dwelling becomes absent or even unimaginable, and shelter becomes the only envisioned way to survive. Therefore, a shelter is a space that represents the absence of dwelling; it represents an inverted image of the house or the home — their opposite.

In the following, this connection between the camp, the dwelling and the shelter will be explored. First by exploring how Zaatari camp in Jordan was built, and the ways in which discipline and management played a role in its making.

The relationship between dwelling and shelter



Part One: Dismantling

Interlude
Syrians in Jordan and the Construction of Camps

'You can stay here in your grandfather's house, but we are going back to Syria', my mother told me during a visit to Amman in October 2011. The Syrian war was still young, and had only started a few months earlier in March of the same year. It was clear, even back then, that no 'good outcome' could be expected in the near future. While many cities were experiencing minor tensions and were preparing their streets and neighbourhoods for what would become unexpectedly horrifying battlefields, witnessed by a global audience, cities such as Homs, where I grew up, were already changing more dramatically. Parts of Homs had been bombed, people were being arrested, neighbourhoods were destroyed and the surrounding villages were besieged. With no realistically feasible solution in sight, Syria was becoming a sombre place.

In Jordan, the arrival of displaced Syrians fluctuated over the years. Being a Jordanian citizen, I had no problem in crossing the border back to Jordan. Syrians were also allowed into Jordan during the first years of the conflict and were, at least initially, welcomed by the Jordanian society. Interestingly, the notion of 'Syrian refugee-ness' had yet to be born. From a Jordanian perspective, Syrians were to be welcomed, as they were perceived as victims fleeing from war. In Amman, the majority of Syrians relocating to the Jordanian capital were either businesspeople trying to rescue their capital, or people working in politics — including those who claimed to be 'activists', as well as politicians who belonged to what was known as the 'Syrian opposition'. Others were Syrians who had already been working in Jordan before the war and were therefore accustomed to its different and somewhat 'neoliberal' lifestyle. Most of these Syrians had come from Homs or cities in the Syrian south, while cities such as Damascus and Aleppo had not yet been badly affected. Although the presence of Syrians in Amman had been gradually increasing over the years, it was thus the northern part of Jordan where a sequence of dramatic events was taking place, setting the stage for what was to follow.

To date, the influx of Syrians to the northern part of Jordan remains poorly documented. It has often been suggested that many Syrians chose to settle in the north of Jordan due to strong familial, cultural and economic ties. Most of them

had not fled their home country for the same political or economic reasons that had motivated their peers in Amman, but because their villages, towns and cities were being destroyed by the raging war. They had literally been made homeless, and had fled under vulnerable circumstances, often without official documents such as a passport or ID card. It was the arrival of this particular group that marked the beginning of Syrians' problematic path in Jordan.

The story began on 18 April 2012, when the UNHCR suddenly declared the need to direct all humanitarian activities to the north, 'beyond Amman' (UNHCR 2012b, 1). The reason for this abrupt and dramatic requirement was the overcrowding in a refugee accommodation centre in Ramtha city called Al-Bashabsheh — a refugee space that had been growing, away from the eyes of humanitarian NGOs that were more prestigiously located in Amman. Between April 2011 and 2012, undocumented Syrians arriving in Jordan were taken to Ramtha, and to a residential complex made up of seven identical buildings. The complex was named after its owner, Nidal Al Bashabsheh, who in a YouTube interview declared his intention to donate this complex for the souls of all Muslims. In the video, his donation was also portrayed as an act of patriotism, as Nidal was helping the Jordanian government to accommodate this particular group, thereby compensating for a lack of other solutions at the time. While the exact relationship between Nidal and the government remains unclear, the residential complex served as the first 'refugee space', from which all the other Syrian camps in Jordan emerged.

Initially, and in order to legalize their presence in the kingdom, undocumented Syrians would be bailed out by a Jordanian *Kafīl* (sponsor), who needed to be over 35 years old, financially sound and willing to pay symbolic fees to free Syrians from their temporary detention in the complex (NRC 2016). The implementation of this policy remained vague and poorly documented. However, it appears that it remained operational until 2014, when the Jordanian government started to work on stabilizing the population in camps and preventing undocumented and reversed migration to cities. To revisit the matter of Al Bashabsheh, the use of the Kafala system generated economic dynamics and produced what was referred to as 'bailout lords', exploiting Syrians by pressurizing them to pay money in order to get out of the camp. As explained by a Syrian who was bailed out from the complex, 'some people lived there for more than four or five months […] because they didn't have anyone [relatives or acquaintances] or couldn't find a *Kafīl* […] where would they go? I was lucky enough to have relatives who sponsored me to get me out'. Due to the dysfunction of the Kafala system and the increasing numbers of Syrians without documents, the site was becoming alarmingly overcrowded. In another YouTube video, Nidal declared that around 40,000 Syrians had passed through Al Bashabsheh, with it hosting 3000 people at once at its peak.

The overcrowding in the Al Bashabsheh complex was a turning point in the course of events. For the first time, the 'Syrian refugee' had become visible and

locatable, and thus needed an immediate humanitarian intervention. Up to that point, Syrians had not been registered as refugees in Jordan, which had not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention but agreed on a memorandum of understanding with the UNHCR. When the first Syrians were hosted in the Al Bashabsheh complex in April 2011, the UNHCR counted only five or fifteen *registered* Syrian refugees in all of Jordan (the statistics vary). During this period, many Syrians relied on humanitarian assistance from both local and international organizations, yet they avoided registering as refugees. For one reason, Syrians did not perceive themselves as refugees during the first years of the crisis. The term 'refugee' was always linguistically associated with the loss of home, and therefore the Palestinians were the only refugees Syrians had intimate knowledge of. The other reason for their reluctance was that Syrians had inherited a mistrust of international institutions from the Syrian regime. 'Foreign' institutions such as the UNHCR, UNRWA, Red Cross, and so on, were all considered to have external agendas and were therefore deemed untrustworthy. This explains why Syrians in Jordan were very hesitant to register as refugees (see for example Un Ponte Per 2012). Nonetheless, with increasing numbers of Syrians crossing the Jordanian border every day, especially from late 2012 up to mid-2013, pressure started to mount to register all Syrians in Jordan as refugees. As warned: 'for those not registered, there is no free-of-charge access to the public health and education systems or eligibility for WFP food vouchers and UNHCR cash assistance' (JRC and IFRC 2012, 6).

The events unfolding at Al Bashabsheh posed an urgent question: where should the increasing numbers of 'illegal' Syrians be accommodated? The complex offered a temporary 'grey zone' (Yiftachel 2009), in which legality was negotiated through the Kafala system, but this was insufficient. Not all the Syrians were able to find a *Kafil*, and the complex was becoming crowded. The need for spatial solutions became both apparent and compelling. Local organizations such as 'Al Kitab Wal Sunna' involved in supporting refugees — mostly based on religious affiliations — started to search for sites to reduce the pressure on Al Bashabsheh. The local news media, for instance, reported that 'Al Kitab Wal Sunna' had proposed to refurbish an old hangar and a building within the QIZ (Quality Industrial Zone) outside Irbid, which was ultimately turned into a special camp called Cyber City to detain Palestinians from Syria. The UNHCR documents mention a stadium, which was temporarily used to accommodate male Syrians, later known as 'single travellers'. Other sources also refer to the involvement of Gulf-based organizations in the process of relocation. For example, a colleague who worked with a Saudi campaign at the beginning of the crisis told me that an offer of support was made to the UNHCR during a visit to the Al Bashabsheh complex by a Saudi royal. This led to a joint decision to refurbish an abandoned park in Irbid to relocate Syrians. The result was the construction of a small camp known as the King Abdullah Park. Eventually, the

Al Bashabsheh complex was closed in September 2012, but the influx of Syrians was far from over.

Away from the dynamic 'humanitarian bubble' that had started to expand around the arrival of undocumented Syrians in Jordan, the scenario was enfolding differently in many of Jordan's cities. Between 2011 and 2014, Syrians with valid passports were still be able to cross the border and settle in cities and villages wherever they found lodging. Yet although Jordan maintained an 'open door' policy towards Syrians, crossing the border was not as straightforward as it sounded. The Jordanian government gradually became aware of a 'mass' displacement taking place, without any prospect of control or the mechanisms for it. Some people were made to wait for few days at the border, present further documents or contact acquaintances in Amman before being able to cross over. However, this did not affect the flow of Syrians without documentation (or '*sans-papiers*'), who did not enter Jordan through the official border check points.

The increase in the number of Syrians settling in cities and villages — or what the UNHCR prefers to call 'urban refugees' — was accelerating. In small and underdeveloped cities such as Ramtha and Mafraq, the impact soon became visible. Families would build additional rooms on roofs, rent out garages, enclose their gardens on ground floors and refurbish old storage spaces to accommodate Syrians not able to find housing in the city (Alshadfan 2015). In some cases, Syrian families were offered living space on farmland if they were willing to build their own housing. 'These houses can be easily spotted as they lack a concrete frame', explained an urban planner appointed by the Municipality of Zaatari village. This resulted in the emergence of 125 informal settlements scattered around the peripheries of cities (NRC 2014), and a drastic increase in rental prices. The *Wohnungsfrage* ('housing question'),[1] suddenly became central to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan: Where could the increasing numbers of Syrians be accommodated? There could, of course, never be a simple answer to this question; yet it emphasized the need to develop a *spatial* strategy.

The city continued to be the site of unprecedented contestations. The unplanned accumulation of Syrians in underdeveloped cities, including Ramtha, Irbid and Mafraq, started to have further effects on their infrastructures, such as public services, the education and health system, the real estate market, the economy and the labour market. Schools started to become overcrowded and job opportunities decreased, as Syrians were willing to work for lower salaries (especially in the fields of construction, catering, farming and the service industry). Economic competition

1 *Zur Wohnungsfrage* is a series of essays published by Fredrich Engels in 1872. In them, he puts forward the question of modern 'housing' vis-à-vis the politics of the state, capitalism and the conditions of the labor force. This discussion was connected to the refugee crisis through the writings of Andrew Herscher (2017).

increased in a country that already suffered from a lack of resources — a situation that transformed the perception of Syrians from being war victims to being a threat. This process was compounded by feelings of injustice and resentment among Jordan's marginalized communities in the north, who watched on as relief organizations from all over the world came to the 'rescue' of the Syrians, while leaving them behind. Institutions, ranging in power and size from the trans-national UNHCR, WFP and IOM, through the smaller NRC and DRC, to the local JHCO and others, started to open offices in the north, and foreign expats and international relief workers would be seen roaming around the underdeveloped parts of the Jordanian north. Amidst these transformations and the ongoing economic strife, local sentiment concluded that the Syrians were to blame. As one report suggested, the sight of Syrians selling their standardized relief assistance, 'has generated resentment, and the impression that Syrians are doing quite well, much better, in fact, than the majority of local residents' (Mercy Corps 2013, 9).

In light of these developments, the decision was taken to open an official Syrian refugee camp in Jordan. The Jordanian government had insisted on taking this step (UNHCR 2013a, 9), as it faced significant pressure from tribal leaders in the north who supported the idea (Turner 2015, 392). There was also an overwhelming result of a public survey (75%) in favour of opening camps for Syrians (CSS 2013, 7), thereby 'restricting [their] access to the territory' (UN 2013, 139). Moreover, the opening of a refugee camp provided an opportunity to visualize the refugee crisis — giving it a name, a location and shape. This approach was considered as a way to attract external funding and further economic support to the kingdom (Mercy Corps 2013). At the time, 35,000 Syrians were registered as refugees at the UNHCR, and the organization was struggling to depopulate the 'transit camps' that it had created earlier in Jordan's north, as well as to coordinate the daunting humanitarian crisis that was enfolding in the entire country. While the camps (Zaatari, and later the Emirati-Jordanian and Azraq camps) made it easier for humanitarian organizations to assist refugees, it should be mentioned that around 75 per cent of Syrians continued to live in urban areas. In 2020, the UNHCR counted around 650,000 registered Syrians in the Kingdom, most of whom were living in Amman, Irbid, Mafraq and Zarqa. By comparison, only around 125,000 were living in camps.

To return to our story, on 9 July 2012, the Council of Ministers finally approved the decision to open the first official Syrian refugee camps in Jordan (UNHCR 2012a), marking 45 years on from the opening of the last Palestinian camp in Jordan — a country ultimately made up of refugees and camps. Nineteen days later, attended by government officials, ambassadors, journalists, representatives of the UN and INGOs, philanthropists and military forces, Zaatari camp was inaugurated in a ceremonial event.

A satellite image of Zaatari camp in 2017, made up of various zoomed-in stills

Source: Author's own, based on Google Earth.

Chapter 1
Zaatari Camp and its Planning

Zaatari is a controversial refugee camp. In the course of just a few months, it mushroomed into one of the largest in the world, according to experts, hosting one of the busiest markets a camp has ever seen. It also came to serve as an experimental field in which to test new humanitarian strategies and policies, and where the caravan, or the prefab container, was used as a new type of shelter. This turned Zaatari camp into both 'a huge caravan park' and a 'major urban hub' at the same time (UNHCR 2013b). The ability of Syrian refugees to extensively transform the camp spatially and to 'build a city', while, according to one of the camp's managers, humanitarian organizations were building a warehouse (Radfold 2015), has drawn significant attention to the space at a time when the refugee crisis was gathering momentum. In fact, it could be even said that Zaatari camp in many ways epitomized the suffering and resilience of Syrians, who suddenly found themselves in different regions around the world, having to adapt to harsh environments and challenging conditions. This explains why the camp turned into something of a pilgrimage site for researchers working in the field of migration and refugee studies — in addition to famous diplomats, actors, football players, ambassadors, philanthropists, photographers, filmmakers, heritage experts and entrepreneurs. All of them either visited out of curiosity or sought to make a contribution in support of the camp, which was simultaneously perceived as both a 'miracle of resilience' and a 'mess'. Furthermore, my personal connection to Syria — as I come from a Palestinian refugee family and hold Jordanian citizenship — contributed to and facilitated my access to such a busy and complex field. All these aspects made Zaatari camp a perfect site to examine spatial transformations within refugee camps.

This chapter has two objectives: First, to contextualize the camp by showing how it was built, how it was spatially planned, what kind of infrastructures were offered to refugees, how it was economically managed and what populations it accommodates. Second, to highlight the disciplinary nature of the camp. By looking at shelters, communal infrastructures and economic structures, the chapter demonstrates that a refugee camp is not only a temporary space for accommodating refugees, but also a space that dictates a 'different' way of living to them — one

that separates the dwelling as we know it, into fragments spread over the space of the camp in ways that keep refugees managed and governable. Thus, in this chapter, I show how refugees reacted to this disciplinary machine, and in turn, how they dismantled its components into smaller pieces that were later used to reassemble the space that was lost and suspended in the first place: the dwelling. The chapter will first outline how the camp evolved over time, and how it was planned. Then it will show how it was dismantled, materially and non-materially. Lastly, the chapter sheds light on the 'caravan' as an important archetype that had a significant impact on shaping the space of the camp. It concludes with a short presentation of the refugees of Zaatari camp, highlighting their diverse origins, cultural background and social structures.

Camp evolution

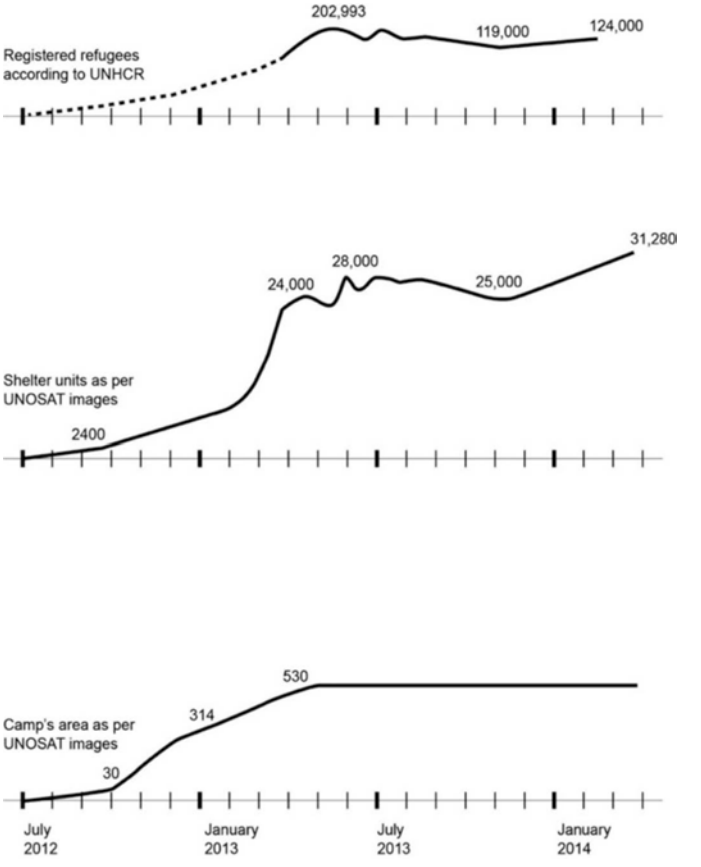
With the support of UN organizations and the approval of the Jordanian government, Zaatari camp was opened on 28 July 2012. The area chosen for the camp is situated in the desert, about 10 kilometres to the east of Mafraq, which is a small, underdeveloped city in the North of Jordan. The camp is also located a similar distance from the Jordanian–Syrian border, and about 750 metres south of the international road connecting Mafraq to the Iraqi border.

Zaatari camp was initially planned after a series of 'smaller camps' had been built to accommodate Syrians who had crossed the borders without legal documents. These smaller camps (Al-Bashabsheh, the Stadium, King Abdullah Park and Cyber City) were rapidly filled, and the need to construct an official 'humanitarian' camp away from the state's overburdened facilities and infrastructures became apparent. Thus, Zaatari camp was initially opened with the intention of hosting 10,000 refugees (UN 2014). This was at a time when 1500 to 2000 Syrians were arriving in Jordan every day (Al-Rai 2012a). An analysis of satellite images shows that the camp has grown exponentially. Over the course of six months, it rapidly expanded from the size of a farm (30 hectares in September 2012) to the size of a city (530 hectares in March 2013). The camp subsequently maintained its size, with no plans for further expansion. Nevertheless, additional spaces around the camp were reserved for just that purpose. Some of these spaces were eventually used to host added facilities, such as administrative offices, a solar farming project and a sewage treatment plant.

The initial expansion in size was a result of the increased influx of refugees. There is no published data from the UNHCR for the estimated number of registered refugees in the camp before January 2013; however, it can be projected that around 10,000 refugees had already arrived at the camp in less than a month after its opening. The rise in the camp's population reached its peak in March 2013, amounting

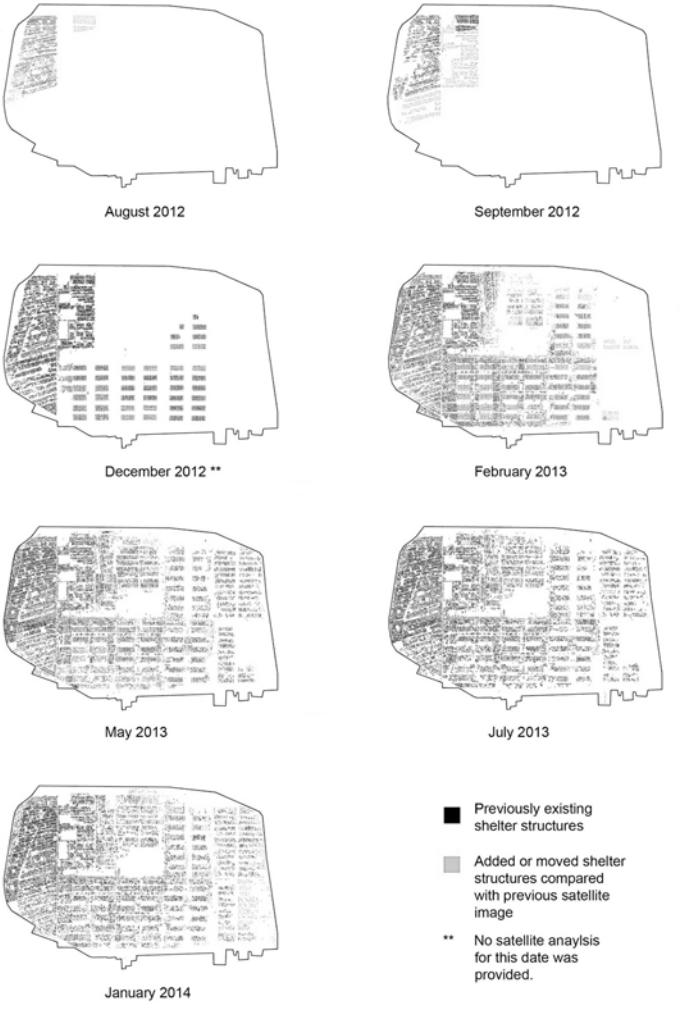
to more than 200,000. These numbers dropped to about 80,000 refugees during 2014, at which point the figure stabilized and the camp was closed to new arrivals.

Analysis of the shelter, population and size of the camp during the period of growth between July 2012 and March 2014



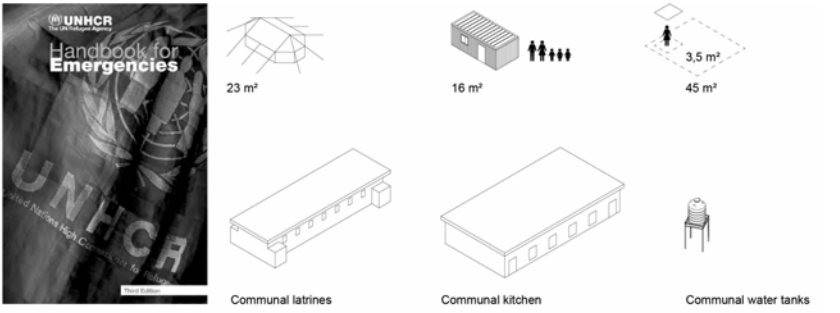
Source: Author's own, based on UNOSAT.

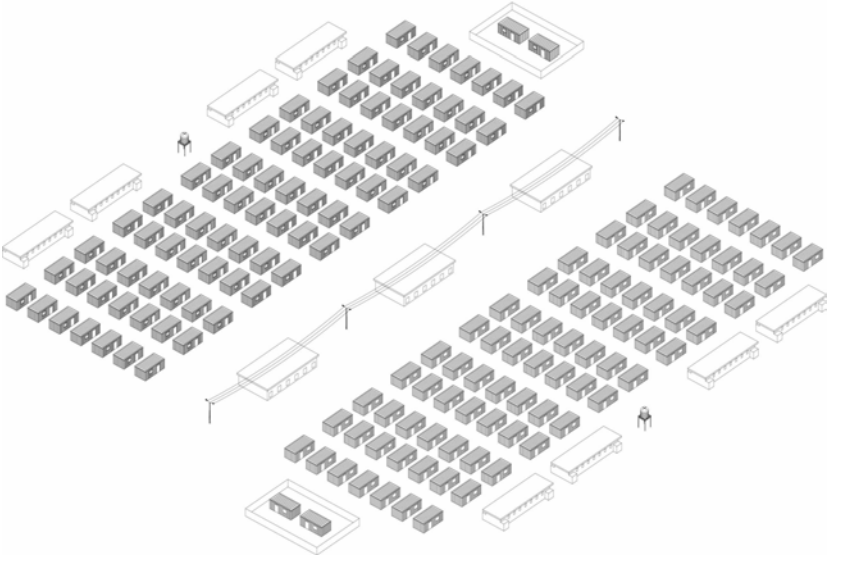
The physical-spatial growth of Zaatari camp between August 2012 and January 2014



Source: Author's own, based on UNOSAT.

The architectural elements and spatial measures used for planning Zaatari camp, and its proposed end results





The planning of Zaatari camp

The planning of refugee camps has been much criticized by scholars and academics, yet this has had little effect on the policies and regulations under which camps are still placed. Some of this criticism has targeted technical details and the inefficiency of the available guidelines in terms of adequately responding to refugees' need for multi-purpose space (Kennedy 2005, 2004, 2008). Others consider the planning of refugee camps to be somewhat colonial in outlook, especially in the way that it is imposed on populations, cultures and regions 'that could not be more different' (Herz 2008, 285). This, however, has not had any significant impact on the way camps are planned, as this is still mainly based on guidelines found in manuals such as *Sphere* and the *Handbook for Emergencies.* In these manuals, site planners can find information about how a camp's layout can be arranged, what distances are required between different elements, where certain infrastructure elements should be placed, how shelters should be arranged and what measures should be adopted in order to ensure that refugees are safe and well protected. The planning of Zaatari camp was nevertheless not as smooth as often assumed, but occurred in various phases and took different forms across the camp.

For example, the first phase took place between July and November 2012, when the camp was managed by the JHCO and the UNHCR. At that time, refugees were settling in the limited space of the camp. Tents were placed in rows, creating narrow pathways between them. Shared facilities such as toilets and kitchens — initially as movable units and later on as structures built out of concrete blocks — were distributed between the tents wherever there was sufficient space. This area, which was relatively small and amounted to only about 35 per cent of the camp's eventual size, was partly surrounded by two main asphalted roads, along which other infrastructures such as schools and hospitals were also being built. The space was, moreover, located near the entrance of the camp and the base camp, where relief organizations were stationed. It later became known as the 'old camp' — a connotation it also earned for its high density and extensive informality, making it appear similar to 'Palestinian refugee camps in Damascus', as a refugee woman recalled. During this phase, the basic principles of camp planning were barely observed. Refugees were crowded into the small area, and the refugee influx continued. Thus, the need to intervene became increasingly urgent.

By November 2012, it was determined that an extension of the camp, as well as the creation of a manageable refugee space, had become a necessity. The availability of empty fields to the south-east of the first populated area of the camp was seen as offering a perfect opportunity to implement the principles of camp planning. At their core, these principles have two objectives that are intrinsically interlinked. On the one hand, camp planning aims to ensure that humanitarian measures are met and that refugees are protected; on the other hand, it transforms refugees into

manageable objects. In doing so, the camp is converted into a disciplinary space, and the machinery for managing and controlling refugees is put in place.

The planning of camps begins with arranging their basic elements: NGO offices (base camp), shelters, communal facilities, infrastructures, distribution centres, spaces for social use, and so on. Their layout is based on a division of space according to certain quota, and adheres to specific distances that are stipulated in the *Handbook for Emergencies*. For instance, it has been determined that each refugee in the camp should be provided with 3.5 m^2 of 'covered' space and 45 m^2 of 'open' space. This has led to the concept of a diagram-like cellular layout that bears striking similarities to the planning of other disciplinary spaces, such as the panopticon, the military camp, and so on (cf. Palomino 2021). In order to prepare the expansion of Zaatari camp, it was divided into sub-camps or districts (twelve in total), and each district was again divided into twelve plots (excluding the four districts that belonged to the 'old camp', specifically plots D1, D2, D3 and D12). Each plot was equipped with one water distribution point and four communal latrines, while every two plots shared three communal kitchens. Satellite images show that additional spaces were reserved to the side of each block for multi-activity centres. Each plot followed a grid of twelve lines and seven rows of shelters, and each shelter hosted a family of five people.

The result of this type of planning is a layout with multiple 'faces'. For instance, it reminds us of modernist planning principles, which advocated the spatial separation of different functions in the city (Le Corbusier 1986, 1987). These principles have been denounced for failing to acknowledge the complex, dynamic and messy ways in which cities function. Moreover, the resulting layout epitomizes the criticism of humanitarian planning principles implemented in camps, particularly in relation to their imposed, decontextualized and colonial character, and the way they are forced on people with little understanding of their culture and background (Herz 2008). In addition, such a layout promotes control over refugees. The subtle arrangement of the architectural elements contributes to the production of a disciplinary space.

In his book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979) suggests that 'discipline' was born when the art of controlling the human body was cultivated. Considering how the body and the dwelling are intrinsically and inevitably interlinked (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995b), this may warrant taking another look at the resulting layout for the planned parts of Zaatari camp, especially as it resonates with other camps around the world. Interestingly, taken in its entirety, the layout resembles that of a house, but in a fragmented manner. Refugees are placed in a living area designated exclusively as a residential zone. For cooking, they have to go to communal kitchens, and for bathing, they have to go to the communal latrines. The dwelling, as a complex, dynamic and self-contained microcosm, thereby becomes fragmented, broken into manageable pieces and spread over a vast area of space. At

the same time, it is reduced into an abstract and 'cellular' space; namely, the shelter. The shelter is then placed within a hierarchy of divisions, diagrammatic layouts and measurements that contribute to the production of a disciplinary space — a machine for care and control.

To reflect on this notion of the camp as a machine is important for two reasons: first, it allows us to better understand what these subtle arrangements of elements and architecture do to the people who experience them; second, it highlights an underlying network of power relations that is materialized in these spatial arrangements. At first glance, such simplistic layouts appear to stem from the state of emergency characterizing the situation — they seem to be merely a consequence of a series of pragmatic decisions. However, what they actually do is to place refugees in a fragmented 'machine for living', as Le Corbusier once called the dwelling — a machine they first have to dismantle in order to humanize it and make dwelling inside it possible. To reduce the level of abstraction of this image, I will now outline a few examples of how this machinery of the camp, taking Zaatari as an example, was gradually dismantled by refugees.

Dismantling Zaatari camp

According to the Cambridge English Dictionary (2019), the word 'dismantling' means 'the process of taking a machine apart into separate pieces'. In refugee camps, this process is multifaceted. For one thing, it entails the subversion of imposed power relations, which can be seen in the many ways refugees have replanned, reused and rearranged the architectural elements used in planning the camp. Second, it includes the fragmentation and dissolving of other structures imposed on refugees, whether physical or metaphysical, such as the physical aspects of the shelter, as well as the economic structures. In the following, I will highlight how refugees deployed various practices, material and non-material, in dismantling Zaatari camp and in preparation for it to be reassembled. The purpose of reassembling the camp and its different fragments was to create a counter design: to collect the fragmented parts of the dwelling and put them back together in different designs and forms, as we will see later. To start this discussion, I will return to the planned layout of Zaatari camp that was discussed earlier.

In 2013, refugees were taken to the newly-planned area of the camp. However, due to the unexpected rise in arrival rates and the inability to organize refugees' settlement on site as was initially planned, the refugees started to reshape the original layout. Some began to relocate their shelters, while others settled next to relatives and people they already knew. The spaces in between the shelters gradually became populated. In just a short period of time, the humanitarian agencies' layout

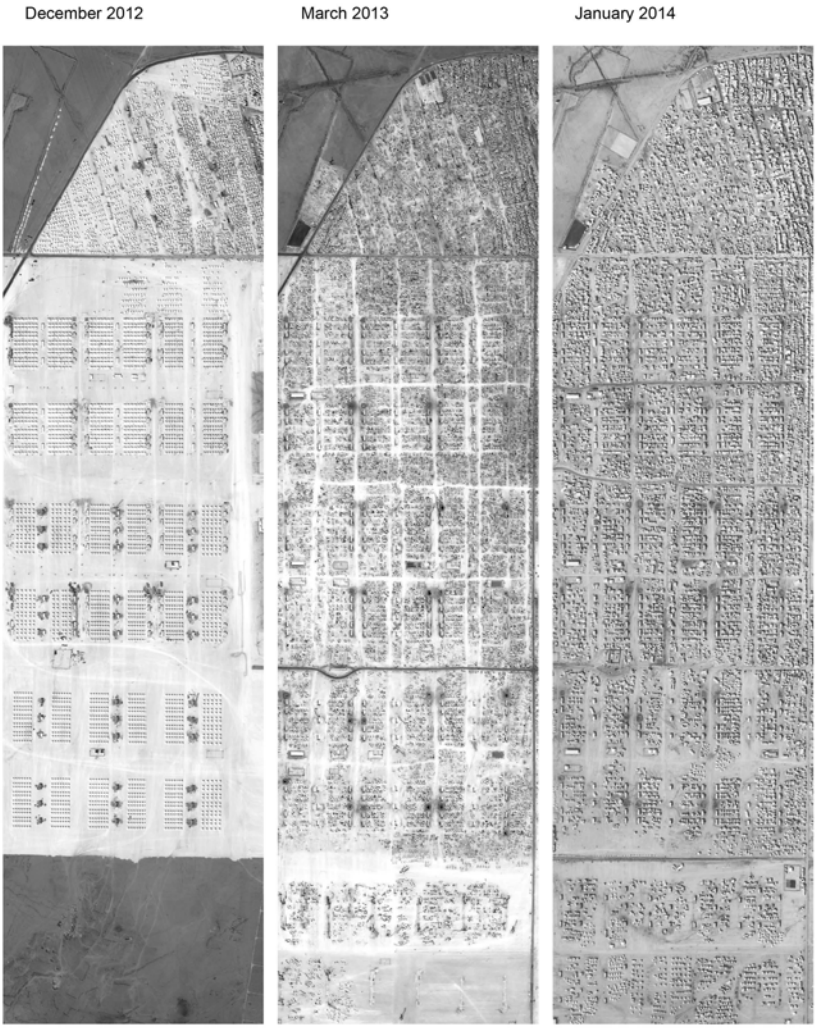
of Zaatari camp started to disappear. While this process is indeed reminiscent of squatting practices in residential areas and ghettos, what is significant here is that by relocating, rotating and replacing shelters, in tandem with refugees gathering, dispersing and re-distributing across the space, the humanitarian order was being subverted. In particular, the disciplinary layout of the camp — implemented with the objective of distributing bodies in fixed places and in order to prevent gatherings or unwanted movement — was gradually broken down. The rearrangement of subtle architectural elements, such as the shelter, introduced new power relations to the space of the camp. One of the most complex spaces in this respect was the 'old camp', as a site planner explained: 'it got so crowded and that does not fit with our standards. We need to be able to bring emergency cars or fire fighters there whenever needed; we are even thinking of widening the streets there so our cars can get through.' Indeed, these comments remind us of Hausmann's famous plan for Paris. In that sense, by disturbing and subverting the geometric layout of the camp, and by producing heterogeneous territories of concentrations and dispersions, refugees introduced a new spatial order — one that resisted and opposed the disciplinary machinery of the camp.

Similar transformations could also be observed in relation to communal facilities. Refugees began tapping into the lighting poles, extending wires to their shelters and to newly emerging dwelling structures. Over time, lighting poles became hubs, used to 'individualize' what had initially been intended for communal purposes. Communal kitchens and latrines were similarly appropriated. These appropriations, however, were not inclined towards a general 're-purposing', nor did they suggest a change in use. Instead, the facilities were simply dismantled, and the components obtained in this way were utilized for individual purposes; more precisely, for the purpose of dwelling. For example, communal latrines and kitchens were built from concrete blocks, water pipes and other elements. In the 'old camp', some of these facilities disappeared entirely, as refugees began to dismantle them. 'One time we couldn't locate a communal toilet that was just built. It had entirely vanished! Thank God we had Google satellite images to prove to the donors that it had been built there, and that it had been entirely dismantled by refugees' said the camp manager, Kilian Kleinschmidt. In that sense, dismantling the camp provoked a dilemma: while relief organizations saw such practices as vandalism, refugees considered them to be a necessity stemming from the need to dwell — a need that was suspended in the logic of the camp and the shelter. 'My mother is old and sick, and she can't walk. How am I supposed to take her to the toilet every time she needs to! I also have two young daughters; I don't trust sending them to the toilets alone at night by themselves!' — a male refugee explained. The elements extracted from communal facilities and infrastructures were reassembled anew within the sphere of the dwelling. Electricity cables could be seen stretched, branched and raised over more than four or five dwellings; pipes would be buried in the ground, creat-

ing a network for channelling waste water; concrete blocks were used to construct individualized toilets and bathing areas, and some even used them to create seating areas next to the entrances of their shelters or their newly emerging dwelling structures. The materials brought by humanitarian organizations were dissected from the system they had been placed in, and they resurfaced with different sets of meanings, cultural codes and social relations.

A lighting pole, tapped into by multiple families in Zaatari camp
A dismantled communal latrine in the old camp

Satellite images showing the dismantlement of the humanitarian spatial order in Zaatari camp



Source: Author's own, based on Google Earth.

In addition, the dismantling practices in refugee camps extended to other, 'invisible' structures, such as economic relations. Economic factors often dictate whether camps are built in the first place. In the Global South, humanitarian camps are built to isolate refugees from the economic structures of the nation state, as these are often fragile and underdeveloped (see for instance Turner 2015). In that sense, placing refugees in camps implies that these camps should come with their own economic model; one based on standardized humanitarian relief. Imagine a city-sized camp with 80,000 refugees from diverse backgrounds and with different skills, who all receive the same amount of aid (cash or items), who are expected to exchange cash for items found in one supermarket and who are asked to survive on this model until the condition of 'self-reliance' can be claimed (UNHCR 2005). Although one may arguably be more inclined to describe this economic model as 'utopian' than as 'disciplinary' when compared with the previously mentioned aspects, it is nevertheless a part of the machinery of the camp, insofar as it treats refugees as a homogeneous group worthy of the same and equal humanitarian assistance.

Dismantling the economic model in refugee camps takes place by disrupting the circuit of giving and receiving, and by introducing the received aid into complex, dynamic and overlapping cycles of economic relations. For instance, vouchers distributed by the WFP in Zaatari camp were sold and exchanged at lower prices, and the single market built by relief organizations was replaced by hundreds of smaller shops, cropping up in different sizes and locations, and offering a variety of services. In this context, therefore, the dismantling of the economic system imposed on camps does not resist discipline spatially, but instead disrupts homogeneous and small circuits of aid, using their elements to compose multiple economies. These include shops, the emergence of businesses and professions, the selling of property and the exchange of non-food items (see Dalal 2015). While it has been observed that camps tend to turn into economic hubs within a certain amount of time after their inception (see Montclos and Kagwanja 2000), in Zaatari camp the boost to the local economy had an even bigger significance. In fact, it led to the emergence of a substantial market that was estimated to be circulating 2 million USD a month — which 'impressed even seasoned humanitarian workers as well as Jordanians with experience in other refugee camps' (UNHCR 2014, 12). Moreover, it led to the emergence of a 'caravan' market, which will be explored later. Before going on with the analysis, however, it is important to showcase the 'caravan' as a special and influential archetype that had a major impact on how Zaatari camp was spatialized and materialized over time.

Hundreds of shops opened around the main streets in the camp

Caravanization

The development of camps around the world has brought with it a new type of shelter, namely the prefab or the caravan. Countless refugees — many of whom were Syrians placed in camps from Iraq to Turkey, Greece, Germany and Jordan — have been sheltered in prefabs. Major corporates such as IKEA have even shown an

interest in developing this model. Scholars have drawn attention to the container, or caravan as they are called in Zaatari camp, as a new humanitarian archetype, closely linked to the modern economy, in the way that containers play a role in concentrating and dispersing refugees in space (see Baumann 2020; also Pascucci 2021; Scott-Smith 2017a).

The 'caravanization' of Zaatari camp — referring to the process of replacing tents with caravans — was shaped by various factors that made the process unique to this space. For instance, the use of caravans as shelters in the camp was not initially intended. The collapse of tents in a snowstorm that hit Zaatari camp in November 2012 triggered an emergency response (UNHCR 2014). Relief organizations, in particular from Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait, were among the first to donate caravans to Zaatari camp, aiming to help families that had been left without shelters. As noted earlier, this took place at a time when the camp was still growing rapidly. The first caravans were placed in the 'old camp', but soon after, the camp management decided to adopt this as a new policy. The first families to have arrived at the camp were given caravans to replace their tents. A family of five was provided with one caravan, larger families — as well as those with injured members or vulnerable cases — were given an additional one. Newly arriving refugees, on the other hand, were at this stage still being given tents. Thus, between 2012 and 2015, the camp was a mixture of tents and caravans. This situation offered refugees different elements they could experiment with, while designing their dwellings.

Generally, the caravanization process was chaotic for various reasons. First, its dependence on donations meant that the number of caravans available to refugees varied over time. On some occasions, the UNHCR had to distribute hundreds of caravans that had suddenly arrived at the camp. At other times, there was a longer waiting period for more donations to come in so that the demand could be met. Therefore, the availability of caravans — and thus the number of them — in Zaatari camp fluctuated over the years, but kept on steadily increasing from a few hundred in 2013 to over 26,000 by 2017. Second, the fact that several different donors were involved resulted in a diversity of caravan typologies. For instance, while the majority of caravans were movable,[1] at a later stage and in an attempt to bring back the 'disciplinary' layout of the camp, some caravans were developed to be fixed in place and were equipped with their own kitchenette and toilet/bathroom. The number of fixed caravans, however, was somewhat limited in comparison with the movable caravans, which remained the standard type. Additionally, the diversity of donors led to a wide range of caravan sizes and specifications. The mainstream model, for

1 Refugees invented various techniques to move caravans, such as placing them on a light structure made of few metal beams attached to wheels, or by sliding them on metal plates or rolling them on empty gas cylinders.

example, was a 5 x 3 metre Saudi caravan, while the favoured one was the Kuwaiti caravan, which measured 6 x 3.5 metres and featured high-quality materials. Third, the allocation of caravans varied and was dependent on the availability of space in the camp. This resulted in the emergence of a socially constructed understanding of the camp's space that contrasts with the one imposed by the humanitarian regime. Zaatari camp was perceived by refugees as comprising non-geometrical territories of different shapes and sizes, each carrying the names of the Gulf countries from which their caravans were donated. This different territorial understanding of the camp was common among refugees, particularly during the first years before they became accustomed to the numerical system suggested by the camp planners. The contrast between refugees' bottom-up vision of the camp and the humanitarian regime's top-down planning reveals the two spatial orders in play. By November 2015, all the tents had been replaced by caravans (Al-Shawabkeh 2015), but the caravan donations continued, primarily for the purpose of replacing and repairing damaged ones through a special programme tailored by the NRC.

The caravanization process gave Zaatari camp a very distinctive look. Its components — the caravans — were moved, rotated, relocated, dismantled and reassembled in various ways to enable dwelling, as the following chapters in this book will chronicle. Yet it is important to keep in mind that the subtle and slow movement of caravans over the years went along with a network of underlying social relations, starting with those who had been given the container as a new living archetype. In the following, I will shed some light on the people who lived in the containers of Zaatari camp.

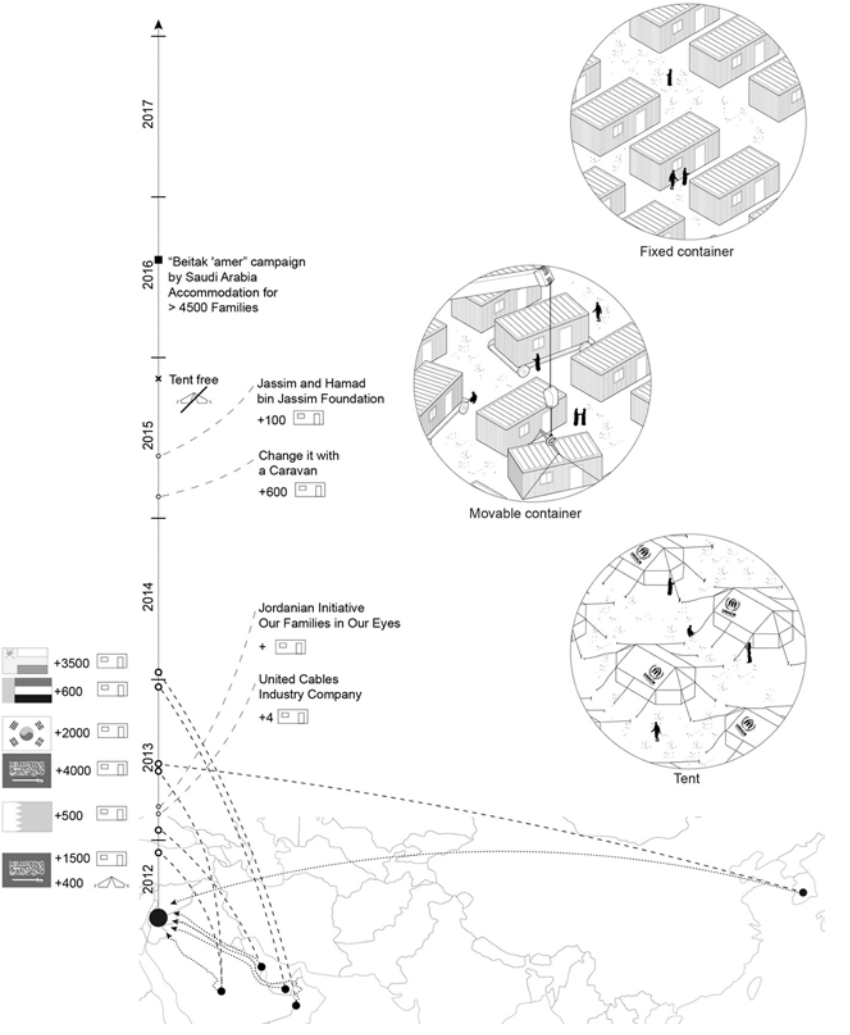
Refugees' origins and backgrounds

Refugees tend to be perceived and dealt with by the humanitarian regime as a homogeneous and abstract group of people. This renders them voiceless and de-historicized figures, detached from the previous contexts in which they used to live. In the context of Zaatari camp, and unlike other camps, a little more effort was put into understanding the populations accommodated there. The chaos prevailing in the camp during its first years, while it was still expanding, forced relief organizations to implement various scanning and population surveys. 'Zaatari camp is probably one of the most surveyed and mapped camps in the world', explained Léa Macias, a researcher working in this field. These different surveys offer us a better image of those inhabiting the camp, but they only provide a vague sense of their identity, background, economic status and culture. For instance, by the end of 2015, it was found that 83.1% of refugees in Zaatari camp originated from Daraa, 14% from Rural Damascus, 1.8% from Homs, 1.1% from Damascus and 0.8% from other areas (UNICEF and REACH 2015). Considering that Daraa is one of the

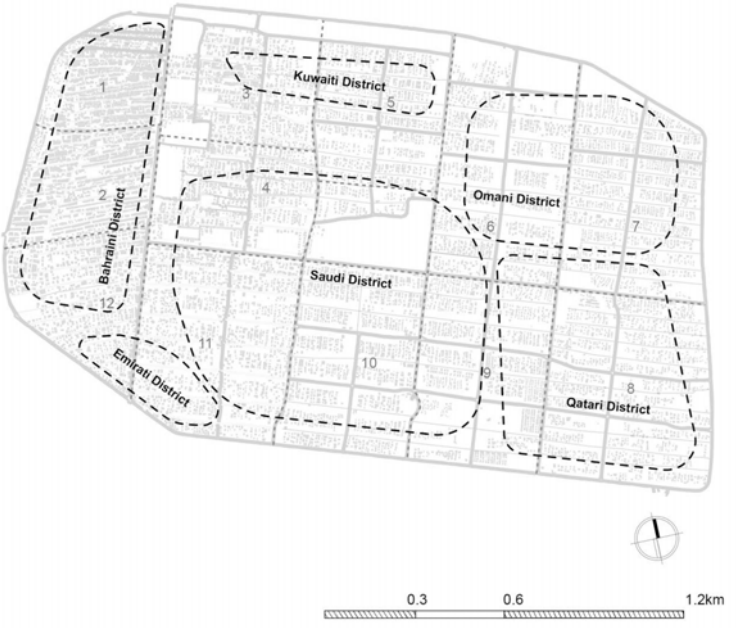
biggest regions in Syria, the survey provides another three sub-categories in Daraa that refer to its three governorates (Daraa, Izraa and As-Sanamayn). The statistics show that out of the 83.1% from Daraa, 21.8% are from As-Sanamayn, 29.6% are from Izraa and 48.6% are from the Daraa governorates.

Refugees using a caravan conveyor to relocate a caravan after it had been placed on site

A timeline showing the dates, numbers and sources of the caravans donated to Zaatari camp between 2012 and 2017 (based on multiple sources)



Estimated boundaries of the districts as perceived by refugees (based on interviews)



While such statistics may help relief organizations to 'manage' a population, they remain very managerial and abstract in that they overlook refugees' cultural identities, which can be diverse and sometimes contested. For instance in Zaatari camp, refugees originating from governorates such as Daraa, Izraa and As-Sanamayn could have been city dwellers, villagers or even Bedouins. In 2013, many refugees fleeing the eastern parts of the Daraa region were predominately Bedouins living in sedentary communities. Yet these groups, which belonged to such tribes as Al-Juwasmeh, Al-Lujah, Jamalan and Al-Sulat, were effectively invisible to the UNHCR's official surveys and mappings. The differences in cultural habits and practices between the Bedouins and the *Ḥaḍar* (urbanites) led to conflicts, resulting in the relocation of the majority of the Bedouin communities to the less-populated part of the camp. Similarly, refugees who had previously lived in highly urbanized settings, such as Damascus and Homs, encountered villagers and Bedouins, sometimes for the first time. These multiple encounters were observed to have played an important role in shaping the spaces of the camp

(see Dalal 2021). While the encounters might have eventually led to extensive concentrations of Bedouins in the eastern periphery of the camp, particularly in District 8, they did not produce self-contained groupings similar to those witnessed in Palestinian camps during their first years (Peteet 2005). Some of the possible reasons for this might have included the continuous influx of refugees to the camp between 2012 and 2014, the constant mobility of refugees within the camp, the limitations of space during its expansion, and the close inter-cultural relations and connections between most groups descended from larger families and tribes in the Houran Plain, such as the Al-Hraki, Al-Hariri and Al-Zoubi. All these aspects contributed to fairly intense intermingling between the different refugee groups in the camp, even among and with the Bedouin communities. Thus, no clear-cut social territories or boundaries were constructed, except for the area with a large Bedouin majority, mentioned earlier.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that while the later refugee numbers in Zaatari camp hovered between 70,000 and 80,000, the majority of the population comprise infants and youths. Indeed, a recent survey shows that about 20 per cent of the camp's population are infants (between one and four years of age), and 25 per cent are children (between five and eleven), with the average size of a family counting six members (UNHCR 2017). This means that about half of the camp's inhabitants are a youth population, most of whom were born and raised in the camp, and most of whom tend to marry at an early age. This became apparent in a survey conducted in 2017, in which 88 per cent of the respondents (made up of 30,704 people, with roughly equal proportions of men and women aged between 18 and 59) were married and had three to six children (UNHCR 2017). These statistics highlight the nature of the social structures in Zaatari camp, which are predominantly based on extended family relations and strongly encourage marriage for adolescents. One important reason for this lies in the connection between family and shelter. For instance, while a family of five has to share one caravan during their stay in Zaatari camp, the marriage of one or two of its members allows them to form a new family, thereby becoming eligible for additional caravans. Moreover, in addition to marriage, the complexity of social relations — shaped by such events as divorce, arrival, departure, relocation or the death of a family member — has a significant impact on how the dwelling spaces are reassembled.

From dismantling to reassembling

Zaatari camp is a complex and dynamic space. It resembles a unique experiment, in which planning methodologies and norms, humanitarian economies, materiality, shelter and infrastructure, and people's origins and backgrounds have been brought together, producing a disciplinary machine. In this chapter, the focus had

been on the notion of *dismantling*. Available literature renders the process of dismantling under generic terms such as camps' urbanization or the appropriation of space. While those terms are important, and are essential in order to understand the multi-scalar dimensions of dwelling in a camp, *dismantling* is intrinsically embedded within the web of power relations that produces a camp. The planning of refugee camps inevitably means forcing them to become politico-spatial apparatuses for governing refugees. This manifests spatially, materially and even economically. In Zaatari camp, the arrangement of shelters and infrastructures within the planned plots, and the policies of distributing refugees within available shelters, revealed the face of this disciplinary machine. However, this power constellation appeared momentarily and disappeared shortly after, due to extensive dismantling practices. Shelters were relocated and rearranged, spaces were renamed, infrastructures were reused and dismantled, and economic structures were adjusted.

Dismantling the camp, therefore, is a process in which the camp as a composition of power relations is broken down into elements, and in which these relations are subverted. This not only destroys and disempowers the disciplinary machine of the camp over time, but also gives refugees new elements, which they can piece together to dwell in there. This means that the notion of dismantling always needs to be juxtaposed with the disciplinary machine of the camp — which can differ in its elements, policies and composition from one camp to another. It also means that while dismantling the camp may appear as a series of appropriations when looked at separately and on the micro scale, its relationships to power and to the disciplinary space, as shown in this chapter, allow it to reveal a holistic process in which the camp is not only broken down into elements, but is also *reassembled*. These practices of reassembling — their dynamics, rhythms and scales — will be the focus in the following three chapters.

Part Two: Reassembling the Social

Introduction
The Social Ordering of Space

A relocated caravan, a piece of tent, a window removed from a caravan, a few concrete blocks taken from a communal latrine, a water pipe found near a communal kitchen, an electric cable detached from its place, few metal sheets removed from a warehouse, wooden beams found near the entrance and a smuggled bag of cement. These are the elements of a dismantled camp such as Zaatari. The original layout of the camp and the spatial arrangement of its elements were dismantled from their initial composition, and now it is time to recompose them.

Reassembling comprises the process of re-ordering the space of the camp. Dwelling as an inevitable need, and the social spaces around it, start to slowly distort the homogeneous and disciplinary order of the camp. The elements dismantled from the camp are then used to create porches, seating areas, guest rooms, curtains, bedrooms, bathrooms and gardens. The dismantling and reassembling enable the tracing of the physical-spatial transformation of the camp; a process led by the need to dwell. It puts the camp and the dwelling into a conversation with each other. The disciplinary nature of the camp aims to keep the space manageable, controllable and following standardized logic and a universal order, whereas refugees want to make the space liveable, and therefore diverse, meaningful, more humanized and possibly less orderly. Dismantling and reassembling the camp allows us to establish an analytical spectrum, a field of vision, a range of movement; between the camp — as the end of life, the biopolitical, the static — and the dwelling — as a manifestation of life and being, of politics, and of the lived and dynamic. The resulting structures echo the intensity and strength embedded in each side of the spectrum.

Dismantling and reassembling the camp are complimentary processes, and thus inseparable from each other. In the previous chapter, the focus was on how Zaatari camp was dismantled, and which aspects of its planning were affected. In the current chapter, the transition from shelters to dwellings will be focused on. Each attempt to dwell, to relocate a caravan, to expand a living space, to construct a bathroom and so on, means dismantling and reassembling the camp simultaneously. The intensity of these practices differs from one context to another, as they

are mostly dependent on the level of control and discipline enforced in a camp. Dismantling and reassembling produces a rupture in a camp's static, disciplinary and homogeneous spatial order. Thus, the conversation between the camp and the dwelling is permeated by power. If the efforts to control and manage the camp are at their full capacity, the dismantling process will be harder; conversely, the process will be easier if the control and management is weaker. The strength and intensity of the disciplinary machine of the camp can also vary over time, even within one camp. Nevertheless, dismantling and reassembling are always interlinked. In light of that, and for refugees to dwell in a camp, the camp must be dismantled and gradually dissolved. The elements resulting from this process are then utilized by refugees to construct new dwellings. By doing so, refugees begin to formulate new spaces, and to present a different spatial order; one centred around the needs and demands of social life.

Reassembling and the social space

The practices of reassembling a camp reveal the significance of a buried and almost oppressed notion in their planning: the *social space*. In this book, I generally follow Lefebvre's reading of the social space — perceived not as fixed or static, but in constant movement and motion; like waves that vary in their intensity and spread, and therefore continuously overlap and conflict (Lefebvre 1991). The process of dwelling, perceived as an inevitable form of being (Heidegger 1971b), is interwoven with social space, and in turn, shaped by it. Changes within the social space induce changes within the dwelling structure and vice versa. Dwelling as a need to settle, to sleep, to store belongings, to socialize, to eat and so on, is no longer a static plan or a standardized layout implemented by engineers and the construction. Instead, dwelling, in the same way as the social space, is in constant flux. The transition from shelters to dwellings in Zaatari camp reveals the dynamics of self-building and how they are dictated by social space; dynamics that are less visible in cities today. Looking at the camp from above — using Google Earth for instance — shows a body in constant, subtle movement. The dwellings are continuously being built, re-built, extended, shortened, relocated, rearranged and redesigned, and so are the social spaces around them.

Dwelling in the camp is a process of reclaiming the body that was initially disciplined. The planning of the camp space and its shelters enforce a re-organization of the body and its social life. It separates this life and puts it into parcels, containers, shelters and infrastructures that are manageable and controllable. Therefore, dismantling and reassembling the camp is a revolutionary act; sometimes violent and often conflictual. By seeking to reclaim, to reassemble the pieces into func-

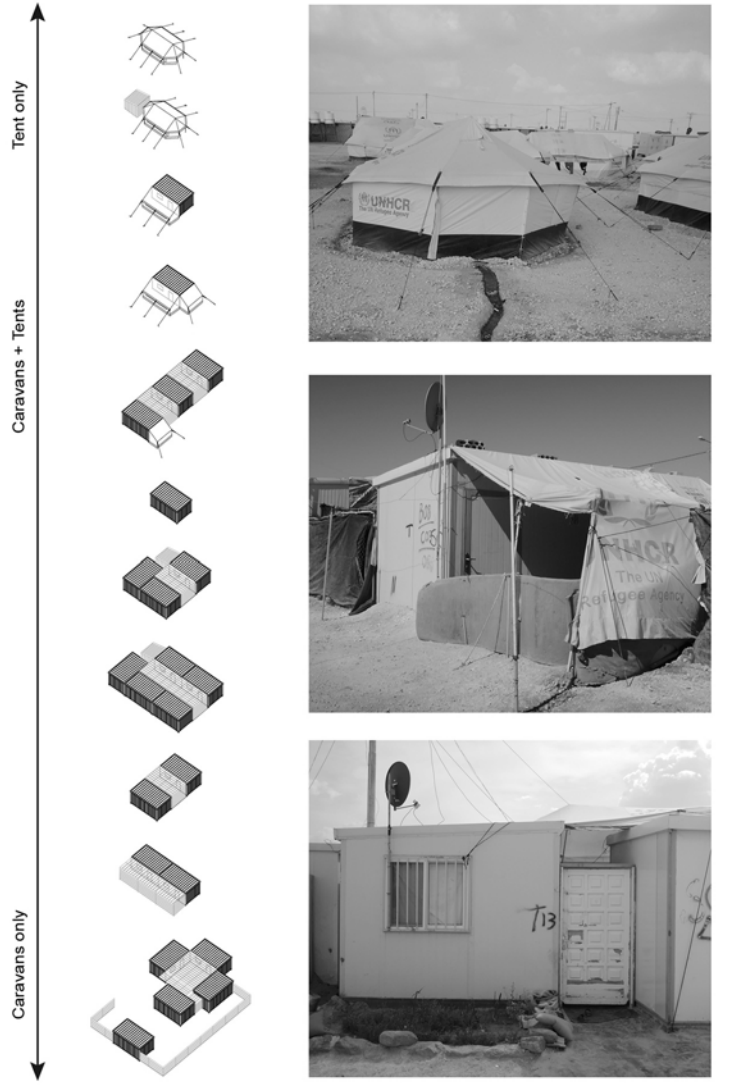
tioning compositions and to give social life its meaning, the space of the camp is reproduced. The camp is being dismantled and reassembled.

Just like the body, the process of dismantling and reassembling is never detached from the dynamics of everyday life. Politics, economics and social dimensions influence the ways in which dwelling occurs within a camp. The following two chapters focus on the politics and economics of reassembling, whereas the current chapter focuses mostly on the social dynamics. Nevertheless, as will be seen, social dynamics cannot be entirely separate from politics and economics.

To reassemble the camp, both the dwelling and the social space are informed by the practices, behaviours and preferences of the dwellers. This means that while some social dynamics may be seen as universal, such as the need for private space, these dynamics need to be understood as part of the unique social experience of the refugee group in the camp. Moreover, these dynamics are influenced by the tensions, similarities and contradictions between the social groups accommodated in these camps. Therefore, this chapter is directed towards the experience of Syrian refugees in Zaatari camp. The social dynamics generated in this camp — that have significantly influenced the practices of reassembling and dwelling — are tightly linked to the way of life, ideals, aspirations and means of communications established among this group. It is also linked to the differences apparent among refugees in Zaatari camp, such as class and urban origin. Accordingly, explaining the social dynamics of reassembling needs to be more detailed.

An unusual dwelling arrangement in Zaatari camp, formed around the concrete foundations of what had previously been a water tower

The composition of dwellings in Zaatari camp in relation to shelter typology



The social dynamics of reassembling

The social dynamics of reassembling differ from one camp to another, and from one refugee group to another. In Zaatari camp, the dynamics have been influenced by aspects related to the unique social structure there. For instance, gender played a significant role in directing the process of re-ordering the space of the camp. Privacy was not simply a matter of visually separating spaces, but was a means of introducing a hierarchy of space, which is argued to be a common feature in Arabo-Islamic cities (J. Abu-Lughod 1987). The reassembling practices thus produced a spectrum of spaces, ranging from the private (the inner space of the shelter), to the semi-private (shared streets and alleyways) and to the public (the main markets, streets and *Souqs*). These spaces are actively demarcated and physically shaped through the arrangement of elements such as water tanks, washing lines, thresholds, doorsteps and even the gardens and gravel around dwellings. The abstract space of the camp and the shelter are dismantled and reassembled as social spaces. The reclaiming of visual privacy in Zaatari camp may be one of the most common dynamics with regard to the social sphere, but is not the only one and cannot be simply generalized. Producing visual privacy and the semiotics of space in Zaatari camp were influenced by gender, religion *and* the psychodynamics of the family.

In my research, I stumbled across the family — not as a rigid institutional entity, but as a socio-spatial composition that had a major influence on the dynamics of reassembling. The co-mapping method I introduced earlier (see Introduction), always resulted in steps in which the dwellings were reassembled; most frequently, based on changes occurring within the family. The arrivals of large and extended families in the camp meant that the standardized spaces of the shelter needed to be used and arranged to accommodate the socio-spatial relations within the family. The ways in which mothers and sisters, parents and children, aunts, uncles and so on, used the space, was reflected in the composition of the dwelling and its layout. One of the most striking aspects in this regard was that marriage always led to the *enclosure* of what appeared earlier as a very dynamic and fluid structure. In other words, marriage justifies the separation of a married couple from the 'social body' of the family, spatially speaking, leading to the emergence of new socio-spatial compositions within the dwelling. Similarly, aspects such as the death of a family member or the arrival of distant relatives also resulted in changes within the dwelling and how the camp was reassembled. To understand these dynamics, I relied on Suad Joseph's notion of 'patriarchal connectivity', which explains the relations, psychodynamics and boundaries established in Arab families (Joseph 1999). These are then articulated on space and practices of reassembling.

The last form of social dynamics that influence practices of reassembling in Zaatari camp are those associated with the reconstruction and representation of identity. How can people express themselves in an abstract space such as the camp

and the shelter? Culture, memory and urban identity offer some answers. They provide the dweller with models that can be restored. However, to what extent can refugees completely restore the old? Practices of reassembling stand on the verge of what is new, what is old — and most importantly, what is possible. The refugee who performs the process of reassembling, becomes a creator; a painter. Some may be inclined to reproduce images of dwellings they are already familiar with. Others utilize a reservoir of knowledge about space that becomes a toolkit, from which refugees are inspired to paint new pictures, to produce new forms of dwellings. This *knowledge about space* is crucial in the ways refugees reassemble the camp. The connection between the dwellers and their identities, cultures and memories, are permeated by knowledge. Through knowledge, refugees begin to express the social dynamics related to their own story and personal experiences. In other words, knowledge may not at first appear to be strongly connected to the social dynamics of space addressed in this part of the book. However, the fact that refugees *reassemble*, which is an act in space, means that the dwellers bring with them a set of socio-spatial dynamics that are not necessarily shared in common. This is because reassembling is a creative act that is influenced by the reservoirs of knowledge to which the dwellers are connected. For instance, it was widely common and acceptable to suggest that Syrian refugees reproduced dwellings resembling those in which they had lived before, but one of the striking findings in this research is that refugees do not necessarily reproduce replicas of their previous dwellings. Instead, they utilize various forms of knowledge, whether *implicit*, such as that learned through being embedded in a certain culture and identity, *subconscious*, such as that generated by the memory of the dweller, *borrowed* from different contexts, such as wanting to construct an 'American kitchen', or even *emergent*, such as hands-on solutions that are locally disseminated. Knowledge about space becomes a tool in reproducing *difference*; that is, an important dimension for shaping and using social space.

Introduction to case studies

The following case studies present a rich ethnographic account of how refugees in Zaatari camp transformed their shelters into dwellings. The social dynamics of reassembling described above are apparent in all the case studies. Nonetheless, each of the three is used to represent the complexity of the process, and to highlight one of the social dynamics addressed earlier. In that sense, the case studies are not necessarily intended to create a clear distinction between the dynamics, but to situate them in conversation with each other by pointing out the specificity and the conditions of each.

While each of the cases seeks to underline one of the social dynamics that influence practices of reassembling and dwelling, they also aim to shed light on refugees' narratives, and to give them a voice in the process. Accordingly, instead of presenting these social dynamics as separate categories, I chose to place the emphasis on refugees' socio-spatial experiences. Each case study tells the story of a person, a family or a group of people, and their struggle to dwell. It also sheds light on specific spatio-temporal conditions in the camp, and the challenges engendered by them. For example, arriving at the beginning when the camp was newly opened left many refugees facing the challenge of dwelling amidst dense spatial and physical environments. The 'old camp' offers a good example, showing how navigating visual privacy within clusters led to different reassembling practices than those encountered in the 'new camp'. Similarly, arriving at the peak of the refugee influx in the camp during 2013 differed greatly from attempting to dwell in the least populated part of the camp after it had been closed to new arrivals. Issues such as the scarcity or abundance of resources and infrastructures were also intersected with the social dynamics. Therefore, each case study not only sheds light on one of these social dynamics, but also illustrates the challenge of dwelling in Zaatari camp at a certain point of time, and in a certain place.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that while aspects such as economics and politics appear through the case studies here — which will be explored in depth in the following two chapters — these case studies can be intense to read. Due to the richness of each case, and the complexity of the socio-spatial dynamics, I have tried to summarize various steps through graphics, which aim to provide a visual element to facilitate explaining these densely packed case studies. In addition, the case studies are meant to function as *openings* into the dynamics of reassembling. These dynamics portray the struggle of *bridging the gap between the shelter and the dwelling*. The results are not only hybrid — the outcome of reassembling all these social dynamics merging with the camp itself, but also continuously changing, shifting between infrastructures and shelter forms.

Chapter 2
Visual Privacy

'Why do refugees keep their window shutters down, even during the day!?' a student asked suspiciously after a field visit to one of Berlin's refugee camps (Tempohomes). Despite being relatively small compared with Zaatari camp, it was obvious that the lack of privacy was one of the main issues that refugees struggled with while being accommodated in shelters. Textiles were added to the front doors, and curtains were used to cover windows. Some porches were even entirely wrapped with textile, creating what looked like a semi-private room utilized as an additional space during the day. Therefore, the need for privacy was not only a matter of visually separating spaces, but also of introducing a social hierarchy within space. Similarly, in Zaatari camp, one of the main social dynamics of reassembling was related to the need for visual privacy. In order to provide a further explanation of the process, I detail one of the case studies, illustrating how dwelling occurred in one of the densest areas in Zaatari camp: the 'old camp'.

Dwelling in density

Density, both physical and social, can impose various challenges to the process of dwelling. The construction of space becomes not only one's own decision, but a collective one with regard to the use of space, the nature of social activities taking place around the dwellings, the installing of infrastructures, and the utilization of the available resources and materials. Density renders dwelling contested, as it implies the need to negotiate and incorporate the ways in which other nearby individuals and groups also want to dwell. When people attempt to secure their need to dwell in a context characterized by density, the competition over resources may lead to frustrations and conflicts, especially in the absence of coordination and collaborative efforts. One example is a refugee family that was settled in close proximity to two other families in the old camp. Once the tents had been replaced with caravans, the two families closer to the street built bathing and toilet areas next to their caravans, and the third family further back was soon left surrounded

by toilets and with no access to the street. 'We felt as if we were trapped. Imagine being surrounded by toilets. One of the families was raising chickens as well, so imagine the smell. We had to leave immediately, as soon as we had the opportunity', the family explained. Yet while some families struggled due to density, others benefited from it, as it eased and accelerated their process of settlement.

I now turn to the case of Sami, a 32-year-old man who, at the time of the research, was living with his wife and four children in the 'old camp' — the first area in Zaatari to be populated. Sami came from a small village in Daraa called As-Sawara (which, according to him, had a population of around 5000). He fled the village in August 2012 when it came under attack by the Syrian regime. Accompanied by other residents, he reached a border village called Al-Tayybeh, four kilometres from the Syrian-Jordanian border. Here, they were guided by the Syrian Free Army to the *Sheek* (fence), referring to the informal check point that played a major role in providing access for Syrians to Jordan in 2012. The group was then received by the Jordanian military and transferred to Zaatari camp. Sami recalled, 'I entered Zaatari on 20 August 2012', so one month after it had been officially opened. At that time, the camp was still in its emergency phase.

A photograph of a street view in the old camp, taken in May 2016

Sami initially settled with his family in the southern part of the 'old camp'. In line with the humanitarian regulations of aid distribution, he was given a tent, in which he would live with his family for about a month. A few days later, he realized the need for a private washing area; thus, he promptly installed one, explaining,

'I installed a washing area between the tent and the adjacent street because my wife wasn't comfortable going back and forth to the shared toilets'. Based on his description, the washing area would have resembled a small roofless room, made out of plastic sheets or *Baṭṭanīyh* (the underlying textile of the tent) and light metal poles. It functioned as a semi-private room, or a buffer zone, between the street and the private space of the tent. It also managed to accommodate activities such as washing dishes and bathing, which require high levels of privacy for women — highlighting the gendered nature of the domestic space and its functions.

Despite the relatively small size of the space, Sami created a grey water system that reflected the earliest forms of urban infrastructures in the camp. He dug a small basin in the ground, reinforced its sides with blocks and cemented its surface so the water was not absorbed into the ground. The basin was then connected from one corner to an open channel leading to a larger reservoir. The walls of the reservoir were also cemented. At the bottom, this reservoir was then connected to an end-destination reservoir, located outside the dwelling area and made out of a perforated plastic barrel. The final reservoir and the preceding one were connected by a water pipe obtained from the humanitarian workers. Sami recalled, 'the engineers were building the toilets [WASH], so I asked one of them if I could take the pipe, and he gave it to me'.

One month later, in September 2012, Sami decided to move in order to settle next to his relatives from As-Sawara, yet remaining within the 'old camp'. According to him, it felt more comfortable and secure to be next to relatives from the same village. 'Life in the camp is hard, but is made easier through friends and relatives', he explained. Shortly after he had moved to the new site, caravans were distributed in the area, and he received one in exchange for his tent. It is important to keep in mind that the allocation of caravans was on a somewhat random basis, especially in the old camp. Satellite images show caravans placed between the sandy streets in no discernible order. 'The donors put the caravans here and left. We thought there will be an ordering process soon [*Ṭanẓīm*], but this never happened. Until today we live on top of each other!' exclaimed one of the refugees. By distributing the caravans adjacent to each other, not only did they become almost impossible to move and relocate, but families were also forced to live right next to one another. Families, however, still chose the security of these caravans — their physical durability and privacy — over having to wait in tents in more spacious areas for an unspecified amount of time until they were given a caravan. Negotiating the conditions of each context played a significant role in how dwelling was spatialized and how it materialized.

Sami began to live with his family in the newly acquired caravan. He was surrounded by two other caravans: one to one side of his, and one in front. One month later, he again added a bathing area, attached to his caravan and closer to the road leading to what was gradually becoming a cluster. The location of the bathing area

helped Sami to create an entrance to his dwelling and to establish a buffer zone between the street leading to the inside of the cluster (semi-public) and his caravan (private). He referred to this space as a 'salon', using it as a living room or an area in which to receive guests. It was nevertheless not entirely private, but semi-private. 'My aunt's caravan is here bordering the salon, but its window is looking into our salon. Thank God she is a relative, so it wasn't as uncomfortable as if she had been a total stranger', explained Sami. The construction of dwellings in Zaatari camp, especially within dense areas, was multifaceted. Refugees had to negotiate social relations, different degrees of social space, the physical characteristics of the caravans and the way they were placed — sometimes all at once.

To go back to the design, the bathing area that Sami constructed resembled again a roofless room made out of zinco (metal sheets), which had been distributed by NGOs as part of a winterization kit. Its ground was cemented, with a hole dug on one side. However, in contrast to the previous one, this time Sami did not construct his own sewage system. Instead, he connected the hole to a water pipe that was found near the camp. He explained, 'The neighbours wanted us to connect all the houses to one pipe so the area does not get dirty. We found one, unused and lying on the ground in the farms next to the camp so we brought it here, put it in the middle so all houses can connect to it … and then we let it pour into the big pipe in the street'. The large pipe to which the sewage water was connected in this cluster was part of the rainwater collectors installed by the UNHCR in 2012. Interestingly, this shows two contrasting logics: relief actors engaged in constructing a camp composed of communal infrastructures and shelter units vis-à-vis refugees constructing dwellings out of the shelter and the dismantled infrastructures. The refugees' need to dwell was manifesting itself against all odds.

Five months later, Sami's neighbour decided to leave the area. This turned out to be a transformative and festive event. 'When I heard that my neighbour was leaving, I told him, "Stop! Please sell me your caravan. I am your neighbour and deserve it more than anyone else", and so he did!' explained Sami with great satisfaction. Being able to own this adjacent caravan was very important for Sami, as it made it possible for him to expand his dwelling on the site, increasing its size in a dense area where every inch counted. Eventually, he managed to buy the caravan for 135 JDs (equal to approximately 150 euros), but there was an issue: the caravan's door was facing towards the other side. In order to include the newly bought caravan into his dwelling, and in particular to connect it to the 'salon', Sami had to call on the help of a technician. The caravan was *dismantled* in place, and its parts were *reassembled*. An entire section of the caravan was removed, creating an extension for the living room, and the door was replaced with a normal caravan panel. While the refugees' ability to appropriate and build with caravans rapidly developed into what can be described as a reservoir of local knowledge that helped them to overcome the challenges of density, the process of dwelling also required imagination

and creativity. The result of opening up one caravan to the 'salon' was a new, larger space, in which the kitchen was merged with the living space, and the worktop was equipped with a washing basin and a water tap linked to a water tank. When describing the new set up, Sami recounted, 'I always wanted to have an American kitchen … half open to the salon; I had this idea in mind when I was about to build my own house in As-Sawara. But since I couldn't do it there due to the war, I did it here'. Although Sami had never been to the US, he had no hesitation in borrowing an idea of how dwelling was practiced there. This accentuates the point that refugees do not necessarily seek to reproduce dwellings similar to those in which they once lived, but instead embark on a process of appropriation in which imagination and creativity are used against the limitations of the camp and the shelter. Knowledge of space, whether local, translocal or transnational, becomes a valuable asset in negotiating the complexities and challenges of the physical and social space they are faced with.

The introduction of a second caravan to Sami's dwelling resulted in a shift in functions. Specifically, the bathing area was moved to a more discreet part of the dwelling, located in a corner, thereby giving more space to the guest/living room, which was then furnished with two mattresses and a TV in the corner. The door that had been removed from the newly acquired caravan was placed between the old and the new caravan to create a door to the bathroom. The bathing area was equipped with a washing machine and a squat toilet, which was connected to the collective sewage system built by the dwellers in the cluster. The ground under the salon and the bathing area was cemented.

The final step was to solidify the boundaries of the dwelling, thereby *enclosing* it. The word used to describe this process in Arabic is *Sakkar,* which literally means 'close', but in the context of this narrative, it meant that something was put together and finally sealed. This moment captures the establishment of the internal cosmos of the dwelling, while also firmly establishing connections to the outside world. The division between the inside and outside of the dwelling space thus contradicted the humanitarian logic of open or covered space. In Sami's case, this process involved constructing a wall out of caravan panels that stretched from the kitchen to the main door. For the entrance, Sami added a window and a door with an extra layer (made out of net fencing) so it could be left open during the summer. An additional wall was constructed to separate the 'salon' from the adjacent caravan belonging to Sami's relatives. The wall was constructed parallel to the caravan, about 10 centimetres away, so they could get some air by opening the window of their caravan. In doing so, Sami ensured the privacy of the dwelling, given that the window of his relatives' caravan was looking directly into the salon.

These changes did not take place all at once, but were made gradually over the course of two years, according to Sami. One of the most important factors that affected the process was the availability of the financial means to implement the

changes. Certain steps, such as dismantling and reassembling caravan parts, were particularly expensive, since they could not be implemented individually, but required the help of a professional (in contrast to work completed in previous phases). One caravan panel cost between 10 and 17.50 JDs (about 20 euros), with construction costs of 75 JDs. This *emergent* economic value of caravan panels was something that needed to be negotiated while dwelling, as will be explained more extensively in the following chapter. The transition from shelter to dwelling in Sami's case included a series of appropriations in which density — that is, the scarcity of space, the limitations of the material (the caravan) and the proximity to other refugees — had to be negotiated. The result was not an individual dwelling, but a cluster in which dwelling occurred simultaneously and collectively. To understand the collective nature of dwelling in the old camp, the next segment will provide a closer look into its dynamics and structure.

Dwelling as a collective act and the semiotics of space

Sami's dwelling is in a vibrant and complex urban cluster that was collectively shaped out of the randomly placed caravans in the old camp. One of the first implications of the dwelling process was to transform the humanitarian binary of covered/open space into a gradient of social space. In line with Lefebvre (1991), social space is perceived here as 'waves' of space, with different intensities and boundaries that are fluid, dynamic and contested in nature. Yet these spaces were carved out an empty metal 'body' — a set of 16 caravans that were placed randomly on site and turned into a space that would end up being reminiscent of the fabric of an old Arab city, or Medina. As one woman from rural Damascus described the 'old camp', 'This place reminds me of a Palestinian camp, or even the old city of Damascus. Have you been there?' Density alone is not the only reason these spaces were likened to Arab old cities or informal areas. Instead, the way space is being used and structured follows particular social norms. In her exploration of the Arabo-Islamic city, Janet Abu-Lughod (1987, 167) noted that, 'The creation of male and female turf is perhaps the most important element of the structure of the city contributed by Islam. It is important to remember, however, that the rules of turf were not only to establish physically distinctive regions; more important, they were to establish visually distinctive or insulated regions. The object was not only to prevent physical contact but to protect visual privacy'. Therefore, the placement of windows, the height of adjacent buildings and the locations of doors were all orchestrated in ways that would ensure the privacy of the dwellers. In fact, the placement of curtains in many of Berlin's refugee camps (Tempohomes) — in front of main doors and windows — is a clear sign of the same need to protect privacy. However, according to Abu-Lughod, this results in the production of *semi-private* spaces, as an

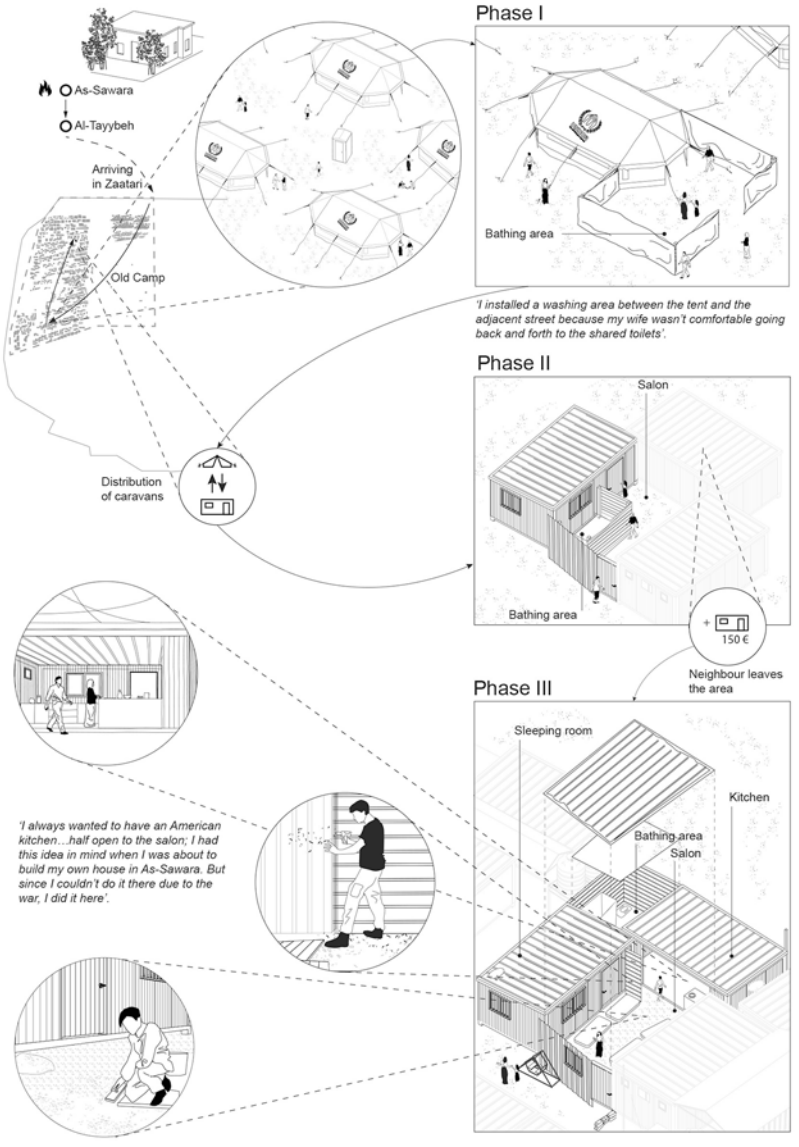
intermediate category that may be lacking in other cultures. Such spaces are not entirely closed, but create a sense of privacy. As she explained:

> I am often struck, as I wander around Arab cities, with how easy it is to tell whether I am in public space or have blundered into semi-private space. I have often tried to identify the markers that indicate this. A sudden narrowing of the path, particularly if that narrowing has been exaggerated by the implanting of low stone posts or even a pile of bricks, is a sign of the shift, especially when the road widens again soon afterwards. (J. Abu-Lughod 1987, 169)

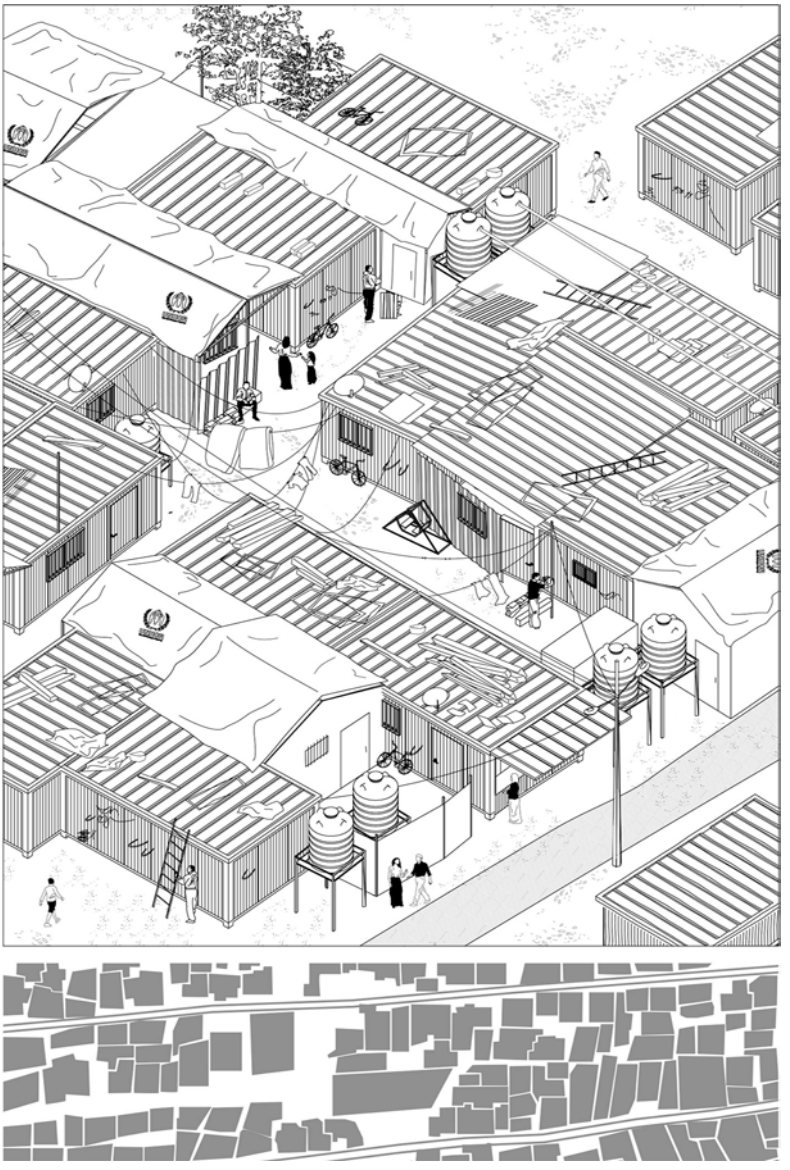
These *semiotics of space* are very important when attempting to understand dwelling as a process that is at its core simultaneously social and spatial. In the resulting cluster where Sami lived at the time of this research, I was able to sense the semi-private nature of the cul-de-sac leading to the different dwellings within the cluster. The entrance of this branching cul-de-sac was marked by two large water tanks, raised above the ground on a metal structure. Due to this construction, every person who passed by needed to make the effort to bend their head in order to pass underneath the water tanks. Additionally, the space was furnished with clothes lines that created a strong and immediate impression of *stepping into* a more private part of the space near the dwelling. At the end of the cul-de-sac, a threshold or *'Atabeh* was also constructed for an elderly woman (living in dwelling number 4), where she could sit outside to socialize with the neighbours. 'These young brats! They keep playing football here and destroying it. But she keeps rebuilding it', said her son, who happened to be also the son of the Mukhtar (the village chief) back in Syria. In the camp, and within the cluster, he tried to maintain this role by keeping one of the caravans open as a guest house for men from the same village, where they would meet regularly to talk and to enjoy food together. While visiting the cluster, I had the opportunity to join them for a lunch, at which a special dish of bulgur, lamb and cooked yoghurt (*Mleḥy*) was served. The space is called the *Maḍāfa*, and literally translates as the 'guest house'. It plays an important role in maintaining and regulating social relations, and can vary in its use according to the different groups in the camp. For instance, well-known clans and tribes established a few *Maḍāfa* spaces across the camp, where these groups could talk to their chief. The *Maḍāfa* is especially important in village settings, featuring as a part of almost every rural dwelling. It was explained to me that: 'People in cities are used to receiving guests in their houses. But for us [villagers from the Houran plain], we need the *Maḍāfa* because it is the place where we can receive guests … not inside the house.'

Dwelling within such a dense context as that found in the 'old' part of Zaatari camp clearly demonstrates the impact of gender, visual privacy and social relations on space. The bodies of the caravans were carved out to produce a gradient of social spaces: from the very private, to the semi-private, to the semi-public (the alleys of the old camp), to the public (the main street of the camp with the *souk* or market).

The transition from shelters to dwellings (the case of Sami)

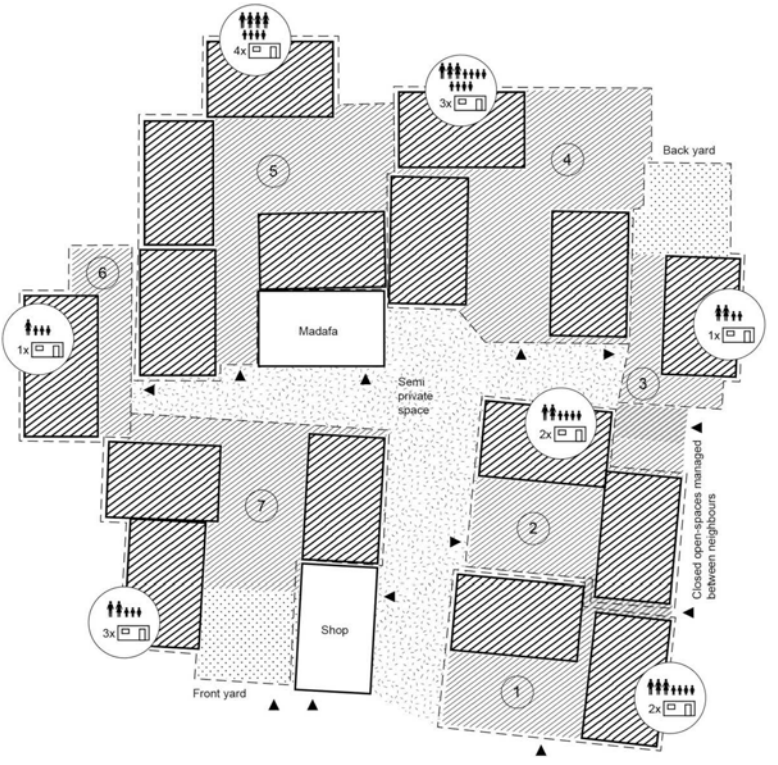


A perspective of the resulting cluster and urban fabric (the case of Sami)



A detailed floor plan and a section showing the complexity of the resulting cluster (the case of Sami)

A diagram showing the familial arrangements within the cluster and the relationship between the dwellers (the case of Sami)



House number	Family members	Number of containers	Relationship between dwellers	Relation to Abu Muhammad
1	7	2	Extended family: parents, 4 children and an aunt	Aunt and her relatives (*khale*)
2	6	2	Single family: parents and 4 children (Abu Muhammad)	Abu Muhammad (reference persont)
3	4	1	Single family: parents and two kids	First cousin (*Ibn 'Amm*)
4	11	3	Extended family: parents with their mother and 8 children (Abu Nasser – son of the Mukhtar)	First cousin (*Ibn 'Amm*)
5	8	4	Extended family: parents with 4 children and two aunts	Distant cousin of the mother (Ibn 'Amm el Walde)
6	4	1	Single family: widow with 3 children	No direct relation (from the family)
7	5	3	Single family: parents with 3 children	First cousin (*Ibn Khale*)

Yet as Abu-Lughod pointed out, this process involves on the one hand, negotiating and regulating space according to socio-cultural norms that have their roots in Islam, but on the other hand, it also represents a collective effort. Refugees had to regulate the use of the resulting in-between spaces that could attract unwanted visitors. Most of these spaces were closed off using a metal door and a lock. 'The neighbours agreed to put their water tanks here so they cannot be stolen. We've put up a door and a lock, and only we have the key', Sami commented while showing me the space. These collective actions not only included physical and infrastructural decisions, but also social ones. 'Here there is a widow living with her three young daughters [dwelling number 6]. She is a distant relative, but she lives with us since she has no one else in the camp. We take care of her whenever she needs help', recalled Sami. In that sense, the need to dwell not only implies the use of imagination, knowledge and solidarity, but also reveals dwelling to be a process of mediation between various elements and aspects at the same time. The imperative of dwelling, in a context where it is suspended (such as in a camp), forces refugees to mitigate and manoeuvre between various needs and constraints as they arise. Eventually, in an area of about 600 m^2 furnished by 18 caravans, seven dwellings were constructed hosting 45 refugees. The space was transformed from a random set of empty caravans into diverse dwellings and a vibrant and collectively managed space. In the following case, these practices will also be explored — this time, however, among the members of the same family.

Chapter 3
Family Relations

The transition from shelters to dwellings in Zaatari camp was strongly influenced by transformations occurring within the familial sphere. In contrast to the static image that caravans and tents can engender, these initially homogeneous shelter units were altered in response to transformations and events within the family: arrival, departure, marriage, divorce, death, birth, maternity, puberty and so on. Before embarking on this analysis, I should underscore the fact that my training was as an architect and not as an anthropologist; yet I find myself obliged to speak of how I saw dwelling in Zaatari camp respond and adapt to these changes in family circumstances. According to William Young and Seteney Shami (1997), one can easily be challenged when attempting to speak of an 'Arab family', due to the diversity of existing structures and practices: families characterized by shared residence, common descent, extended, nuclear, rural, urban structures and so on. In other words, there is no *one* family structure in the region. Thus, discussing the idea of the family is itself contested and challenging. However, what needs to be addressed here is a particular mode of social organization that dictates and distributes certain responsibilities and roles among family members — as encountered in Zaatari camp. Some of these roles and responsibilities appear in Abu-Lughod's reading of the Arabo-Islamic city and the idea of visual privacy that gave direction to the way space was divided and architecture was used, within the dwellings of the old Medina. Accordingly, there may indeed be an Islamic dimension inscribed into the ways in which gendered relationships are dealt with socially, and thus spatially. The construction of the *Maḍāfa*, particularly the separation of men and women within the dwelling, contributed to shaping its spaces. However, these interpretations are not enough to describe what happened in Zaatari camp. Sometimes separated into different shelter units, families were not necessarily only concerned with notions of privacy. Instead, they were tied together in ways that appear to be psychological, related to the understanding of the self, a mode of *being*, and thus a mode of *dwelling*.

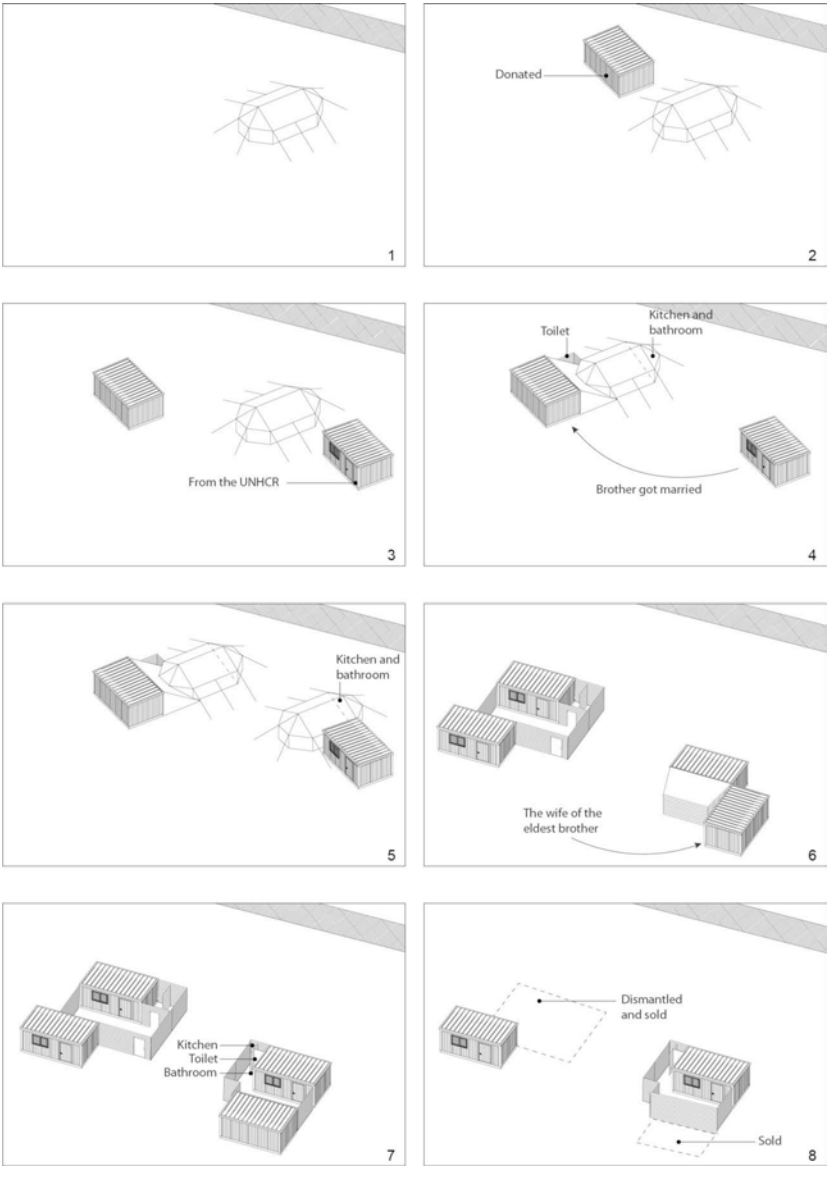
In the following, I rely on Suad Joseph's idea of 'intimate selving' among Arab families, and particularly the notion of 'patriarchal connectivity'. With this con-

cept, Joseph tried to trace the psychodynamics through which members of Arab families operate. The idea is based on two intertwined notions: The first is *patriarchy*, suggesting that men or fathers have a leading role and can speak on behalf of other members in the family. The second is *connectivity*, which indicates that the identities (though they could be seen as either dominant or submissive) are in fact very fluid and shifting, and operate in ways that ensure the success and survival of the family. Although this idea is not explored spatially, I suggest that it has spatial implications on dwelling practices. Tracing these spatial-psychodynamics was possible in Zaatari camp, because dwelling emerged from the socio-spatial practices of the dwellers and was solidified over time. One of the spatial implications of this 'patriarchal connectivity' can be seen through the patrilocal patterns of residence among Arab families — especially in marginalized areas such as slums and camps. In Palestinian camps, for instance, the initial dwelling practices evolved into what could be called 'growing housing' (Misselwitz 2009, 222), best captured by the image of open-ended columns with exposed metal structures on roofs, awaiting expansion as soon as a son gets married. Yet while the patrilocality of Arab families is questioned for its inability to be generalized (see Young and Shami 1997), the notion of 'patriarchal connectivity' offers a wider perspective, through which the socio-spatial practices and dynamics between members of Arab families can be traced, especially through dwelling, as we will see.

To reiterate, what I am trying to address here is a mode of socio-spatial organization that allows members of a family to act collectively or individually, but first and foremost, tactically, to ensure that the transition from shelters to dwellings is manageable. During my research, I came across several examples that reflected such a process, but the following case is probably the one in which these tactical, and psychodynamic, aspects of patriarchal connectivity appear most starkly.

This case study concerns Eyad, a 22-year-old male refugee who arrived at Zaatari camp with a large family of ten (including his parents, his eldest brother, and the brother's wife and children). The family originally came from As-Sanamayn, which according to Eyad is a large village made up of ten smaller settlements and with around 25,000 inhabitants. When the village was bombed in 2013, people started to flee to the south. The family initially spent a month in a smaller village near Daraa called Said, which is the hometown of Eyad's mother. Then they continued to Jordan. On arrival at the informal check point, they were received by the Jordanian military and escorted directly to Zaatari camp, which, at the time, was heading towards its peak in terms of size, availability of shelter and population count. Thus, the area they settled in, located in the middle of the camp, was densely populated. Today, however, its average density is much lower in comparison to what one would have encountered in the 'old camp'.

An additional example, showing how changes in social relations among a small family from Rīf Dimashq (Rural Damascus) had a direct impact on the dwelling structure



A street view of an area in the middle of Zaatari camp during May 2016

On arrival, Eyad and his family were given two tents, because they had registered as two families, each of five people: The first family comprised Eyad, his parents, his younger sister Rasha and his younger brother Hasan; the second family consisted of Eyad's oldest brother Yaseen, with his wife and three infant children. When they were taken to the area where villagers from As-Sanamayn had settled, the families initially could not find a place for their tents. Eyad recalled, 'The district was full of tents, so we placed them next to the street where the water tankers used to pass by'. At that time, both families used the communal kitchen and latrines located nearby. To dry their clothes, they extended a washing line between the two tents, which could also be understood as a visual sign of connectivity and relatedness. Living in the tents was frustrating for both families, but this situation did not last long. Two weeks after their arrival, they were given a caravan by the UNHCR, since the father was severely ill and thus registered under the 'vulnerable' category in need of prioritized assistance. However, the caravan — which had been funded by a Saudi donor — was placed 1.5 kilometres away. The family therefore had to use a caravan carrier to move it to the site, and one tent was subsequently returned to the UNHCR.

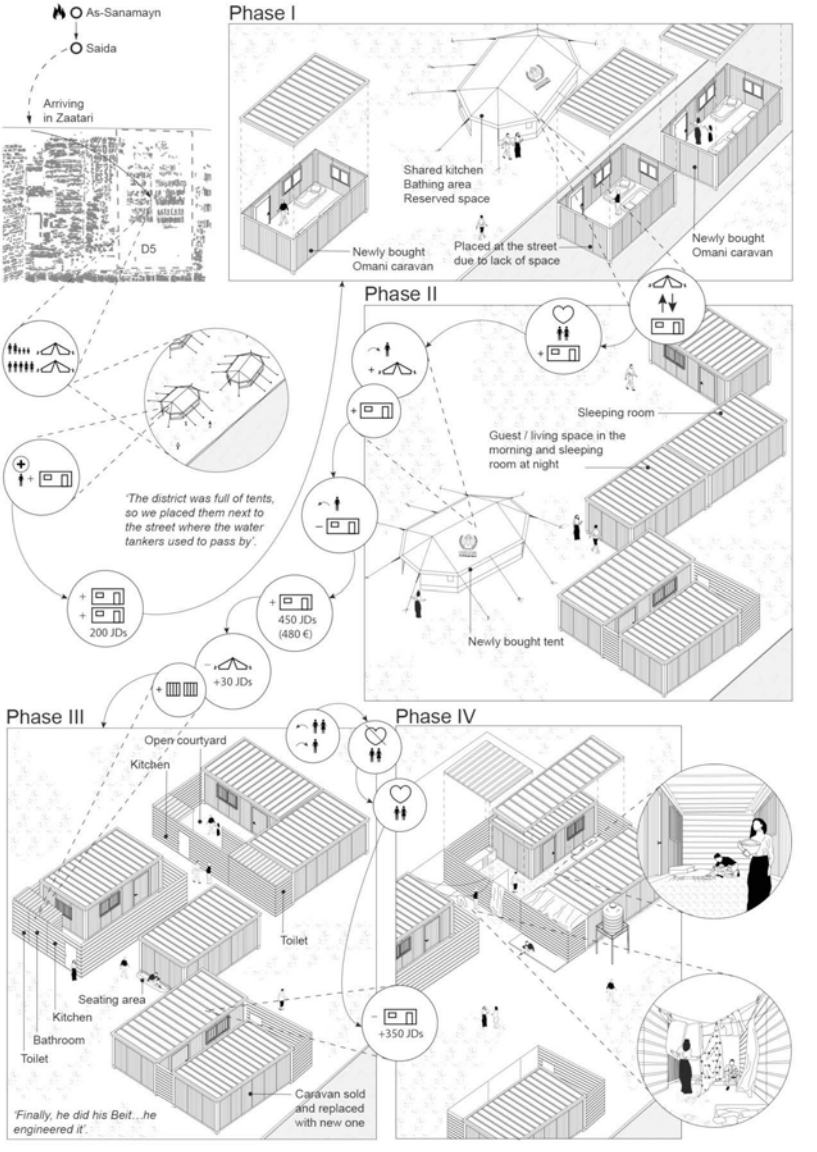
Having the caravan increased the family's sense of safety, especially for the older parents, but it was not sufficient for them to create a dwelling, as more shelters were needed. Thus, Eyad and his elder brother Yaseen covertly left the camp to work illegally in the construction industry for about two months. After that, they

were able to purchase two caravans for 100 JDs (around 80 euros) each. In this way, the family ended up with three caravans and one tent.

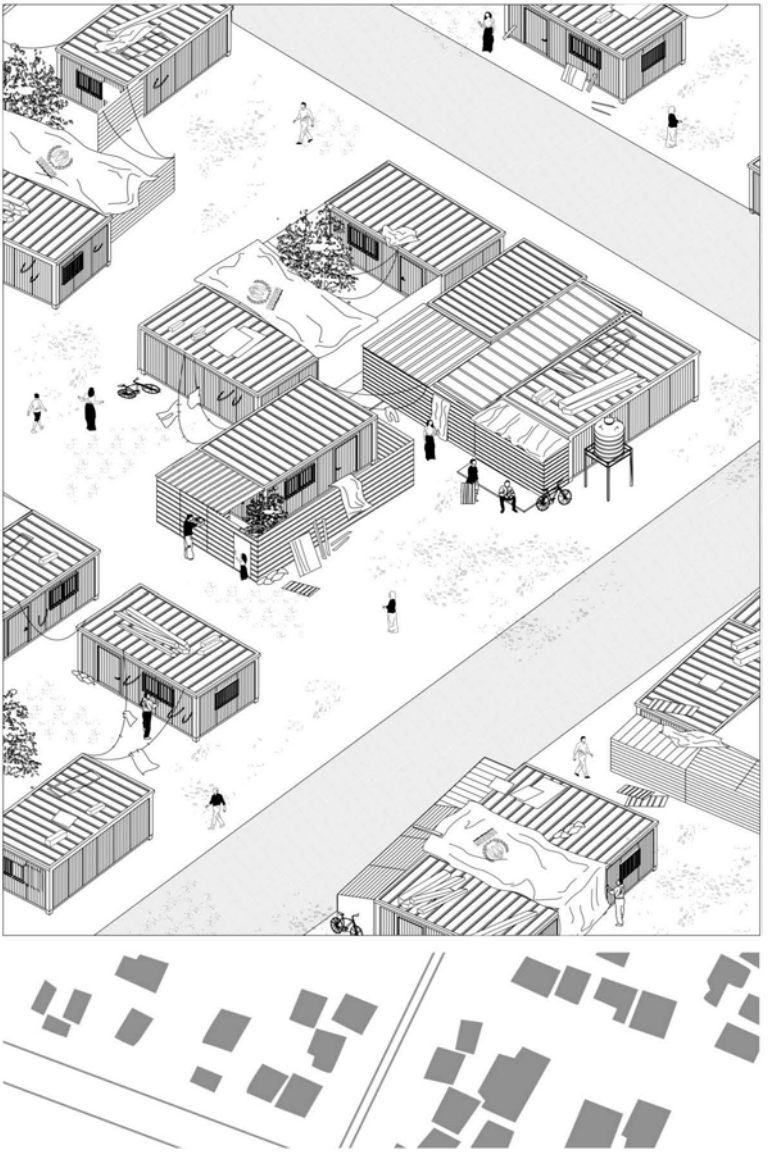
In the case of extended families such as Eyad's, dwelling was often practiced differently among the different family members. For instance, the older brother, Yaseen, was given a caravan and a tent to create a gradient of spaces: a caravan room functioned as a private space, and a tent, attached to the top of the caravan door, created a semi-private space. Meanwhile, Eyad, his younger sister and brother, and their parents shared two caravans lined up next to each other. Although considered almost adults, Eyad and his younger siblings all slept in one caravan, while their parents slept in the adjacent one that was used as a *Maḍāfa* in the mornings. In front of them, they placed a tent that was 'not suitable for living', as Eyad explained, and that was utilized as a shared storage space, kitchen and bathing area for all the family members. The resulting arrangement could be summarized as follows: Yaseen, his wife and their children lived in a separate and *enclosed* dwelling (a caravan and a tent), while Eyad, his parents and two siblings stayed in an *open* dwelling arrangement (comprising two caravans and a shared tent). One could wonder why Eyad's parents did not make a dwelling space by placing two caravans opposite each other and covering the resulting space with a tent. It seems that marriage implies the need for clearly formed boundaries to demarcate a social unit — a distinct entity — and this in turn facilitates the enclosing of dwelling spaces. Eyad's parents accordingly left these boundaries open, as they were soon expecting their sons to get married within the camp, as will be shown.

The lack of space in that part of the camp prompted the family to place their tent further out into the empty area in order to 'reserve space', as Eyad suggested. 'We were waiting until our neighbours left so we could shift our caravans up away from the street', he remembered, which they then did. Around that time, Yaseen was given a caravan from the UNHCR as a replacement for his tent (caravanization). He placed this caravan directly in front of the old one that he had bought, and he then added a bathing area and a kitchen, and closed off the space using zinco sheets. 'Finally, he did his *Beit*…he engineered it', Eyad recalled. Again, there is a notable connection between dwelling and privacy here: the construction of dwellings in Zaatari camp was an act of *reclaiming lost privacy*. This was a pattern repeated by many interviewees, who would often finish the co-mapping process by referring to the moment the dwelling's boundaries were finally closed, adding: '…and like this, we had a *Beit*'. In other words, the formation of a family encouraged the construction of a dwelling. However, the way in which dwellings were constructed — detached, adjacent, or extended — depended on the social characteristics and circumstances of these families; that is, the nature of the relationships they had with each other in combination with the availability of resources, spaces, materials and shelters.

The transition from shelters to dwellings (the case of Eyad)



A perspective of the resulting dwellings and urban fabric (the case of Eyad)



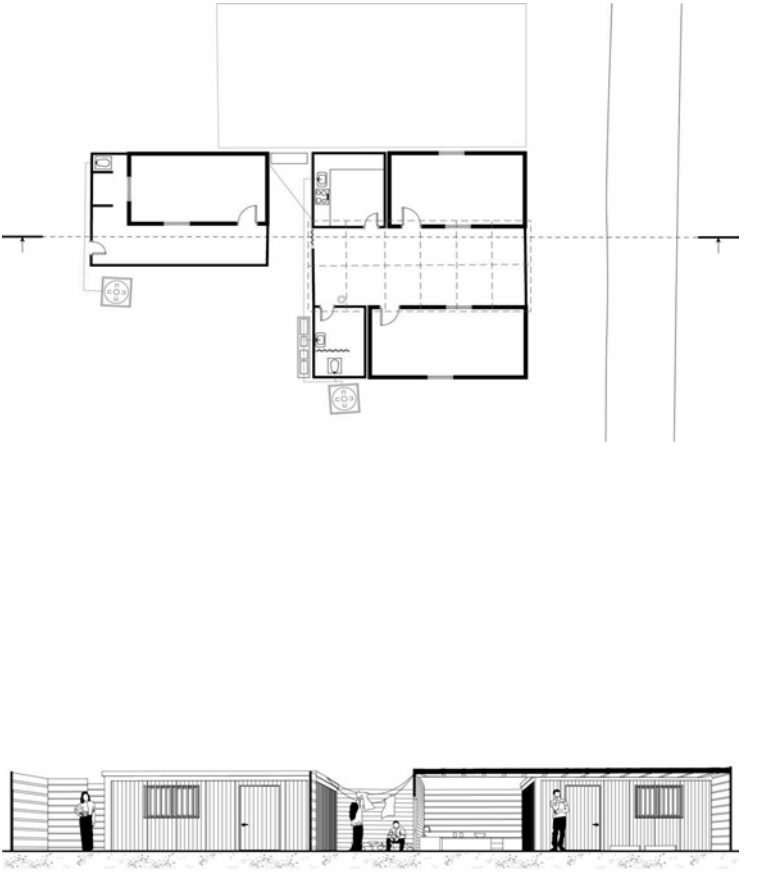
For instance, Eyad's younger brother, Hasan, got married and thus became eligible for a separate shelter unit according to Zaatari camp's regulations — a rule that, intentionally or not, encouraged early marriages in the camp. He was given a caravan, which he placed in the corner of the family's space so that their neighbours could no longer extend their dwelling rearward. Meanwhile, Eyad's mother went back to Syria to collect her other son, Samer, who was about to be enrolled into military service.[1] She bought him a tent, which he placed next to the *Maḍāfa*. Samer got married to a distant relative in the camp, and began living with his wife in the tent. This meant that the family now consisted of twelve people using four caravans and three tents. However, instead of creating a new family dwelling for the youngest brother, Hasan, they instead decided to construct a 'family house' — a space in which the shared tent (the bathing area and kitchen) would be replaced by constructing a kitchen and a separate bathroom. As he explained, 'Everyone would meet here at night. Meals are also prepared and served at our house everyday … It was *Beit el-'Ayleh* [a family house]'. The construction of the shared family dwelling here highlights Suad Joseph's reading of the psychodynamics of Arab families. Emphasizing connectivity, she suggests that 'the fluidity of boundaries, the affiliative proclivity, the sense of responsibility for and to others, the experience of one's self that has been entailed in connectivity has not been gender or age specific', thus, 'connectivity has reinforced family solidarity where solidarity was necessary for social, economic and political survival' (Joseph 1999, 13).

The family house comprised two caravans: the new one given to Hasan and an old one that belonged to the parents. The area between them was then cemented, and a kitchen and bathing area were added on the side. To build the kitchen, Eyad bought shelves, a sink and a water tank. The bathing area was separated from the open courtyard by hanging clothes. It was also equipped with an in-ground toilet and a plumbing trap connected to a pipe in the ground, leading to a septic tank. One of the caravans was used by Hasan and his wife, the second one by Eyad and his sister, and the parents slept in the *Maḍāfa* at night. In this respect, the *Maḍāfa* was kept as a central semi-private space for receiving guests, located between three newly formed dwellings and utilized as a sleeping room for the parents at night. To accentuate the social nature of this space, small porches were added to the side, creating another layer of social space — a semi-private space where neighbours and acquaintances could meet outside whenever the weather was pleasant. As Eyad explained: 'We people of As-Sanamayn like to socialize a lot! You would see us often with a teapot, sitting outside and chatting with neighbours. The *Maḍāfa* was a great

1 Military service in Syria is one of the main reasons for young men to leave the country, especially during the war. In Zaatari camp, it was noticed that mothers played a role in bringing their sons (who were under threat of being captured by the military) to Jordan, and in this case, to the camp.

spot for that, so we added a seating area on the side, no, on the two sides … one for the morning, that was shaded by the caravan, but it was facing the inside, so we added another one facing the street, which we sit in in the afternoon'. At this time, Samer was given a caravan by the UNHCR that he placed in front of the *Maḍāfa*, installing the tent in front of it at the entrance, thereby creating a semi-private space in the same way that his brother had done before.

A detailed plan and section (the case of Eyad)



Dialects of mobility: disappearance and presence

Dwelling in Zaatari camp responded to changes and transformations in family compositions. In addition to marriages and arrivals, departures and relocations also played a role in how families inhabited the available shelters. For instance, in January 2016, Yaseen (Eyad's eldest brother) decided to move to the Emirati Jordanian camp, hoping to secure better services for his growing children. The Emirati Jordanian camp was known for its facilities, which saw it referred to as a 'five-star camp' (see Dalal 2020). The caravan Yaseen had been given by the UNHCR was returned to the camp's management as per the regulations. To avoid destroying the structure of the dwelling, the family then bought a used Saudi caravan for 450 JDs (about 480 euros) and placed it in the same spot as the returned one. At the same time, the youngest brother, Hasan, was having trouble with his wife, particularly about sharing space with the rest of the family. Therefore, the family suggested that he move to the newly empty house where Yaseen had lived — which he did. During this period, Samer sold his tent for 30 JDs and bought zinco sheets to construct an enclosed dwelling. The door was placed on the side, to divert away from the entrance of the *Maḍāfa*. Next to the door and the caravan, a corridor containing a kitchen and a bathing area with a toilet was added. The floor was cemented with Eyad's help to cut the costs.

Around March 2016, the re-structuring plan (the so-called *Ṭanzīm*) reached the district. The family was asked to move their caravans to the left so that the sewage system could be installed. Their neighbour was also asked to move his caravan away; thus, the house was 'destroyed', according to Eyad, as the neighbour's caravan had been used as a wall. He recounted, 'Suddenly the toilet was on the street, and we were exposed because the neighbour took his caravan away'. To overcome this, Eyad placed the two caravans parallel to each other, creating more space for the kitchen, and used zinco to construct walls and roofs. The bathing area and the kitchen, meanwhile, became connected with pipes to a central sewage system.

In September 2016, Samer decided to move back to Syria, so he left the camp together with his wife. Faced with having to return one caravan because of Samer's repatriation, the family decided not to destroy the house but to give back the *Maḍāfa* instead, as this had remained separate and detached from the dwellings. Tensions between Hasan and his wife continued, so they divorced. The parents then asked Hasan to live in what had previously been Samer's dwelling. He agreed after getting remarried. A few months later, Yaseen, who was by then living in the Emirati-Jordanian camp, asked the family to sell the caravan he had left behind in the camp for him. They managed to sell it for 350 JDs (about 390 euros), even though he had bought it for about 100 JDs (about 80 euros) three years earlier. This exemplifies the impact of the caravan economy on the construction of dwellings. Thus, by mid-2017 the parents were living in what had been Yaseen's dwelling (one caravan), Hasan

and his new wife were living in what had been Samer's dwelling (two caravans), and Eyad and his younger sister remained in what was originally constructed as the family dwelling (two caravans).

Dwelling as a 'family business'

Dwelling is an inevitable phenomenon that cannot be suspended in refugee camps, or reduced to the spatial boundaries of the shelter. The manifestation of dwelling, or 'inhabiting' (Lefebvre 2003), seems to correspond to the nature of social relations within each sociocultural context. In Zaatari camp, changes within family relations and boundaries — attachment or detachment through marriage and divorce, and the need to accommodate the arrival and departure of other family members — created a socially fluid body, a force almost like a hidden biological structure, that resulted in shelters being rotated, combined and isolated. The body, to which here we can add the *social body*, that the machinery of the camp aimed to control and discipline, turned into an invisible yet vivid structure that gave meaning to the set of homogeneous empty 'containers' of the different shelter units. In Zaatari camp in particular, the idea of 'patriarchal connectivity' — which has been described as characteristic of Arab families — appears helpful in understanding the fluid, yet connected nature in which Eyad's family managed their need to dwell while accommodating the changes that were occurring within the relations and boundaries between different family members. This transformation, from two tents in March 2013 to three households composed of five caravans in 2017, was not linear. Instead, it encompassed many social events in between. The elemental nature of shelter facilitated this process, and eventually the family members found themselves in a position where they had to manage various assets, including spaces and shelter units. This points to the complex forms in which dwelling, or inhabiting, was taking place.

One key aspect was the need to manage the different shelters. For instance, while Eyad and his family acquired two UNHCR tents at the beginning of their stay at the camp, the construction of their dwelling overall involved *being given* three caravans from the UNHCR, *buying* two Omani caravans (for 100 JDs each), a Saudi caravan (for 450 JDs), and two tents (for 20 JDs each), and *selling* one tent (for 20 JDs) and one caravan (for 350 JDs). Therefore, the shelter itself did not always function as planned. Instead, its spatial and physical characteristics and economic value were utilized to create socio-spatial compositions that responded to each phase and the related challenges (the lack of space, shifting familial boundaries, financial means, etc.). In other words, shelter was never in itself an end product, but a means to create a suitable socio-spatial arrangement of the dwelling.

In addition, the *connectivity* between family members enabled them to be fluid in terms of the use and reuse of emerging spaces. The parents would use the *Maḍāfa* as a sleeping room at night and a guest room in the morning, and one dwelling was dedicated to family gatherings, cooking and eating during the day, while being used for sleeping at night by Eyad, his younger sister Rasha and later on by Hasan and his wife. Yaseen and Samer both constructed separate dwellings before leaving the camp (the former moving to the EJC and the latter going back to Syria). These spaces were subsequently redistributed among the remaining members of the family. Interestingly, Eyad and his family did not reproduce a dwelling similar to the one they had owned in Syria. Based on their description, this had been a vernacular dwelling built from black lava stone found in the region. Instead, they engaged in the process of managing resources in ways that responded to a particular social structure, as well as fluctuating needs. The result was not necessarily a single, ordered area featuring a gradient of spaces with regard to privacy, but a flexible, shifting, almost floating, arrangement that responded to the family's social needs as they changed over time. The following case, by comparison, reflects the opposite situation: the inability to dwell in a state of financial scarcity and sociocultural difference.

Chapter 4
Culture, Knowledge, Memory and Identity

'Wow, this is interesting!' was a comment that I heard frequently when showing two sketches at once: how refugees live today (a floor plan of their current dwelling) and how they used to live (a remembered floor plan of their previous dwelling). In the first images, one could see how refugees tried to adapt to a new space and how they appropriated it. This space is often a shelter. One or two rooms, or caravans, placed together and moved to create a layout, a floor plan — a new dwelling. The second image is of the previous dwelling, the one in which the refugee used to live: a few rooms, a kitchen, a bathroom, and memories of how the elements were arranged and how the materials were used. What used to be a lived space is now nostalgia, a beautiful dream. Memories rarely represent the truth, but instead are manipulated by their holder. Brief snatches of remembering and forgetting; what was before and what is today. For architects and non-architects, looking at these two images at once is a sentimental moment. It equates to witnessing what displacement is about: an old, romanticized dwelling, often large, versus a newly appropriated and built one, associated with loss and hardship, and often smaller. The 'loss of home' is strongly felt through these comparisons. Juxtaposing them has the power to provoke the meaning of home, and if examined deeply enough, the challenge to dwell in our everyday life of turmoil.

In addition to the symbolism of this moment and its emotional impact, architects would naturally be drawn to observing and comparing floor plans. This room was here and the other was there; this looked like this and this looked like that. Architects would attempt to read the two drawings as interlinked, focusing on the object, the dwelling; what is similar and what is not? Do refugees reproduce dwellings in the same way that they used to live? In Zaatari camp, it was quite normal to hear people repetitively say that 'refugees designed their dwellings similar to those in Syria, all around a courtyard'. The image of the Damascene courtyard house in the Medina comes immediately to mind. The questions therefore, are what type of *knowledge* can be seen as transferred from one place to another? And what can these two different, yet interlinked, experiences tell us about dwelling, and

human behaviour and culture? The question about culture becomes the prevalent one.

Culture, memory, knowledge and identity can be interlinked, with one leading to another, similar to the maze of the home, house, domestic space, dwelling and shelter described earlier. These topics are inherently connected, yet each could lead to a slightly different path. The questions here are then: what is prioritized in this regard, and what is most relevant to the construction of dwelling? Or to put it more concisely, which of these issues have an impact on the reassembling practices? Understanding the reassembling of the camp as a socio-spatial ordering of space, allows us to reassess the importance of these topics *from below*. What is most relevant to refugees so they can dwell within the sea of shelters, or the 'caravan parking', as it was once called in a UNHCR report? Do refugees seek to reproduce 'cultural' models, such as the courtyard found in the Medina? Are they relying on their memory, or instead on certain relationships to identity and knowledge?

In this chapter, I use the words 'culture' and 'memory' as starting points to reach two dimensions that I consider as essential to the process of reassembling. These are *knowledge* and *identity*. Both culture and memory are catalysed and perceived here as forms of *implicit* 'knowledge'; ways of knowing the world that are not necessarily conceptual, but instead interactive, imaginative and lived. These forms of knowledge are complemented with what is imagined or wished for: knowledge that is seen and obtained from far away, thus *translocal*, or even knowledge that emerged from the camp itself, and is thus strictly *local*. In contrast to the construction and planning of the camp, this knowledge is not centralized or put together in a handbook. Instead, it becomes a tool that serves the dwellers' visions and needs. It also helps them to reconstruct certain 'identities', and consequently engenders *difference* as an important social reality in contrast to the 'refugee' that renders them all as the same homogeneous group. While these topics appear across all case studies and will be expanded on later; I will let them slowly unfold with the following case: a refugee who identifies as a 'city dweller', arriving in the camp in 2014 and settling in its margins, while lacking financial means and social support.

Dwelling on the edge

Omar, a 30-year-old man, was raised in an old city in Syria. Before the war, he had obtained a degree in teaching and had been able to purchase his own flat in the suburbs of the city. He married a woman who was originally from the Houran region. At the start of the war, Omar was conscripted into military service, but he managed to escape with the help of smugglers, who took him to Jordan after spending two days in the desert. Omar arrived at Zaatari camp in April 2014, which also marked the date of the opening of Jordan's new camp, Azraq. This meant that

he was among the most recent waves of arrivals at Zaatari camp. As his wife and in-laws (two parents, two brothers and a sister) had already been settled in Zaatari camp since 2013, he moved so as to be directly next to them, in an area located in the eastern part of the camp. At the time, this area was one of the least populated parts of Zaatari, due to its remote location (situated 2.5 kilometres from the entrance) and lack of infrastructure. As Omar explained, 'We were the only district that did not have electricity in the whole camp … It was all tents!' This was at a time when many dwellings around the camp were already being constructed out of caravans and metal sheets.

The eastern periphery of Zaatari camp in February 2014

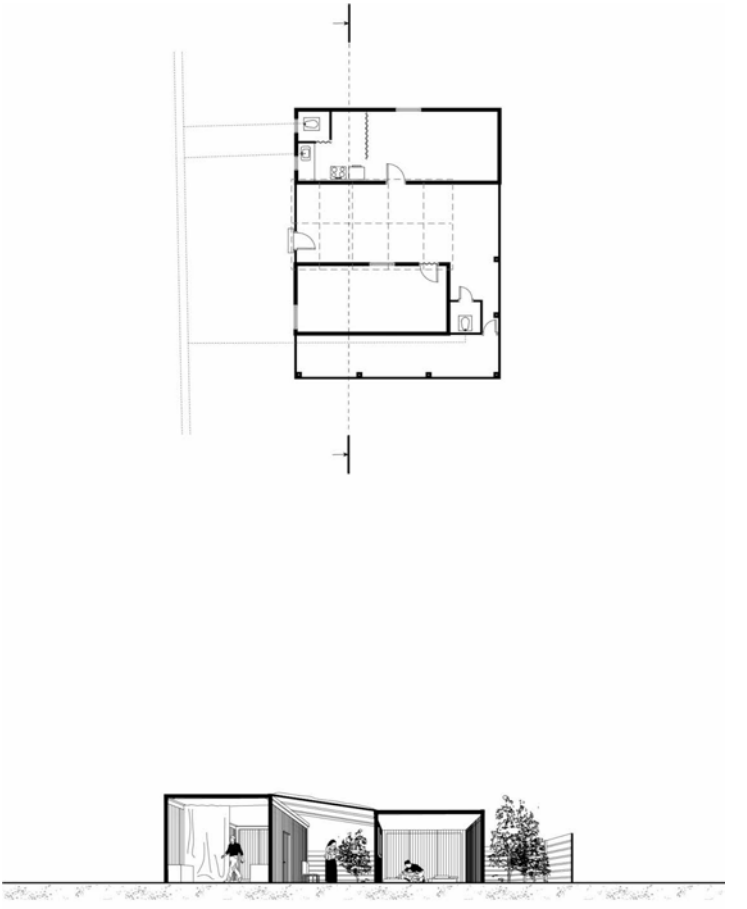
In contrast to others, Omar was not given a shelter on arrival at the camp, due to delays in the registration process. Instead, he was accommodated in an empty caravan borrowed from a neighbour. The caravan had only recently been delivered, therefore no additions had yet been made. As Omar recalled, 'an empty caravan. No zinco, nothing'. The caravan was already situated next to the one his in-laws were living in, so they did not have to move it. Settling there with his wife, Omar just added a mattress, so the caravan could be used as a sleeping and living space. Bathing and eating took place at his in-laws', who had already constructed their dwelling out of two caravans. Here, they lived for about twenty days until they had to return the caravan, because the neighbours needed it to construct their own dwelling.

Having arrived at the camp with only the money in his pockets, Omar had to find alternative accommodation. He managed to buy a used tent for 30 JDs (35 euros), which was all he had. The tent was placed in the empty area in front of his in-laws' living space and was again furnished with a mattress. Being physically close to his in-laws gave Omar a feeling of security, but being reliant on them also made him feel weak. He recalled, 'I felt I was a burden on others, and I didn't want to add anything to the tent because I wanted to go back to Syria'. Thus, the caravan was used as a living room for Omar and his wife during the day, but at night the wife would sleep inside one of her family's caravans. He explained, 'The tent is not safe to sleep in at night, so I asked my wife to sleep over at her family's place'. This again shows that the shelter, especially the tent, was not perceived by refugees as a safe and secure space. Instead, tents and caravans were used as elements to serve different socio-spatial arrangements, in which families and their members would feel protected and where privacy could be ensured.

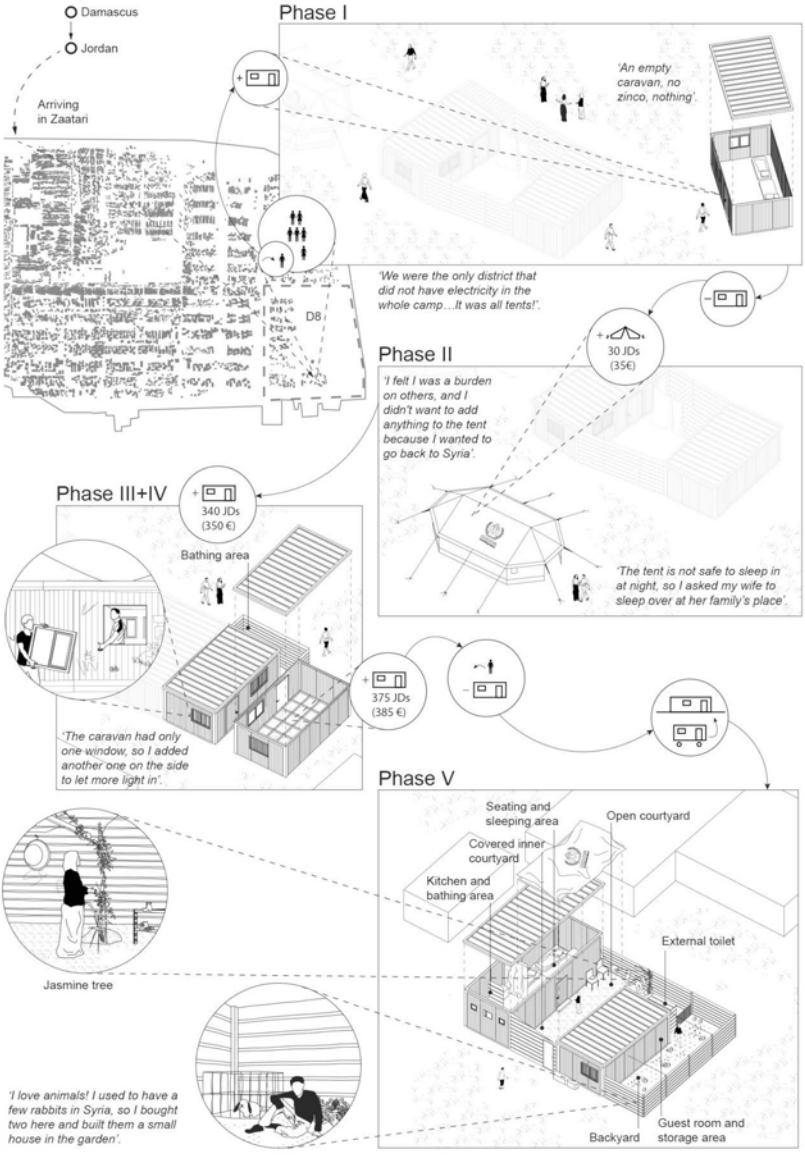
After spending four months in the tent and managing to earn some money from working in an NGO, Omar was able to buy a used caravan for 340 JDs (about 360 euros). The caravan had belonged to a neighbour, who planned to leave the camp to live with her husband, who was working in Saudi Arabia. The caravan was located about 300 metres away in the same district, so it was placed on a caravan carrier, moved to the site and then positioned next to the in-laws' dwelling. When asked about this, Omar said, 'I am spending much of the time in the morning at the NGO, so I want my wife to be close to her family'. Dwelling close to family was an important source of security for people in Zaatari camp, and constitutes a general practice that is assumed to be associated with the nature of Arab societies (see Young and Shami 1997, 3). However, Omar's case was slightly different, because he was not a direct member of the family. Here, in line with Suad Joseph's (1999) analysis of 'patriarchal connectivity', Omar was connected to his in-laws and considered as a 'son', on the one hand, while on the other he was expected to show his ability to fulfil the leading role prescribed to him as a husband. Additionally, as the daughter's husband, he could not be exposed to other women in the fam-

ily. This translated into spatial arrangements: the newly bought caravan was not placed directly facing the in-laws' ones, but off to one side, with its door facing the neighbours, thus expressing a sign of connectivity and of separation at the same time. Omar and his wife lived in the new caravan for a year and a half. The only addition he made was a window. He recalled, 'The caravan had only one window, so I added another one on the side to let more light in'. Cooking would be carried out inside the caravan using a small gas stove, and bathing would take place at the in-laws' dwelling.

A detailed floor plan and section (the case of Omar)



The transition from shelters to dwellings (the case of Omar)



A perspective of the resulting dwelling and urban fabric (the case of Omar)

After a year and a half, Omar was able to buy another caravan to receive guests in. To reduce costs, he bought it without a floor for 275 JDs (about 290 euros). He explained, 'I bought it without the floor … its wooden floor was sold by the caravan traders. It's cheaper like that'. Using a caravan carrier, it was placed one metre in front of the other caravan. To make it usable, he added sand and cement to the floor with the help of a professional. Additionally, he created a bathing area in the back using zinco sheets. Here, he would live with his wife for another four months. During this period, Zaatari camp was going through a re-structuring process, and a new type of caravan was introduced in the camp — the fixed Qatari caravan, which is larger and equipped with a built-in kitchen and bathing area. Omar's brother-in-law was able to obtain one of these fixed caravans, which happened to be located in an empty space in front of the in-laws' dwelling. However, shortly afterwards, the brother-in-law decided to relocate to the Emirati-Jordanian camp, seeking better services for his children. Instead of returning the fixed Qatari caravan to the UNHCR (as per the regulations), Omar and his brother-in-law came to an agreement to give back one of Omar's caravans (the cheaper one) in its place, so Omar could settle in the new, fixed caravan. Such forms of self-management of shelter helped refugees to find suitable solutions to changes occurring within the family — as shown in the previous case.

After relocating, Omar had to rearrange his dwelling around the new caravan, which was fixed to the ground. He placed the remaining original caravan in front of it, thereby creating a courtyard. This was a common practice in Zaatari camp and was used to increase visual privacy. Yet in contrast to the previous cases, the construction of Omar's dwelling had to negotiate the characteristics of the fixed caravan, in terms of its size, dimensions and elements. For example, while this type of shelter comes with a built-in toilet placed near the kitchen, such an arrangement could be problematic for some. As Omar commented, 'I don't like having a toilet next to the kitchen!' Therefore, he built a small cubicle outside, adjacent to the caravan and near the back so it would not be seen immediately on entering the courtyard. This shows that the production of 'advanced' types of shelter, although offering more comfort for refugees, is still an imposed form of 'habitat' (Lefebvre 2003), and could thus clash with the dwellers' lifestyles and how they envisioned to dwell.

The resulting dwelling therefore had two rooms: a large one in the Qatari caravan, separated from the kitchenette and the bathing area by a curtain, and a small room in the adjacent caravan. The large room was furnished with mattresses, carpets, curtains, LED lights, pictures and a TV. 'When I receive guests [male friends], they can come here, and my wife stays at her family's temporarily until they leave', he commented. In that sense, the large room functioned as a guest room (*Maḍāfa*), living room and sleeping room. The other caravan he used as a storage room, where electrical equipment was kept. 'I like to create things. I made this generator here.

I use it to power these LED lights around the garden when the electricity is cut off', he noted. Between the two caravans, Omar constructed a roof with the help of a professional and added a cement floor along the length of the Qatari fixed caravan. The difference in length between the fixed caravan (7.5 metres) and the movable caravan (5 metres) resulted in two types of courtyard: a covered one along the length of the smaller caravan and an open one in the remaining space leading to the garden and the outside toilet. A few months later, Omar extended his dwelling by adding a backyard stretching from the open courtyard towards the back of the movable caravan. Here, he planted corn and raised rabbits. He stated, 'I love animals! I used to have a few rabbits in Syria, so I bought two here and built them a small house in the garden'. Finally, the dwelling was fenced with zinco sheets, and the backyard garden was kept separate from the rest of the dwelling using a net fence that would prevent the rabbits from reaching the courtyards if they were left out in the backyard.

The resulting arrangement and design of Omar's dwelling differ slightly from others in Zaatari camp. On the one hand, the difference stems from attempting to combine two different shelter typologies: a fixed and a movable caravan. On the other hand, the use and construction of spaces within the dwelling relied heavily on Omar's background, as we will see below. Nonetheless, a scarcity of resources delayed this process. Arriving at the camp with only about 35 JDs, and struggling to produce income, meant that Omar and his wife had to shift between various forms of shelters for two years until settling in their newly designed and composed dwelling.

The Saudi fixed caravans, with a built-in kitchenette and bathroom/toilet

A wedding tower decorated with LED lights and used to illuminate squares where weddings and the Dabkeh dance were performed in Zaatari camp

Catalysing culture and negotiating identities

'What is Syrian culture?' I asked myself after a long presentation of the various dwellings I examined in Zaatari camp on my return to Germany. In anthropology, it has been argued that 'culture' is used as a tool to maintain hierarchies and construct the 'other'; therefore, scholars have called for the need to argue 'against' it (L. Abu-Lughod 1991). In the context of refugee camps, Liisa Malkki (1992) noted the impact of space on refugees, as those accommodated in camps were observed to harness the purity of their national identity in contrast to those who found refuge in cities, and tended to adopt a more cosmopolitan identity. However, such generalizations about culture and cultural identity remain somewhat problematic, as Lila Abu-Lughod (1991) warned. In previous work, I have argued that — especially in a camp context — there is a need to uncover the multiplicity of cultures and identities that often remain 'concealed' by homogeneous categorizations within the humanitarian discourse (Dalal 2017). Furthermore, I have suggested elsewhere that there is a specificity to refugee camps that has long been overlooked. This specificity is tied to the fact that the camps put people from different cultures, backgrounds and origins, who have often been conceived of as immobile, in close contact with each other — in many cases for the first time. Therefore, the refugee camp is intrinsically a site of encounters, allowing refugees to rethink identities of the 'self' and the 'other' (Dalal 2021).

In the context of this book, and in relation to dwelling, what could appear to be 'cultural', and in that sense generic, are the importance of visual privacy and the position of women within the family. In his book, *House Form and Culture*, Amos Rapoport (1969) suggested that cultural forces play a primary role in shaping the layout of a dwelling, in comparison with other factors, such as economy, site, materials and building techniques. For instance, he observed the 'courtyard house' to be a recurring model in Greece, the Middle East and Latin America, where there is an 'extreme need for privacy for woman who are cloistered'. Therefore, 'the windows and roofs of these courtyard houses are designed to prevent anyone from intruding into the intimacy of the house' (Rapoport 1969, 65). However, in his latest work, Rapoport (2005, 1992) came to recognize the difficulty of discussing sociocultural factors in generic terms, and therefore called for 'dismantling culture' into various elements — including identity, which is a subtle yet important dimension to focus on in the case of Zaatari camp. To highlight this dimension, I turn again to Omar's dwelling.

As mentioned earlier, Omar originates from a city in Syria. This portrays him as 'highly civilized and advanced' in contrast to most of the refugees in Zaatari camp, who originate from villages and towns in the underdeveloped south of Syria. During an interview, Omar established this *difference* by saying:

> Everyone in the camp … and I mean it, everyone has relatives here except me … a cousin working here, an uncle working there … but not me! I'm here all by myself. And imagine, every time I open my mouth to speak, they would immediately ask me, 'where are you from?' They realize that my dialect is different.

Omar felt very estranged by his urban identity as a city dweller, even though he had been living in the camp for three years at the time this interview was conducted. When asked about the culture of other refugees in the camp, he commented:

> I don't go to their weddings anymore. I find it weird. Even the songs and chanting I don't understand. I feel like a stranger. I'm afraid to act in a way that would be misunderstood. I was asked to go to a wedding the other day, but I refused! I can't integrate with them, even though I've tried! The other day I had to go to a wedding of a close friend of mine. I simply did not like it. A guy playing keyboard loudly all day, and people dancing *Dabkeh*, and noise! Two days of dancing and then three days after the wedding ceremonies. Is that normal? This is not a wedding, this is a 'party' [in English]. Our weddings were not like this, two hours, rings, and a small event, that's it.

The notion of 'identity' is a very complex and challenging one in the Middle East. Different aspects, such as religion, socioeconomics, sects, territories, elitism and history can be deeply intertwined, producing hybrid and sometimes contested identities. 'Where are you from?' I am often asked when taking a cab in Jordan, due to my Syrian dialect. Although holding a Jordanian passport, I would be treated differently and looked at with a different pair of eyes. These Middle Eastern identities are recognized and associated with dialect, behaviour, education, knowledge, place of residence, and so on. Being aware of this complexity, particularly within the Syrian context, I would suggest that the main identities in Zaatari camp are constructed around urban origins. City dwellers were considered to be more 'civilized' and 'advanced' compared with villagers in the camp; nonetheless, they were also seen as more 'uptight' than the villagers, who were described as maintaining a fairly 'relaxed' and 'open' attitude. Similarly, the Bedouins or the nomads were considered the 'least civilized' by both city dwellers and villagers. 'Bedouins have a different lifestyle. They have no problem with leaving their kids running outside in the streets barefoot and naked, or pissing outside and playing in mud! This is not acceptable for us. We are conservative communities', commented Omar. Such tensions between nomads and the *Ḥaḍar* [urbanites] are historical and are claimed to stretch beyond the newly established nation states in the Middle East (for a more detailed explanation, see Dalal 2021). While the debate on identity constructs in the camp clearly requires further research, it should be underlined here that these identities are not static, but are fluid and dynamic in their formation. For instance, one of the refugees had his family origins in a village in the south of

Syria, yet was born and raised in Damascus. This put him in a problematic position within the camp, as he recounted:

> I tried to integrate and make people think that I am just like them. I always repeat 'I am like you, I'm also from Daraa'. But they keep treating me differently. Whatever happens, they immediately say. 'You are *Ibn al-Sham* [a Damascene]!' Maybe it is true, I am different. People from cities are different. When you live in Damascus, you are used to a certain lifestyle. You may have lots of friends and social relations outside, but when you come back home and close the door, it means you are by yourself, and nobody has the right to disturb you or interfere with your life. Here, I started to hear people gossiping, 'Oh, they did this, and those did that'. Rural society is much more open towards each other than in cities, they know each other much more closely and have stronger relations. But this made my life miserable here. They kept interfering in my choices. Even the zinco I put up to prevent my door from being exposed to the main street — they ask me why I put it there! I regret that I came to this area, although I am next to my relatives.

All of the above shows that identity can be a contested term, even in a newly established space such as Zaatari camp in Jordan; but how did that contribute to the construction of dwellings in Zaatari camp, particularly in Omar's case?

It has been suggested that 'a dwelling can be seen as an expression of identity, both for oneself and others. Location, exterior and interior have something to say about the social group one belongs to, and provide information about one's lifestyle and personal taste' (Hauge and Kolstad 2007, 273). In Omar's case, identity was *reconstructed*, expressing itself in the ways in which he furnished his large room: coloured curtains, wall decoration, LED lights, carpets and mattresses. Further, on entering the dwelling, a notable feeling of cleanliness would be apparent. This is an important cultural practice among city dwellers in Syria, and a sign of wealth and pride. 'Look, Bedouins are everywhere in this area. If you want to know how to recognize them, just look around and you will see dwellings wrapped with *Mshamma*' [plastic sheets, here meaning parts of tents], bags, wires. You would recognize them mostly from the *Mshamma*' they keep using, although caravans and metal sheets are available for construction', said Omar. Based on that, identity is not only signified by the decoration and interior design of dwellings, but also by the type of materials used to construct them.

Remnants of a tent (Mshamma') used to construct a front yard in a dwelling inhabited by a Bedouin family

The 'guest room' of a family originally from a city, showing the contrast to the humbly decorated rooms of the villagers in the camp

The Role of knowledge

In the context of 'dwelling', knowledge seems to have been paid little scholarly attention to date. If considered at all, it has been simplified or reduced to implicit forms of knowledge carried by the dweller and practiced in the form of 'memory' and 'habits'. This form of knowledge, which I would term *implicit knowledge*, is indeed an important dimension of the process of dwelling, as it is inscribed directly in the practices of the dweller. In addition, although implicit knowledge is very important (and culture could be considered as one source of implicit knowledge), it is not the only dimension in which knowledge becomes important for dwelling — an aspect that I will return to later.

From a historical perspective — for instance in relation to the climate — it has been argued that 'people respond to the regional conditions of the places they call home, and dwell through a particular way of *knowing* the world' (Bassett 2015, 110 [emphasis added]). A re-reading of Rapoport (1969, 1992, 2005) also suggests a way of thinking of culture as a form of implicit knowledge. It can be associated with the poetics of dwelling, and thus with memory and the practices generated by it. As Gaston Bachelard (1954, 36) puts it in his famous book *The Poetics of Space*, 'But over and beyond memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us. It is a group of organic habits'. This means that implicit forms of knowledge are also *expressed* implicitly, as well as unconsciously. The ways in which they are intrinsically merged with the practice and imagination of the dweller make it difficult to recognize this knowledge as a separate element from the dwellers themselves.

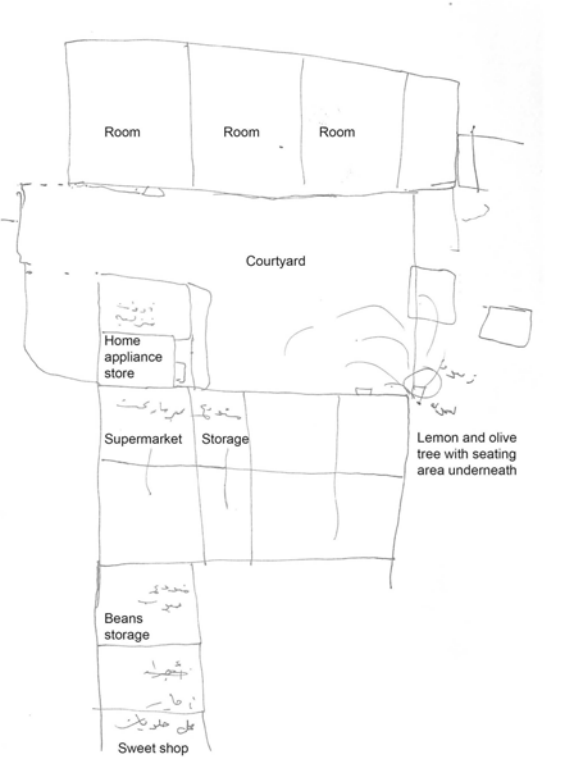
In Omar's case, this was evident in the way he used the spaces around the shelter. As mentioned earlier, the difference in size between the fixed and movable caravan resulted in the creation of an open courtyard: a small uncovered and fenced space with a cemented floor and two chairs placed in the corner. In front of this area, a jasmine tree was planted, spread over a wooden beam, behind which the external toilet was located and a net-fenced door leading to the backyard was placed. When Omar was asked whether he had been inspired by his previous dwelling in Syria when constructing the one in Zaatari camp, he answered with some irritation, 'We used to live in a house that is 200 years old. It is impossible that I could rebuild a similar one here'.

According to his description, the dwelling in which he was raised was located in the Medina, and represented a typical Syrian courtyard house: a central open space around which the dwelling and its spaces are organized. A kitchen, a water fountain, a bathroom and a guestroom were located on the lower floor, and sleeping rooms were situated on the upper floor. 'I love sitting in this place [in the open courtyard] when the sun is not too strong', Omar commented when he showed me the space. Another form of this implicit knowledge of space could also be observed in the way additional areas around the dwellings were used and appropriated. City

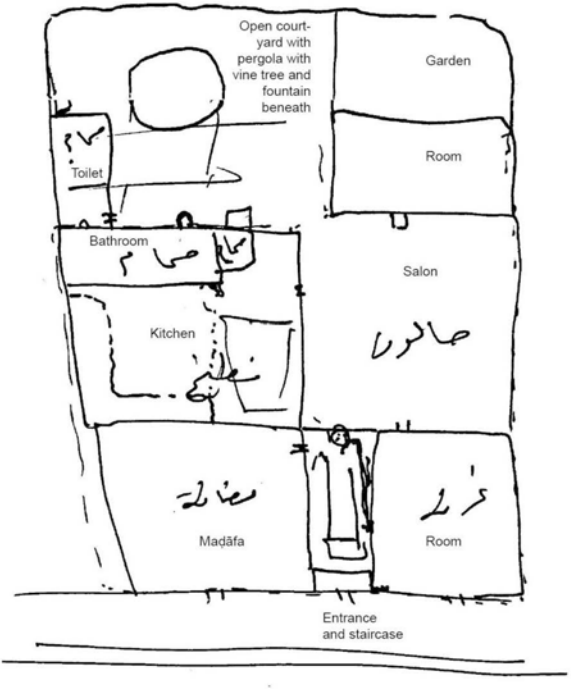
dwellers, for instance, were keen on constructing a fenced garden or open space attached to their dwellings, in which domestic animals could be raised and the family could sit outside in the shade during hot summers. 'This is where we eat and gather on summer days. The kids just love it', commented a refugee woman from Homs city, while we sat on a bench built from concrete blocks propped up against the caravan and furnished with small pillows. The knowledge of how to construct gardens clearly has its origins in the production of habitats in Syrian cities, where the general design encourages the creation of fenced gardens attached to the dwellings on the ground floor. The necessity to construct such gardens in cities arose out of the need to maintain visual privacy and a desire to bring back nature to cities in which green spaces were rapidly declining. Such a practice, or rather this particular expression of *implicit knowledge*, was not found among villagers in Zaatari camp, who were accustomed to 'living in the fields', as one villager put it. 'We rarely had private gardens attached to our dwellings back in Syria. They were mostly surrounded by *Ḥākoura* [farms]', a young man from the village of Sheikh Maskeen commented. In this regard, the impact of implicit knowledge was astonishing: none of the interviewees from rural origins had fenced gardens attached to their dwellings in the camp, in stark contrast to all of the interviewees from the city. While the sample used here is by no means representative, knowledge seems to be of significant importance to dwelling and has the capacity to catalyse notions such as 'culture', which could be misused, especially in the context of scholarly research and representation (see Said 1994).

A mental map of a refugee's previous dwelling in Syria, located in a rural area (The case of Eyad)

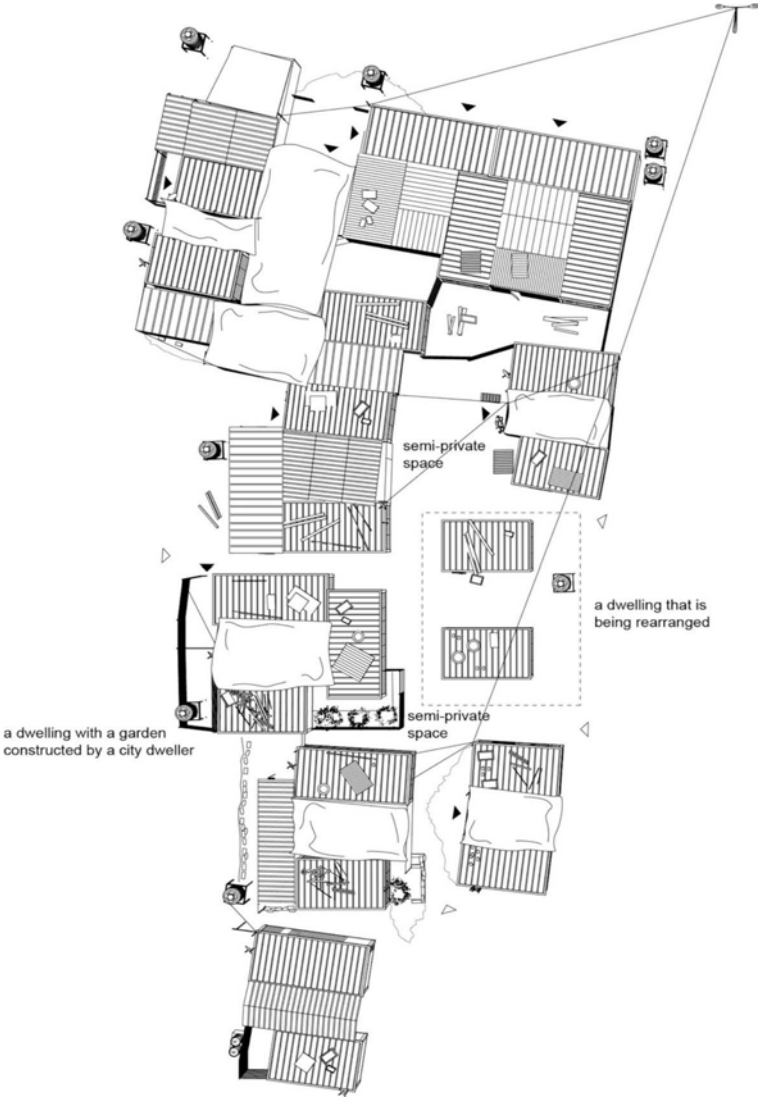
A mental map of a refugee's previous dwelling in Syria, located in a rural area



The arrangement of a courtyard house in an old city, where a Syrian refugee in Zaatari camp used to live



An overhead view of a studied cluster, showing the semiotics of space and the role of implicit knowledge in reassembling



Knowledge, in the context of dwelling, can uncover and shed light on the power dynamics involved in the process of reassembling. At the beginning of this book, I sketched the notions of 'habitat' and 'inhabiting' that were developed by Lefebvre (2003a). The concept of knowledge can help us to unpack these further: What kind of knowledge is used to produce habitats today, including shelters? And the other way round, what kind of knowledge is mobilized by dwellers to inhabit space? In the context of Zaatari camp, in addition to the implicit subjective knowledge brought to the camp by each individual and the knowledge of space borrowed from other contexts — which could be called *translocal/transnational knowledge* (for example, the American kitchen in Sami's dwelling), new forms of *emerging local knowledge* were also produced. The main characteristic of this knowledge was that it emerged from the specificity of the context and thus produced a local and dynamic reservoir of spatial knowledge, continuously expanding within the camp. This knowledge was initially generated and spread through encounters (Dalal 2021). Gradually, people became accustomed to the tent and the prefab. They not only appropriated them to suit their daily needs, but they also became knowledgeable about their specific characteristics: how to move and relocate the caravan, how to shorten its metallic framework, how to alter its composition, how to use it as a load-bearing system, and most importantly, how to inhabit it. This knowledge, although ephemeral in nature, was assembled by the 'professionals' mentioned in the case studies. These professionals were often referred to as the 'realtors' or 'caravan traders' (whose role will be elaborated in the following chapter). They not only became responsible for carrying and preserving the knowledge about the caravan and how to build with it, but also developed new techniques, including dismantling the caravans and rebuilding entire dwellings out of their parts.

Based on this, the knowledge used by relief actors and donors to produce shelters in Zaatari camp was confronted by an ephemeral, emerging and unexpectedly growing body of local knowledge that enabled refugees to inhabit the shelter and to construct dwellings. Refugees would share information about successful models that improved dwelling among their neighbours. In other words, dwelling in Zaatari camp was a tactical practice in which refugees' knowledge about space was utilized against the institutional knowledge of space. The former operated 'tactically', and therefore informally, whereas the latter functioned 'strategically' (De Certeau 2013, 36), through standardized knowledge resources such as the *Handbook for Emergencies* (2007). This last point sheds light on the importance of understanding and approaching the process of dwelling not as a product or a physical structure, but as *ongoing resistance* to the hegemony of institutions that want to discipline dwelling and make it manageable, especially during crises.

Chapter summary

This chapter aimed to unpack a myriad of issues that are, by nature, interlinked and thus often confusing to address, such as memory and culture. In the context of the shelter and the camp, culture appears as the most striking element as it the easiest one to notice: a set of behaviours and traditions that represent 'difference' in contrast to the standardized and 'similar' shelter design offered to refugees. Coming back to the notion of dismantling and reassembling which ties this book together, I have suggested here a new way to look at culture and memory, by first addressing the *struggle* and *conflict* that is automatically engendered by attempting to dwell in the camp, and second by considering them as means to 'win' this conflict as De Certeau would say. In that sense, culture and memory find ways to express themselves in the camp, but can be seen as tools to win this struggle. To clarify this point, I turned into the notion of knowledge which *weaponizes* culture and memory. These notions become ways to addressing the struggle to dwell in a shelter; they become justifications to why and how shelters are appropriated and the camp is being eventually altered. Knowledge therefore is a more holistic term that brings us closer to the nature of dwelling in camps, which is not only conflictual, but also tactical and strategic at once. Dwelling in camps is where institutional knowledge confronts an emergent, hybrid and ephemeral kind of knowledge which is simultaneously local, translocal and implicit. This knowledge, possessed by the dwellers, is geared towards removing the limitations and constraints against a more suitable and dignifying dwelling space. In the following, I will try to wrap up this part, which was directed towards exploring the social dynamics of reassembling in Zaatari camp.

Outro
From the Social to the Material

This part — comprising three chapters — has two purposes. The first is to highlight the social dynamics of reassembling, and second, is to provide ethnographic accounts of how reassembling was carried out in different settings. Zaatari camp is a heterogeneous space, in contrast to the way in which it was initially planned and envisioned. Its vast area became permeated by different material-spatial realities, infrastructures, social structures, identities and suchlike. The three case studies were chosen to illustrate different times and locations in the camp. Although they do not seek to offer any representations or generalizations, they nevertheless underline the diversity of the socio-spatial conditions of the camp, and therefore, the diversity of the approaches to reassembling.

The role of these ethnographic accounts is their ability to allow the complexity and richness of the process to unfold. Reassembling practices are not linear or simple. They are conflictual, overlapping, contested and complex. They seek to bridge the gap between the shelter and the dwelling, and therefore are very creative, case-based, heterogeneous and sometimes unexpected. Refugees seek to reproduce social space in the camp — a space that suspends dwelling. In this context, reassembling is the approach to these goals, rather than the outcome. *Reassembling* is the way in which refugees seek to reproduce social space and to dwell in a camp. From that perspective, reassembling is the journey and not the destination. This journey is permeated by many events, structures and dynamics emerging in the social sphere and among the dwellers. Studies directed towards the dwelling and the domestic space per se have for long addressed these issues. Aspects such as privacy, semiotics of space, identity, culture and family relations are far from being new to the field. However, what is being addressed in this book is the process of *becoming*. To visualize this process, it helps to always remember how a crowded cluster, such as the one in which Sami lives, was originally just a group of empty, standardized containers. Or that Eyad's and Omar's dwellings were made from a series of shelter units that were constantly being replaced and changed. The focus here is therefore not the shelter or the material per se, but the larger process in which they are embedded.

In the context of Zaatari camp, this process of becoming — or to be more explicit, the transition from shelters to dwellings — was affected by three major dynamics. The first is visual privacy, the second is family relations and the third is knowledge. While these may be the main themes, much can be discussed under each, and linkages can be easily made between them. For instance, family relations are sustained by maintaining visual privacy, and this can be considered as a form of implicit knowledge, finding its roots in the region. Nevertheless, these three themes are definitely interlinked and can be felt in any context in regard to dwelling; yet they appear to be the most prominent in the camp because of how shelters are made and what their purpose is. By containing refugees in shelters during emergencies, social relations and space are suddenly no longer in perspective. To bring these elements into the picture, reassembling practices revolve around the spatialization of social relations, which requires re-establishing private areas, socio-spatial codes, differences and identities across the space of the camp and the shelter — a process in which a myriad of knowledge is utilized.

To clarify these points further, I revert to the impact of the 'material world' on the process of reassembling. How did the materiality of the shelter and the camp influence the ways in which dwellings were constructed in Zaatari camp? Moreover, what role did aspects such as temporariness and politics play in the process? The following part shows the extent to which the practices of dismantling and reassembling are deeply entrenched in the materiality of the camp itself.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Part Three: Reassembling the Material

Chapter 5
The Caravan
Economics and Architectonics

Caravans, or prefabs, are simple structures that were originally, and still are, used for trade. The larger ones can be seen on the back of ships or lorries, moving goods from one place to another. The smaller ones can be used temporarily as offices on construction sites, or as accommodation for workers, and examples of this type can be widely found across the Gulf region. Migrant workers' camps, including those in Oman and the UAE, are built from smaller containers similar to the ones distributed in Zaatari camp. The fact that the built structure of Zaatari camp is assembled from containers mostly brought from, and donated by, Arab Gulf countries shows the connectedness of the histories of migration and refuge in the Middle East; beyond the narrative of one state, one refugee group or even one camp. Migrant workers from southern Asia, and Syrian refugees — both unwanted categories, and a potential form of a crisis waiting to erupt — are *contained* by nation states using the prefab. The nation states confront the circulation of refugees and unwanted migrants by using the simple, and even trivial-looking, element of the container, the prefab or the caravan as it referred to in Zaatari.[1] States, prefabs and people, circulating in the Middle East and beyond, drawing new histories of marginalized beings, living inside a 15 square-metre room made of metal sandwich panels.

The focus on the caravan in this chapter has two objectives. The first is to complement the analysis of the previous chapter by showing how the architecture and emerging economy of the caravan contributed to the transition from shelters to dwellings. Examples of this transition were shown in detail previously, and the importance of the caravan — its prices, sizes and building techniques — is evident across the case studies. In this chapter, the missing pieces of information will be illustrated, highlighted and elaborated on. The second objective of the chapter is to

1 For further analysis of the circulation of prefabs and how they are used to move, contain and displace refugees, see (Baumann 2020).

underline the multi-scalar nature of dwelling. Previously, practices of dismantling and reassembling were traced across the scales of the camp, the neighbourhood or the cluster, and the dwelling itself. In this chapter, I look deeper into the body of the container, showing how these practices manifest on a material and micro scale. To do so, the analysis focuses only on the movable types of caravans. The newly distributed ones — one of which appeared in the last case study — are not included, due to their scarcity and insignificance in comparison with the movable shelters.[2]

The significance of caravans

Caravans were distributed in Zaatari camp as a provisional replacement for tents. Many tents collapsed under the heavy snow that hit the camp around the end of 2012, and Gulf donors — including both governments and NGOs — were among the first to donate caravans. During that period, the camp was being officially managed by the JHCO and the UNHCR, yet the landscape and power relations within the humanitarian regime in Jordan were becoming more heterogeneous and transnational than before, and the presence of Gulf actors was accelerating. The involvement of Gulf actors shaped the establishment of camps in Jordan, as well as their built structure. The provision of caravans was never consistent, and strongly dependent on donations. In addition, although the UNHCR adopted the caravan as the main shelter in Zaatari camp, the times at and numbers in which caravans were brought to the camp varied (see Chapter 1). 'I don't think we have exact records of what and when caravans arrived in the camp. Especially at the beginning … it was, to be honest, a bit chaotic', confessed a camp technician in embarrassment. The gradual replacement of tents by caravans — or what I refer to as 'caravanization' — produced an exceptional site: a camp, the size of a city, entirely built of caravans, mostly donated by Gulf actors, and differing in size and quality. Eventually, Zaatari camp became a 'huge caravan park', to put in the words of a UN reporter (UNHCR 2013b). This description illustrates how the humanitarian actors perceived the camp. An accumulation of endless rooms, shining under the sizzling sun, resembling a metallic carpet over the Jordanian desert. Refugees, however, perceived the caravan differently. This simple shelter unit became the centre of social life in Zaatari camp. I still remember hearing a UNHCR Field Officer answering his phone: 'Please don't panic! We will try to find you a caravan as soon as possible! Meanwhile, try to convince your wife to stay with her relatives until we call you to

2 The years 2016 and 2017 involved experiments using 'new' types of caravans. These were larger, incorporating a built-in kitchenette and bathroom, and most importantly, fixed to the ground.

get your new caravan'. For refugees in Zaatari camp, the caravan became an element of paramount importance. Their daily life is organized around the caravan — its dimensions, characteristics, and even sound qualities. 'Listen, can you hear the sounds in the nearby caravan?' a young volunteer asked me while we were in an activity centre. 'This is how we hear our neighbours too. Imagine. Could you live like this? If I knew this before, I would have arranged it [dwelling] differently', he added.

The caravan — initially a shelter unit, or a *container* space — became a *contained* element within the dwelling arrangement. It was absorbed by a more holistic and vital composition: namely the dwelling. The influence of the caravan on the reassembling practices in Zaatari camp can be traced both in terms of architecture and economics. Practices of reassembling were influenced by the physical and material quality of the caravans on the one hand, and on the other, by their economic value and constantly changing prices. Yet how did caravans — an element offered to refugees free of charge — gain value? Further, how does that relate to the economic dynamics of reassembling?

A surplus of caravans

The accommodation of refugees in Zaatari camp is based on a policy that provides each family of five members with its own shelter unit. Early on, the traditional type of UNHCR family tent was distributed in the camp. However, from November 2012 onwards, the policy shifted towards caravanization, which meant that all the tents in the camp were to be replaced by caravans. Ideally, a successful implementation of this policy would have resulted in refugees having only one form of shelter at a time, and thus no caravans would be exchanged. The statistics nevertheless show a different picture: A joint report by the UNHCR and REACH (2014) suggests that out of 19,882 caravans in Zaatari camp during May 2014, about half had been exchanged. A total of 8,283 caravans were purchased, 909 caravans were inherited, 508 were received as gifts, 98 were rented and 94 were empty and waiting to be sold.

One of the main reasons for the surplus of caravans in Zaatari camp was the change in population counts between 2012 and 2014. According to the UNHCR (2018), a total of 461,701 refugees have passed through the camp since its opening in July 2012. Considering that the population of the camp has stabilized at approximately 80,000, this means that about 380,000 refugees have left. Taking into consideration this timeframe, it can be concluded that many who were given caravans during the first months of 2013 left the camp during the second half of that year. This explains the transition in the camp's demography from around 200,000 in mid-2013 to 80,000 in mid-2014. In view of the arbitrary conditions prevalent

within the camp during that phase, it is likely that the UNHCR was unable to keep a clear record of those who had left the camp and did not return the caravans they had been given. This can be confirmed by the strict policy that was put into place in 2014, stating that that refugees were not allowed to leave the camp unless they had returned the caravans they had received.

Another reason for the surplus of caravans in Zaatari camp is the dynamic nature of familial relations of refugees there. For example, the marriage of a young couple would make them eligible for a caravan. However, if a couple divorced, caravans were not returned but remained with the family. These family changes, such as divorce, repatriation, death, relocations to another camp and so on, contributed to a surplus of caravans that appear to have been equally distributed across the camp during May 2014.

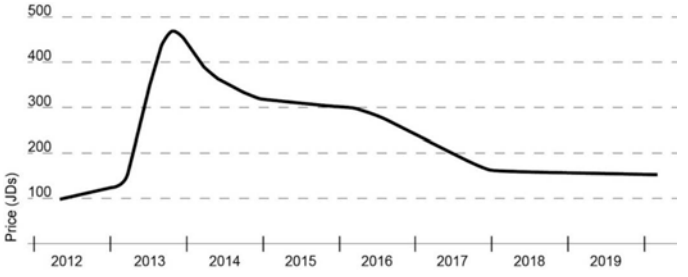
The caravan market

Caravans acquired an economic value by becoming essential components of the dwellings. As shown in the previous case studies, the reassembling practices were heavily reliant on refugees' ability to secure and manage caravans in response to changes in social space, family relations and their needs at a given time. The tension between the *demand* and the *availability* resulted in caravans gaining an economic value. The significance of this value was little known to the humanitarian actors in the camp, but it was noted that caravans were entering a local 'economic chain'. As the UNHCR and REACH (2014) report concluded after a survey conducted in the camp during May 2014, 'caravans are used as a source of income and a product, rather than merely a shelter'. This reading of the economic dynamics of dismantling and reassembling reflects the humanitarian stance towards the camp, and the techno-managerial approach by which its elements are seen and dealt with: the caravan is a form of shelter and should not be traded or exchanged. This perception of the shelter, however, contrasts with refugees' understanding of the structure as a crucial component of their dwellings, and a versatile element that facilitates or hinders their dwelling needs.

Gaining such a central role in refugees' lives, the caravans turned from a humanitarian element provided free of charge, into a form of currency. Caravans became the 'gold' of the camp, and at the same time, its architectural 'DNA'. The prices fluctuated over the years based on availability and demand. For example, as shown in the previous chapter, Sami bought a caravan for 135 JDs to expand his dwelling at the end of 2012. A few months later, Eyad and his family bought two Omani caravans for 100 JDs each. Prices increased between mid-2013 and mid-2014. During this period, Eyad's family bought a Saudi caravan for 450 JDs. The prices, however, started to decrease again from the second half of 2014 onwards. For example, Omar

bought a caravan for 340 JDs and another one (without a floor) for 275 JDs. The graph below, depicting the development of average caravan prices between 2012 and 2019, was drawn based on these figures, as well as further interviews with refugees.

Estimated average prices of caravans in Jordanian Dinars between 2012 and 2019



The graph shows that average prices jumped from 125 JDs in 2012 and 2013, to 450 JDs by mid-2013. This extreme change marks a boom in dwelling construction in Zaatari camp in that period. It was also affected by a radical increase in both the number of refugees and of caravans at the time. Later, dwelling construction started to decrease. According to the UNHCR and REACH (2014) report in May 2014, some 52.3 per cent of dwellings had only one caravan, while 31.8 per cent had two and 11.3 per cent had three caravans as part of the same dwelling. It was also found that caravans made up about 75 per cent of all shelters in the camp during the period, meaning that caravanization had continued, albeit at a slower pace. All these aspects led to a reduction in caravan prices to an average of 350 JDs in 2017 and 175 JDs in 2019.

Prices of caravans also differed depending on the type. The specific details and quality played a role in determining the values, where the quality was often defined by the materials used in manufacturing. For instance, refugees preferred caravans that had metal sheets on the inside rather than PVC or wood. Refugees also attached more value to caravans of a larger size, such as the Emirati caravan (6.5 x 3 m) and the Kuwaiti caravan (6 x 3.5 m). The prices of the caravans also fluctuated over the years due to availability and demand. Some caravans such as the Kuwaiti, which ranks among the most expensive, reached a price of 900 JDs (about 1100 euros) in 2013, before dropping back to half of that amount in 2017. The Saudi caravan, by comparison, maintained its average price. One reason for this could have been its widespread availability in the camp. Moreover, the prices of the caravans

as units influenced the prices of their component parts, which were used in the construction process.

Estimated caravan prices and quality between 2013 and 2017

Type (origin)	Approximate Dimensions (metres)	Quality	Estimated prices in 2013	Estimated prices in 2017
Kuwaiti	6 x 3.5	Metal panels on the inside and the outside. Good quality and larger size	900 JDs	450 JDs
Saudi	5 x 3	Metal panels. Small size	450 JDs	350 JDs
Emirati (Hilal)	6.5 x 3	Metal panels on the inside and the outside	750 JDs	400 JDs
Omani	6 x 3	Metal panels on the outside, wooden surface on the inside	450 JDs	250 JDs

This informal and emerging value that the caravans in Zaatari camp gained, highlight the nature of the economic dynamics of reassembling. These dynamics are strongly tied to dwelling as a primary force, rather than to the logic of the local or international market. One example of that is the actual prices of the caravans, which range between 2000 and 2500 euros per unit (Al-Hurra 2013; QatarLiving 2015). Taking into consideration that Zaatari camp has approximately 20,000 caravans in total, this means that the cost of accommodating 80,000 refugees was around 5 million euros. The international values for materials and construction were substituted by an informal value that fluctuated over the years, depending on availability and demand, and on the quality of the containers. Thus, caravans were not only transformed from donated shelters into economic assets, but also produced a market managed by realtors, in which the values were reassessed and negotiated.

The realtors

In addition to caravans being exchanged through word of mouth, a group of refugees in the camp became specialized in dealing with them, and adopted this as their profession. They are known among the refugees as 'caravan sellers' or 'realtors'. The exact location and size of this business is difficult to trace, because of the intimidation surrounding their work and the close supervision imposed on them by the camp's management. Nonetheless, caravan sellers connect refugees who want to sell 'properties' with others looking to purchase or rent, and by doing

so, they earn a fee. The properties are not restricted to caravans, and can extend to entire dwellings. Buying an entire dwelling was a choice that could only be made by refugees with sufficient financial means, as dwellings cost between 1000 and 3000 JDs, based on the number of caravans involved, their prices at the time and any additions made to the dwelling. Nevertheless, purchasing a dwelling seemed to offer an attractive option for those aiming to settle quickly in the camp. For example, in 2013 one of the interviewees mentioned that he bought a dwelling in D10 for 1000 JDs after he had decided to marry, as he thought it was inappropriate for his wife to live in a tent. Similarly, at the beginning of 2013, another interviewee moved from the crowded area of D1 to a spacious dwelling in D12. The ability to accomplish this transition was strongly reliant on financial means. As he explained:

> I started working at the NGO two months after we arrived, but the salary was nothing … about 50 JDs. Then the projects got better, and I was determined to move out of this small space to a bigger one … To support myself financially, I participated in a *Jam'īyh* [rotating credit and savings association], so I got 800 JDs by the end of the month. I thought 'I need to do something good with that', so I discussed it with my parents, and we decided to move. First, we looked for someone to buy our house … we found someone, and we sold the whole house for 600 JDs … We searched and searched until we found this house. The house was inhabited by a woman with her two daughters and they wanted to go back to Syria. We negotiated with them until they agreed to sell the house for 1300 JDs.

As shown here, an exchange of properties was conducted among refugees through word of mouth. However, during the second half of 2013, caravan sellers took on a more significant role in this process due to the soaring exchange value of caravans. Later, in 2016, the business started to decline again when caravan prices dropped drastically, and exchange activities decreased. A realtor expressed his frustrations about his dealings with the caravan market:

> People think we own many caravans and make lots of money. That's incorrect. You may find realtors that have one or two caravans and charge about 5 JDs only. That's it! We can't trust caravans anymore because their prices keep changing! When the prices are low, nobody wants to sell or buy … It is only when prices start to go higher that people start selling and buying … So, for those who have extra caravans, it's about the right time … but for those who need new ones … they always worry that the prices will go higher!

In line with this argument, caravans not only transformed from donated shelters into managed properties, but also turned into economic assets with a high value and their own market. This can be linked to their importance to the process of dwelling construction. As shown in the earlier graph, the values of caravans de-

creased from 2016 onwards, leading to a shift in the profession of the realtors. In addition, the caravan sellers gradually became more engaged in the use of caravans in construction processes. Their role shifted from enabling economic trade and the exchange of caravans, into constructing with caravans.

From a shelter unit to an architectural element

The caravan is a very interesting element, architecturally speaking. It resembles an empty room with a door and few windows. The simplicity of its design allowed it to be versatile and flexible when repurposed and appropriated by refugees in Zaatari camp. As mentioned earlier, the caravans come in two main types: movable and fixed. While the fixed caravans were distributed in small numbers during the later phases, the majority of caravans in Zaatari camp are movable (that is, not permanently fixed to the ground). Their relatively small size (3 x 5 metres on average) and ability to be relocated made the caravan a fluid and dynamic component during the process of dwelling. However, for the caravan to be inhabited, it had to go through a series of appropriations, and refugees had to learn how to inhabit this new architectural typology, if we can term it that. Thus, to understand how the caravan was appropriated and gradually inhabited, it is worth asking: what are caravans composed of and how are they structured?

Details of caravans differ according to the manufacturer. Some are slightly higher, while others are longer. However, they all share the following components:

1. Metal beams

Caravans are built using a simple metal structure that carries the weights of the panels, the flooring and the occupants. According to a realtor, metal beams most often come in two sizes: 8 x 4 cm and 8 x 8 cm. These are arranged into a cubical form that creates the load-bearing structure of the caravan itself. To support the floor, this structure forms a metal grid on which the flooring sheets are added. On the top, the metal structure is slightly tilted in one direction to direct rainwater to the gutters on the side.

2. Caravan sheets (sandwich panels)

If a caravan were to be compared with a single room, then sandwich panels — or what I refer to as 'caravan sheets' — would make up the roof and the walls. These sheets generally comprise three layers: two thin corrugated metal sheets with a layer of insulation in between. In some cases, a thin layer of plywood is used instead of the metal layer on the inner face of the caravan. Each caravan has 21 sheets that

differ in size: 120 x 240 x 5 cm or 100 x 240 x 5 cm for the caravan sheets on the sides (walls) and 180 x 300 x 7 cm for the roof. In contrast to the smooth surface of the caravan, sheets can be identified by a ridged corrugated metal sheet on the external side. The assembling of the panels within a caravan is made possible by having female and male edges so they can be joined to make a smooth surface.

3. Flooring

The flooring parts of the caravan are made of wooden sheets placed on top of the metal grid. These often come in a size of about 244 x 122 cm and are approximately 1 cm thick. Moreover, their internal face is usually covered with a thin layer of plastic or *Mushamma'*; a form of wall covering that is used to finish the wooden sheets, according to refugees. The material used for flooring is Film-Faced Plywood. Most of the sheets can be identified by a stamp, which makes them traceable in the ways they are later used by refugees for different purposes, for instance to construct kitchens or wardrobes.

4. Additions

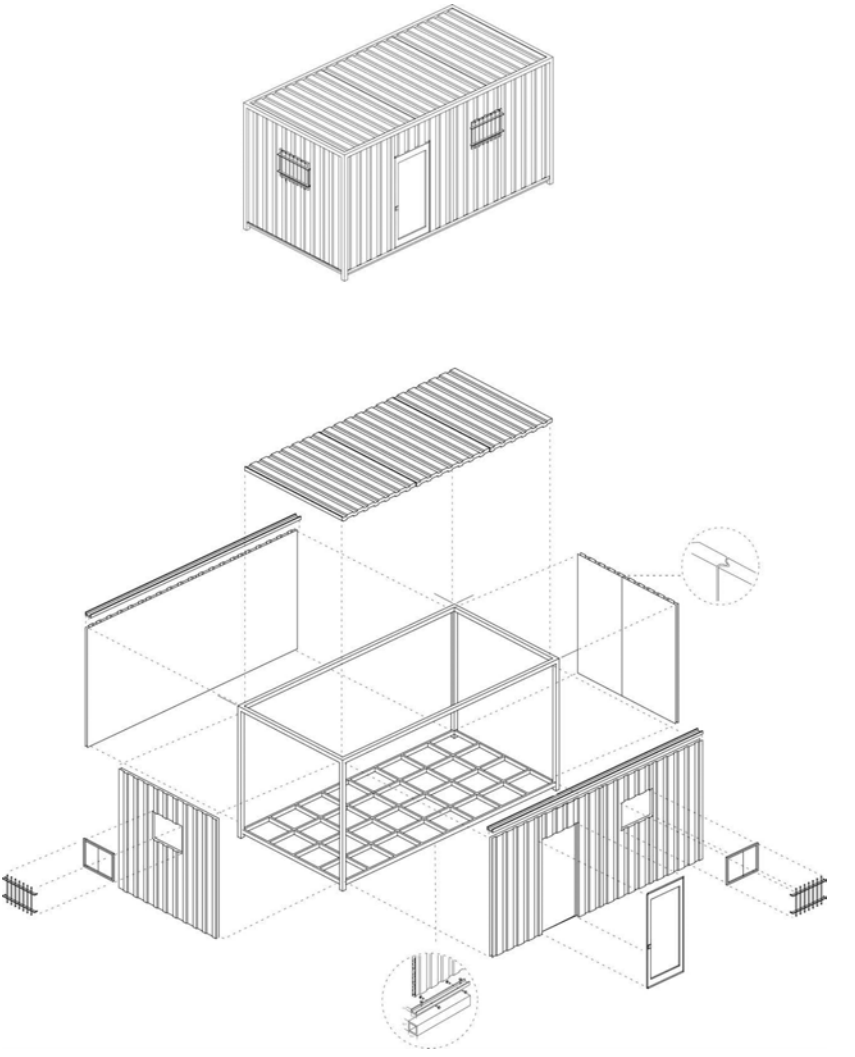
Additions include doors, windows and gutters that are located on the upper sides of the caravan. Windows come in two sizes, 100 x 100 cm and 125 x 100 cm. They come as units that can be detached and attached to the caravan sheets using the female/male connection technique.

By developing an in-depth understanding of the architectonics of the caravan and its anatomy, refugees became experts in utilizing it in the process of constructing dwellings. What was intended to be a shelter unit was transformed into a building component that could be moulded, changed and amended according to evolving needs. In the following subsection, it is explained in more detail how understanding the particularities and components of caravans helped refugees to use them as architectural elements, and how this led to the rise of new forms of spatial knowledge and craftsmanship in Zaatari camp.

Dismantling and reassembling the caravan

Practices of dismantling and reassembling the caravan were most direly needed within the 'old camp', where refugees had to carve dwellings out of the caravans already placed on site. This allows us to project that these practices initially emerged and were developed within the 'old camp', but spread across the whole camp later.

The anatomy of the moveable caravan in Zaatari camp



The elements of a dismantled caravan


Rainwater gutter


Wooden panels (Film faced plywood)


Caravan sheets (sandwich panels)


Window

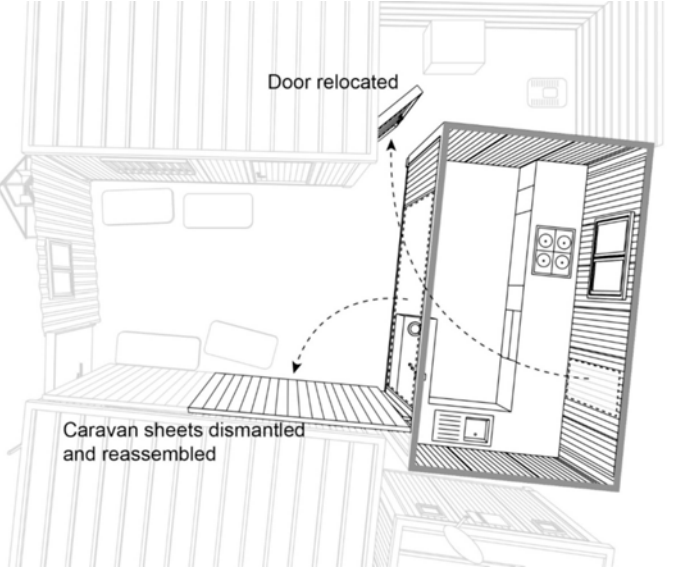

Metal beams


Door

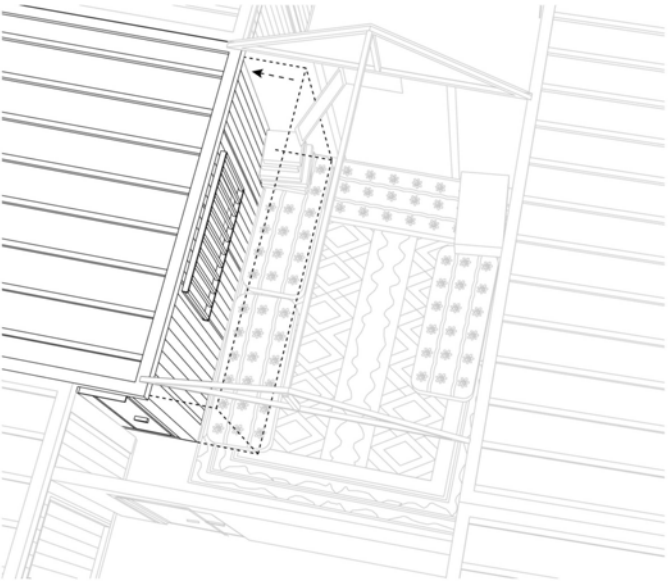
In the first case study, for instance, it was shown that Sami was keen to purchase his neighbour's caravan. While this caravan was adjacent to Sami's emerging dwelling, its door faced the opposite direction, and only the back wall was facing his dwelling. To incorporate it into his dwelling space, Sami first had to dismantle the back wall and replace the door with a caravan sheet so that the dwelling only had one entrance. The rest of the dismantled caravan sheets were used to construct a new wall to separate Sami from his neighbour.

Similar practices were also observed in other dwellings within the same cluster. For example, the house of Sami's cousin was made up of three caravans. While one of them was furnished as a kitchen and bathing area, it intruded into the living area, giving the family less space to meet in. To improve the situation, the caravan was shortened in place with the help of a professional. The caravan was first *dismantled*: One caravan sheet was removed from either side, as well as the roof and flooring. The metal structure was then cut to reduce the length of the metal beams. After removing the sections of the metal structure that were no longer needed, the remaining parts were welded together again, and the caravan sheets were put back. Or better — *reassembled*. As a result, the door of the caravan leading to the kitchen became narrower, yet still wide enough to let people through.

An example of dismantling and reassembling a caravan so it can be integrated into the dwelling space



Caravan reduced in size to expand the salon of a dwelling in the old camp

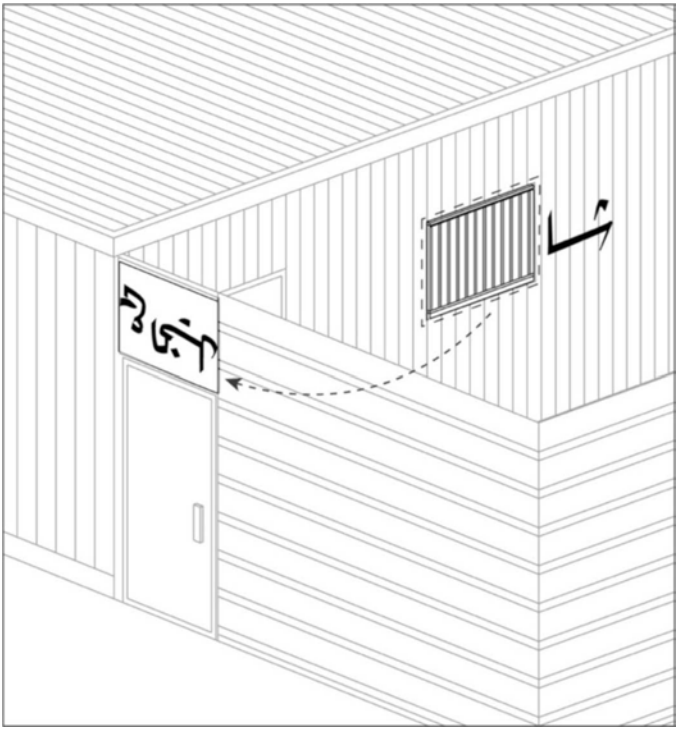


Over time, and due to their importance to dwelling, the practices of dismantling and reassembling caravans spread throughout the camp. They were practiced according to needs, and with more space for implementation. For example, in Omar's case, one of the caravans had only a single window next to the door. As little light could enter the caravan space, he used the emerging local knowledge to appropriate the space: a window from a *dismantled* caravan was bought, and then *reassembled* in his own caravan. It was installed in the corner to allow in more light from the south during the day.

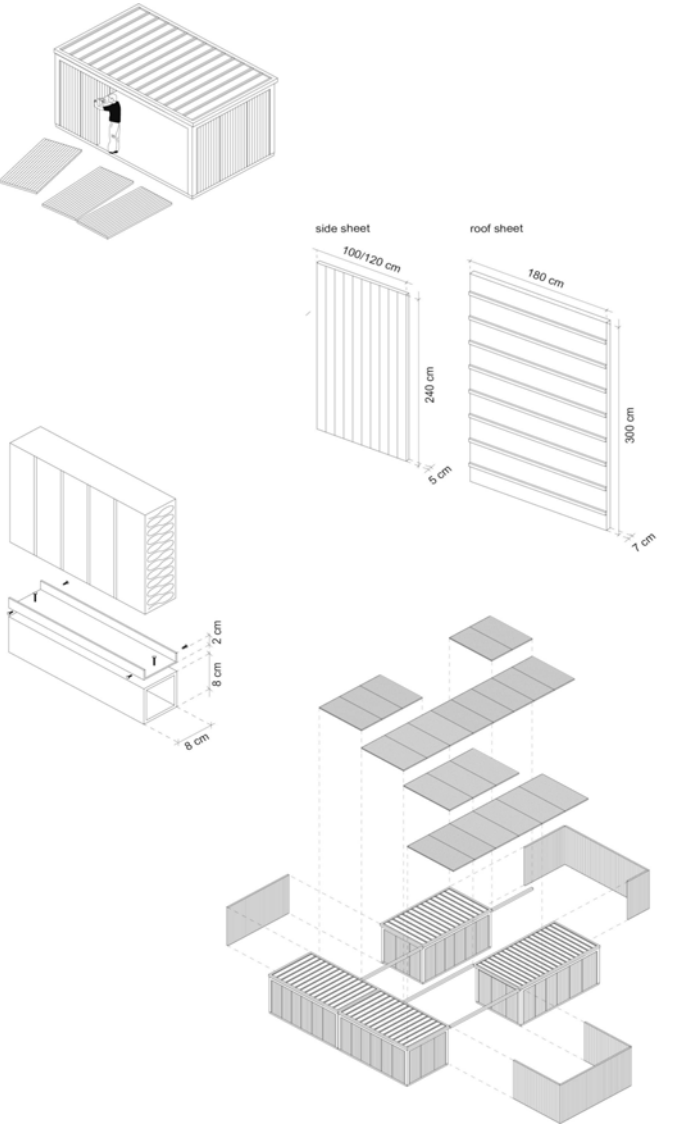
For a normal visitor, these practices may be difficult to notice or even recognize unless talked about. Yet one visually striking example of how dismantling and reassembling practices transformed the camp, both physically and symbolically, can be seen in a dwelling encountered in the northern of the camp. The dwelling happened to be situated on an intersection, where the UNHCR decided to assign a pathway as a street, thus giving it an official name. The name was placed on the side of the dwelling's caravan, facing the street. The following year, however, the family was in need of an external space for their two young daughters to play in. Therefore, parts of the streets were enclosed as a fenced attached garden — a practice common among city dwellers as mentioned earlier — and the street sign was thus no longer visible. Moreover, the family needed more light in their sleeping

room, on which the signwriting had been made. A new window from a dismantled caravan was bought, and was reassembled on their caravan. Consequently, the parts of the caravan where the signwriting had been placed were also dismantled and then reassembled above the entrance of the dwelling, adding an extra layer of privacy. This shows how tracing materials can reveal the ways in which the camp is being dismantled and reassembled. The caravan sheet that was displaying the name of a street — a way of ordering the camp imposed by relief actors — changed location and became the 'portico' of a dwelling.

Caravan sheets with signwriting cut from the original caravan to create a window and subsequently placed above the entrance door as a building material



Constructing entirely using dismantled and reassembled caravans produced a new type of 'caravanized' dwelling



Various uses of plywood extracted from a caravan to build a partition wall, a kitchen and a wardrobe

Wardrobe

Wall partition

Kitchen

A gable roof constructed from insulated caravan sheets and using the caravans as a load-bearing system

Building with caravans

Understanding the anatomy of the caravan allowed refugees to use it as a building material. This goes beyond the previously practiced in-place changes that were made to the caravans. However, it utilizes the same emerging local knowledge about the caravan — its quality, materials, details, layers and structures. For instance, one of the main practices is the utilization of dismantled caravan sheets, to be reassembled outside the caravan itself; and by doing so, utilizing the caravan to build walls, roofs, fences and other extensions to the dwellings. To construct walls, for example, caravan sheets are installed on thick metal beams (rectangular or H section) that function as the 'foundation'. To attach the caravan sheets to these beams, small metal C-section trays, about 2 x 5 x 2 cm, are used. Caravan sheets are inserted into these metal trays, at the top and the bottom, making them attachable to other parts of the dwellings, and they are consequently able to be used as walls, fences and roofs. The shape of these roofs — flat or gable — relates to the type of metal beam structure to which it is attached: either flat by using vertical metal beams, or gable using a welded metal frame.

Another aspect is based on using other elements of the caravan, such as the wooden panels or plywood. These elements are also dismantled from caravans and

reassembled within the dwelling space. In the previous example in which the caravan was shortened, plywood from the flooring was removed and used as a partition wall between the kitchen and the bathing area. Using cement as an alternative flooring material, the plywood was placed on a metal tray and fixed to the ground. Plywood sheets are also removed and reassembled to construct amenities such as furniture and shelves. In Sami's case, plywood sheets were reassembled to create full units for the kitchen, including a long counter, shelves and cupboards. This was installed by a carpenter and was designed to fit the dimensions of the kitchen and serve the daily needs of the family. Moreover, plywood is frequently reused to create wardrobes and other cupboards. These creations can be easily identified by the manufacturer's markings, which is a pattern that can be seen frequently in Zaatari camp and in different parts of the reassembled dwellings. In addition to plywood, windows taken from old rundown caravans can be seen refitted in other caravans or placed in newly installed walls made from caravan sheets.

An extreme form of utilizing the caravan for building is the emergence of 'caravanized dwellings'. These are made entirely out of caravans and the materials harnessed from them. Other common materials, such as metal sheets (zinc), plastic sheets, wooden beams and so on, are less visible and replaced with caravan sheets, which are deemed to be more stable, durable and better insulated. Constructing with caravans as building materials is also associated with a certain 'wealth'. As I was told by a realtor, 'Trust me! Everyone would prefer to have their dwellings constructed with caravan sheets. They are better, and last longer. But only few can afford it!' To give an example, he explained the design of one of these dwellings, which he had recently constructed. It was built in a rectangular form, using four caravans and 52 caravan sheets extracted from a further two and a half caravans. Its ground was then cemented and supplied with the required amenities. The modular nature of the caravan and its dismantled and reassembled parts clearly influenced the layout of the dwelling: its structure was more geometrical, and the dimensions of its spaces were all derived from the container.

The use of caravans to construct dwellings has also engendered a new form of economy. In contrast to the changing prices in the caravan market, the prices of the caravan parts were more stable. For instance, a caravan would produce 21 sheets, each of which could be sold for a fixed price of 17.5 JDs (about 20 euros), amounting to a sum of 367.5 JDs in total — significantly more than the average price of a caravan in 2019 (about 175 JDs). Windows were also sold for an average price of between 10 and 15 JDs. Yet to use them in a dwelling required the help of a realtor or welder, who would charge a fixed fee of 75 JDs. To give a tangible example, the construction costs of the previously described dwelling came to around 6000 JDs (about 7500 euros), according to the realtor. These costs were distributed as follows: 2000 JDs for caravans, 3000 JDs for caravan sheets and metal beams, and an additional cement floor costing around 500 to 1000 JDs. This shows that

while constructing with caravans would produce a neat, well-connected and coherent structure, its implementation required two things: refugees needed to have considerable financial means, and realtors needed to have enough caravans and the knowledge to use them for construction. This explains why this type of dwelling is relatively rare, and why it only appeared at a later stage in Zaatari camp.

The structural qualities of the caravan

In addition to the abovementioned applications, caravans were also used as structural elements. Constituting the most solid part of the dwelling and being based on a stable metal structure, they were used to set up roofs and construct walls. One of the most striking aspects that emerged during field work in 2017 was the spread of a new roof structure, which had only rarely been seen during 2014. Placed over courtyards, gable roofs were developed out of the necessity to respond to environmental factors such as air circulation, sunshine and seasonal heavy rains. Structurally, these roofs were constructed out of metal beams, covered with textile, zinc sheets or caravan sheets, and designed to be placed directly over two opposite caravans. This means that caravans were used as a load-bearing element that allowed dwellings to better respond to environmental needs.

The structural nature of caravans facilitated the enhancement of dwellings, both on an individual and a collective level. In the case of Sami, for example, the density of caravans in the 'old camp' and the need to construct roofing systems produced what appeared to be a collective surface for water management. The choice between gable and flat roofs not only matched each family's needs, but also determined specific channels in which rainwater could be funnelled to then drain away. To accomplish this, the slopes on the surface of caravans were also used. Moreover, efforts to extend pipes for drinking water used the stability provided by the caravans' structures. For instance, the family living behind Sami placed their water tanks in the empty space created in between the two dwellings. In order for them to be filled by a water tanker from the main street, pipes had to be extended over the dwellings to reach the street. This demonstrates that the structural characteristics of the caravan allowed it to function as a load-bearing system, thereby enhancing the quality of dwellings. This could not have been possible without the quality of this material, in comparison with tents for instance.

The material dynamics of reassembling

This and the following chapter focus on uncovering the *material* dynamics of reassembling. In the previous chapter, the social dynamics of reassembling were ex-

plained. Those dynamics encompass a myriad of aspects, such as family relations, gender, religion and sociocultural values. The current chapter and the subsequent one complement this view by highlighting the dimensions that relate to materiality, and how these dimensions influenced the practices of reassembling. In the current chapter it was shown how the caravan — a standardized shelter unit — was transformed from a container space into a contained element within the larger arrangement of the dwelling. This transformative process also symbolically captured what was happening in the camp: the caravan was being dismantled and reassembled, and so was the camp. The inevitability of dwelling as a human need has the capacity to induce spatial and material transformation in refugee camps. This transformation becomes manifest on multiple scales and across various mediums. On the one hand, exploring the material and economic dimensions of the caravan aimed to extend the analysis in the previous chapter and to contextualize the process of dwelling in Zaatari camp. On the other hand, it aimed to introduce the material dynamics of reassembling: another layer that adds to the social dynamics of reassembling discussed in the previous chapter.

The materials brought into the camp — just like the refugees themselves — are intertwined with multiple dimensions that are negotiated during the reassembling process. With regard to the caravan, these dimensions are simultaneously architectural and economical. The architectonics of the caravan are utilized and developed vis-à-vis an emerging reservoir of local knowledge that — probably — exits nowhere else (such as the full utilization of the caravan as a living unit). In architectural schools, students are often encouraged to think of shipping containers as design elements. How can these elements be put together to create different spaces? How can they be appropriated and reused? In contrast to finding answers from the top, on paper and in studios, refugees had to find answers from below. Their everyday encounters with the caravan(s) — noting that there are few different types — forced refugees to find the answers. Knowledge about the caravan, its anatomy, and how it can be dismantled and reassembled were circulated in the camp.

The circulation of caravans in the camp produced a parallel value. According to the date, and the type and quality of the caravans, their prices changed, producing a parallel informal economy. The significance of the caravan for the dwelling process made it a priority for refugees, especially at the beginning. Later on, prices dropped, and a real-estate market emerged, taking over the role of circulating the remaining caravans in the camp, and of dismantling and reassembling their parts in newly constructed dwellings. The prices of these dwellings changed, as the prices of the containers differed over time. The architectural and economic dimensions of the materials are interlinked. A good example of this connection is the answer of a refugee woman who I once asked, 'why don't you expand your dwelling here since you have enough space around you?' She confidently answered, 'who said that

bigger is better? Bigger means more money to construct and maintain. If you have money, you can go for a bigger dwelling'. The question of scale and size, which were standardized within camp planning, become more personalized here. The material dynamics of reassembling therefore capture different dimensions, such as architectonics, structure, quality and economy, and how they relate to refugees' need to dwell. In the following chapter, I will extend this analysis to two dimensions that cannot, and should not, be avoided when discussing camps: temporariness and politics.

Chapter 6
Tents, Zinco and Cement
Temporariness and the Politics of Materiality

'Is building with rammed earth possible?' a British man, fully dressed in a suit, asked an NGO worker, wearing a vest, in Azraq camp. The British man was working for an organization specializing in safeguarding cultural heritage threatened by conflicts. The question came with the backdrop of a proposal to build a Syrian cultural heritage centre in the camp. Although this was not in Zaatari camp, the debate captures the essence of this chapter, which concerns temporariness and the politics of materials. The NGO officer working in Azraq camp was perplexed by the question, and could not find suitable words to express his confusion: not only because the British man was insisting on constructing a building in the camp, but also because it was not clear what material was suitable for the purpose. Is building with rocks possible? Should the building maintain a temporary appearance through the use of metal sheets, tents and caravans? Is rammed earth a material assigned with temporariness or permanency?

On materiality and temporariness

Materiality and temporariness in camps seem to be interlinked, yet only a few scholars, such as Lucas Oesch (2018), have paid attention to this relationship. Through his work in Al Hussein camp in Jordan, Oesch showed that temporariness should be understood as a fluid concept. This allows it to be manipulated and dealt with differently over time, and means that it was within these shifting boundaries of temporariness that the camp was able to structurally evolve and turn into a part of the city: Amman. The politics of temporariness nevertheless lie in their connection to the dispositive functioning of the camp. This dispositive aspect, as Foucault explained (see Bussolini 2010), comprises written and also unwritten rules. As Oesch (2018, 244) noted: 'the impossibility to bring about changes, and especially material changes, in the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan due to their

temporariness is not a written rule'. The vagueness of temporariness, vis-à-vis permanency, keeps the camp in a constant state of material fluidity. For Oesch, the camps 'are not frozen places, but spaces of active waiting whose materiality is constantly being changed according to the changing conceptions of temporariness held by multiple actors, such as inhabitants, state authorities, international organizations, landowners, and political movements' (2018, 245).

In addition to Oesch, other scholars, such as Nasser Abourahme, have used the materiality of the camp as a starting point to unpack the complex nature of its structural evolution over time. Using the case of Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank, Abourahme argues that the bio-political approaches to camps 'never come to grips with the practices and built structures of everyday life through which subjects and objects, people and things come into mutually constitutive relations'. For that reason, and according to him, 'they miss an entire level of materiality that comes to "mediate" subjective action, but over which refugees have limited authorial power' (Abourahme 2015, 3). The importance of Abourahme's (2015) analysis lies in its ability to reveal the material layer, or what he calls 'the world of objects in camps [which] refuses to remain silent'. The relationship between cement and the camp — which is to a large extent particular and special in the Palestinian case — allowed him to trace the camp's vertical expansion and reveal the nuances involved in this process at the level of the everyday life, and through regarding the camp as a constantly changing political project. For that purpose, Abourahme (2015, 4) seeks to present the camp as a 'kind of assemblage — that is, both object and *process*'. While the connection between temporariness, politics and materiality requires further investigation, and is itself worthy of a book, I will pick up on the last quote and try to expand more on the relationship between the camp and the assemblage theory.

Assembling, or 'dismantling and reassembling'?

Since the publishing of *A Thousand Plateaus* by Deleuze and Guttari (1987), geographers and social scientists have been inspired to articulate this theory on multiple aspects of urban life, such as the city and the dwelling (cf. McFarlane 2011c, 2011a). In addition, and as mentioned above, Abourahme and others (for instance Meiches 2015) have suggested that the camp is an assemblage. The nature of the assemblage and the assembling, allows us to reflect on the core of this current book: politics.

In the first chapter, I illustrated how the planned camp — which is an important distinction here from other spaces — is structured to form a disciplinary machine in which refugees are controlled and managed. From the outside, the camp remains an assemblage of people and objects, and thus complements what has been written to date by Abourahme and even Collin McFarlane, who brilliantly argued

that dwelling is a process of assembling. Yet what remains absent from these views, is the distinctive nature of the space and how it affects assembling. To clarify this point, McFarlane (2011c, 649) suggests that through dwelling, people assemble elements 'from the sea of the everyday life'. He gives an example of a dwelling created in a favela, in which different elements were used to compose the space. Similar examples can be seen in *unplanned* and *spontaneous* refugee camps, where refugees tend to bring together elements — both given to them by relief actors, and from the surroundings — to create dwellings. Thus, dwelling indeed has an 'assembling' element to it that cannot be denied. However, to accentuate the political nature of dwelling in planned camps — camps in which dwelling is unwished for, and unwanted — I alternatively use the terms *dismantling* and *reassembling* in this book.

My intention here is nevertheless not to coin new terms or enter a maze of jargon, but instead to highlight the political nature of dwelling in camps in the first place. Planned camps are disciplinary places, where elements, infrastructures and materials are pre-given. It is a politico-material system in which refugees are 'stored' and 'warehoused' temporarily, until a solution is found. Within such distanced spaces, physically and symbolically, we cannot simply speak of assembling without exploring the ways in which refugees first dismantle the camp. Once dismantling begins, assembling and reassembling also start to unfold. This chapter clearly shows how the three processes intertwine. For instance, while specific materials such as textiles and plastic sheets were often taken from tents, and concrete blocks were dismantled from communal latrines and kitchens, other elements including cement and metal sheets were not actually dismantled from the camp. They were brought from the surrounding villages and thus only *assembled*. However, to maintain clarity in the text and to accentuate the political nature of this assembling — which at its core resists the politico-material order of the camp and its disciplinary machine — I will continue to refer to these practices as *reassembling*.

Time and politics as material dynamics of reassembling

So far, what we have called the 'material dynamics of reassembling' has examined the various dimensions embedded in the material; dimensions that refugees had to negotiate while reassembling. The economics of the caravans, their exchange market, and their architectonics, sizes, structures, components and quality were all aspects that had to be considered while reassembling the space of the dwelling. In this chapter, I expand the analysis by revealing two other dimensions that were strongly assigned to the materials in Zaatari camp: politics and time. As mentioned in the anecdote at the start of the chapter, temporariness and its politics pose unforeseen questions about the nature of *building* in camps. Any attempt to construct, becomes a question about the durability of the materials used, their height, and

their structural ability to be more permanent or to allow vertical expansion. In this analysis, I focus on key elements that contributed to the construction of dwellings in Zaatari camp and complemented the role of the caravan mentioned earlier. These are the tents (including textile and plastic sheets), metal sheets (zinco), concrete blocks and cement. On the one hand, and as Abourahme suggested, the purpose of this chapter is to reveal and give voice to the materials that were reassembled in the dwellings and played an important role in its progression and construction. On the other hand, the aim is to show how the dimensions of time and politics were negotiated, and how that affected the material order of the dwelling. Here, it is important to note that all the materials in the camp are affected by the various dimensions mentioned in this and the previous chapter. Therefore, elements such as tents and zinco, for instance, also have economic and architectonic dimensions that had to be considered, whereas the caravan represents a non-enduring material that is suitable to represent and symbolize the temporariness of camps. The dimensions explored in this chapter, thus apply to the previous one as well, and vice versa.

To begin with this material analysis, I start by looking at the role of the tent, and how it was transformed from a shelter into a building material, and thus, how it was dismantled and reassembled.

Tents

In comparison with caravans, tents are easy to dismantle and reassemble. Their lightweight structure, movability, versatility and basic form — which is made from canvas, and thus similar to textile or plastic sheet but heavier — made it an excellent component to facilitate the process of dwelling throughout the different stages of the transition.

In Zaatari camp, refugees were given traditional UNHCR family tents: a ridge, double fly tent with elevated walls. According to the specifications found in the UNHCR *Shelter Design Catalogue*, the tent has a floor area of about 16 square metres plus two 3.5 square metre vestibules, making a total area of 23 square metres. Each of these tents costs 420 US dollars, excluding transportation costs, and can last for about one year (UNHCR 2016, 9). This type of tent, however, is not the only one used in the camp. Some sources suggest that 160 tents were also distributed by the Saudi National Campaign in December 2012 (Al-Rai 2012b). These tents were mentioned during some interviews, and were claimed to be larger in size (about 6 x 8 meters) and to have stronger fabric.

Over the period from August 2012, to September 2012 and to February 2014, the overall number of tents increased from 1000, to 2400 and to 6500, respectively (UNHCR and REACH 2014). However, these numbers subsequently decreased, as

tents were gradually replaced by caravans, and in November 2015, the camp was declared as 'tent free' (Al-Shawabkeh 2015). This does not mean that tents entirely disappeared from the camp, but instead that tents are no longer used for sheltering refugees and for accommodation purposes, and that the camp has been completely caravanized. The utilization of tents for purposes other than accommodation was observed at an early stage. A survey conducted in the camp during February 2014 found that 70 per cent of the tents in the camp were being used for other purposes: 32 per cent were used to provide additional space (for example, storage), 20 per cent as a living space and only 18 per cent were used for sleeping. The utilization of the shelter in ways that contradict its initial purpose is a form of dismantling. The dismantling of tents meant that they were transformed from a shelter unit into an auxiliary building material, from a container space into a textile, from a whole into a component, and ultimately, from an emergency substitute for a lost dwelling into an element of a newly composed and reassembled dwelling.

Tents, in addition to textile and plastic sheets, were easy to utilize for the purpose of dwelling. They were initially given to refugees as part of the camp, and its 'material assemblage'. The availability of these tents has facilitated the practices of reassembling, since it allowed the emerging dwelling structure to be camouflaged with textiles, covered with logos (UNHCR, WFP, SNC, etc.), thereby giving the impression of being 'temporary'. Using the tent as a 'veil' to cover solid constructions underneath has also been observed earlier as a dwelling tactic in Palestinian camps, where temporariness was enforced by policing practices. In these camps, refugees would use the tent as a cover and gradually build solid dwellings underneath using concrete blocks (see Sanyal 2010). In Zaatari camp, however, the caravanization process has given less dominant role to tents over time; thus, they were expected to be used differently. Yet for a longer period, the tents, plastic sheets and textiles have been used as wrapping around the dwellings, hiding what was emerging underneath, and simultaneously giving them a temporary and humanitarian appearance.

At a later stage, the role of tents, textiles and plastic sheets started to crystalize. They became a flexible, temporary and cheap substitute for walls, especially in the absence of caravan sheets, which are more expensive, or metal sheets, which are the common option. The possibilities of reassembling with tents are innumerable, especially due to the elasticity of this material and the creativity of refugees. One example concerns a refugee family of more than five people, who were given two tents: a traditional UNHCR tent and a larger one donated by SNC. Instead of living in two separate tents, the smaller one was placed within the other to create a space that added a new layer, protecting the visual privacy of the family and allowing for new functions of the space. As the interviewee explained:

> The Saudi tents were more beautiful than those of the *Mufawaḍīyh* [UNHCR]. They were also bigger and stronger … this one was about the size of two caravans. So, we built the smaller tent inside the big Saudi tent, and the remaining space between them we used for storing stuff like spoons, dishes, stoves, mattresses, and for washing.

In this case, the material dynamics of reassembling not only included the political, but also the architectonic. The presence of two different types of tents — with different material qualities and dimensions — allowed the refugees to create an 'onion-like' dwelling with two layers. This also shows that the purpose of reassembling was to dwell, and not to simply reproduce familiar or inherited dwelling designs, for example a courtyard house. Dwelling was about negotiating the social and material dynamics at the same time.

Gradually, the number of caravans started to increase, which gave the tent a new role. The material qualities of both the tent and the caravan were considered during the reassembling practices. The tent became a supplementary element for whatever compositions the caravans were used in. In the case of single caravan unit, tents were used to create additional spaces around it. The most common use being a semi-private space in front of the caravan entrance, where guests could be received and where the visual privacy of women could be protected. Less common was to add a side room for raising domestic animals or constructing a bathroom. The tents would be attached to the top of the caravans using stones and tyres, and then stretched to the ground where they could be fixed, and sometimes cemented. The tent was used to create another layer of visual privacy around the dwelling and to protect its residents. This layer could be vertical, thus substituting a wall or a fence, or horizontal, substituting a roof, or a combination of both. In addition, tents were sometimes used as spatial components when dwelling arrangements endured change or were not complete. For instance, in Eyad's case, an additional tent was placed in the middle to be used as a shared kitchen and bathing area, and sometimes to reserve a space. The flexibility of the tent allowed it to play the role of a facilitator, assisting refugees in reaching more stable socio-spatial arrangements, and thus solidifying dwelling structures. The characteristics of the tents (and similarly, textiles and plastic sheets) in terms of their strong association with temporariness, their cheap prices, and flexible material quality and sizes, constitute some of the dimensions that had to be considered during the reassembling practices.

A tent and plastic sheets (with the UNHCR logo on them) used to construct a wall and a roof supported by a structure made from wooden beams

Corrugated sheets (zinco)

Corrugated metal sheets, locally referred to as 'zinco', are the second most used element in the construction of dwellings in Zaatari camp after caravans. At the beginning, zinco was distributed by relief organizations as part of winterization kits so that refugees could create extensions to their tents to be used for cooking and to place heaters in. Shortly after, the presence of zinco in Zaatari camp started to increase. It was brought from the surrounding villages and smuggled by refugees commuting between the camp and the villages. The gradual accumulation of zinco in the camp was later facilitated by the emerging workshops and realtors around the camp. As part of their profession, realtors would usually be able to construct and alter parts of the dwellings using zinco, which was also sold there.

The use of zinco changed over time. Initially, it was used to create small extensions to the tents, but the gradual provision of caravans made it an important element in the reassembling process. By relying on the caravan as the main unit around which dwellings were constructed, zinco functioned as a substitute for walls to delineate boundaries. Usually, walls are built from durable materials such as concrete blocks, cement or and wood, but in Zaatari camp, such elements were prohibited. Instead, zinco was used to create external walls, kitchens, bathrooms,

extensions, roofs and fences. To support its lightweight structure, other elements including metal and wooden beams were used as weight bearers.

The structural qualities of the zinco allowed it to complement the caravan in many ways. If the caravan layer were to be hidden in the camp, one would be more likely to encounter pieces of zinco than anything else, in all possible forms and locations. In that regard, in places where caravans were densely packed such as the old camp, zinco was scarcely used, and vice versa. In the new camp where caravans were sporadically distributed, and thus needed support, zinco was utilized to complement the role of the caravan. Here, it is important to note that constructing with zinco was also associated with economics. Although its demand and availability did not generate a market in the way that caravans did, some families were not able to afford to buy zinco, and thus to build with it. One family accordingly explained the use of sewn pieces of textile to construct an awning: 'here, we don't have zinco like others do'. In that sense, the structural and economic qualities of the zinco affected the ways in which it was reassembled within the dwelling.

Zinco being used by a professional craftsman to construct a fence as an extension to a shelter

A falafel kiosk constructed entirely with zinco

Zinco is associated with temporariness. Therefore, it was tolerated as a building material in Zaatari camp, even though the material was brought from outside the camp and was not distributed internally or provided to refugees for free. The temporariness of zinco is reflected in its material characteristics: a thin, fragile, removable, lightweight structure with poor insulation qualities. The temporariness of zinco, and thus its political dimensions, explains why it was tolerated by the camp management, allowing refugees to use it extensively for markets and for completing the main parts of their dwellings. The politics of zinco were also extended to another Syrian camp in Jordan: Azraq. Here, shelters were already built with corrugated metal sheets, in the form of huts, and as 'lessons learnt' from Zaatari (see Dalal et al. 2018). However, the political dimension of zinco seems to transcend the Syrian experience in these two camps, and dates back even earlier to Palestinian camps, where building was controlled, and thus 'permanent' materials such as concrete blocks and cement were prohibited. While these politics of temporariness were negotiated over time, refugees had to endure living with zinco for long periods. This is best captured in the way a Palestinian artist from the Shatila camp in Lebanon described his relationship to zinco, saying:

> We live in the shadow of 'zinco'; it has been with us for more than sixty years under the same conditions and hardships. With time I discovered that there are many shared characteristics between us and 'zinco'...And so all my shapes and characters

> gradually began to be made of 'zinco'. I'm a 63-year-old youth and I'm made out of 'zinco' and will remain 'zinco'. (Cited in Abourahme 2015, 10)

The presence of zinco in some Palestinian camps is still evident. One of them is the Jerash camp for ex-Gazan refugees, where building with cement had long been prohibited in order to prevent the vertical expansion of dwellings. Although many families replaced the initial zinco sheets of the shelter with concrete blocks, the zinco roofs thus stand as clear evidence of the political nature of temporariness and its impact on materiality in refugee camps across the world. In Zaatari camp, using concrete blocks is still prohibited and controlled. Yet refugees found ways to utilize it while they reassembled their dwellings.

Concrete blocks

Unlike the corrugated zinco sheets, concrete blocks were directly dismantled from the camp. As mentioned in the first chapter, between 2012 and 2014, relief actors were building communal latrines and kitchens for refugees as part of their programmes. These were located across the districts, and were densely built between shelters in the old camp. However, from 2015 onwards, these facilities were removed by the camp management. This was partly because refugees were constructing their own toilets and kitchens, and partly because these facilities were being heavily vandalized.

Tracing the concrete blocks in Zaatari camp gives a clear example of how dismantling and reassembling operate. It also highlights the contradiction within the spatial logic of each actor: relief organizations were building communal facilities and complementing the layout of the camp (its politico-material order), while refugees were simultaneously dismantling them and reassembling them to construct their dwellings (following a socio-spatial order).

Reassembling with concrete blocks in Zaatari camp meant negotiating the political and temporal dimensions assigned to them. As is widely known, concrete blocks are among the most common building materials used for construction today. Their material qualities include a small size, scalability, movability, relatively low price, and most importantly, durability and high insulation quality compared with tents and zinco. These qualities explain why concrete blocks are considered a favourable option in terms of construction; however, they also make the concrete block suggest 'permanency' in every aspect.

The relationship between permanency and concrete blocks made the latter prohibited to build with in Zaatari camp. Although this is not a written law, refugees and UN actors are aware of the politics assigned to the material, and aware of the consequences that may follow from attempting to build with it. During a visit to

Zaatari camp in 2015, I was accompanied by one of the site planners in the camp, where we encountered a dwelling that used a few pieces of concrete block to support a zinco wall. The planner's comment on this practice was:

> It is forbidden to build with concrete blocks here … If the police saw it, they would demolish it. One day the camp management found out about a man who had built parts of his dwelling with concrete blocks. Guess how? … They saw it on the cover of a news report. The poor man! The next day, the dwelling was gone.

This example of building with concrete blocks in camps, which are managed as disciplinary machines, highlights the difference between *assembling* and *reassembling* explained earlier. In this context, although refugees assemble materials to construct their dwellings, the process is politically contoured. In other words, introducing concrete blocks to the realm of the dwelling in such camps means negotiating the politics of temporariness assigned to it. The notion of *reassembling* underlines these negotiations as part of the everyday practices and attempts to dwell in a camp. To emphasize the role of reassembling more, it may be worth looking at how refugees negotiated the political and temporal dimensions of the concrete blocks.

In Zaatari camp, concrete blocks can be found in almost every dwelling. However, since they have not been used to build walls, they are tolerated by the management. According to observations and interviews, concrete blocks were first introduced as part of the ad-hoc kitchens and bathing areas constructed nearby the tent and the caravan. Their use was to delineate the boundaries of the septic hole or to raise parts of the area few centimetres above the ground for sanitary purposes. At a later stage, concrete blocks were used to delineate parts of the dwelling, such as front and back gardens, and as steps placed in front of the caravan doors. In that regard, the concrete block was used as supplementary element, and was never given a leading role in the reassembling process.

Negotiating the politics of temporariness in camps also has a great deal to do with visibility. In Palestinian camps, especially those that were heavily policed during emergency phases, building with concrete blocks was also prohibited. To overcome the political limitations imposed on using the material, refugees would build inside the tent, and thus use it as a 'veil' to cover the structure emerging behind (see Sanyal 2010). In a similar manner, refugees in Zaatari camp sometimes use concrete more extensively when it is hidden inside the dwelling. This is especially the case when constructing a working space inside kitchen or bathing areas.

Not all families were shy, however, about using concrete blocks. Strolling around the camp, one is likely to notice parts of the external walls built with rows of concrete blocks, stacked on top of each other. In such instances, the height of this structure plays a role: is it a 3 metre wall built with concrete blocks, or just a 1 metre support? In other words, what physical dimensions are assigned

to temporariness and permanency, and how does that affect building in camps, as well as reassembling practices? Tracing the concrete blocks in Zaatari camp allows us to explore the fluid boundaries between temporaries and permanency. It also shows us that the position and size of the blocks matter, and affect the way they are politically perceived. The refugee camp sheds new light on the politics of a material such as the concrete block that is so common and so negligible, yet has a significant role in the urbanization of camps, as well as in revealing the contestation between temporariness and permanency, and between dwelling and the camp.

To reassemble with concrete blocks in Zaatari camp, refugees had to negotiate the shifting boundaries between temporariness and permanency. While these practices remain 'hidden' or 'flattened' on the ground, and therefore discreet, refugees have not hidden their desire to transform their current dwelling structure into something more permanent. Whenever this point was raised during interviews with refugees, the immediate answer would be: 'Are they going to do it, *finally*?' 'They', of course, refers to the management of the camp. The question is posed to me, as I am perceived as someone who may have a connection to the relief actors, and thus, knowledge about the subject. Further, 'do it' refers to replacing caravans with concrete blocks. However, what is interesting here is the hope that was shared among all interviewees: of transforming the temporary dwellings into permanent ones. Such hopes are often contradictory and contested, especially when they relate to the notion of 'home'. In this regard, I remember a discussion with an old man in Zaatari camp, who, despite the immense heat within the caravan and the hardships imposed due to the poor material quality of the dwelling's structure, expressed with anger: 'no, I would never replace this caravan with concrete blocks, because I want to go back to Syria! This is not my home!' Here it is worthwhile to again highlight the distinction between on the one hand, the *home* as an idea and a concept attached to a person's perception of where he or she 'belongs', and on the other hand, *dwelling* as the immediate practice of living, settling and being. It is also important to mention that this quote did not emerge during a discreet and anonymous interview, but was stated during a film shooting session, and thus, in front of a camera. What I am trying to express here, is that notions of home, belonging and permanency are all illusionary. They can always change and shift according to the context and one's own opinion. Nevertheless, what remains is the immediate practice of dwelling; that is, not a desire but a need, and not a concept but a reality. As shown so far, this practice unfolds as refugees begin to dismantle and reassemble the camp, and by doing so, negotiate the dynamics of the social and material realm. To complete our analysis, one important material remains: cement.

Cement is used as a flooring element connecting caravans and creating smooth surfaces that can be cleaned and used for seating, especially during summer

The 'sixth façade' (cemented floor) becoming visible after a dwelling had been removed or relocated

Cement

Cement is another material that is 'prohibited' to use in Zaatari camp. Although this has not been explicitly stated anywhere, cement is perceived as a counter-element to the temporariness of the camp, and therefore a threat. During 2014, local authorities disrupted the smuggling of 'large amounts' of cement to Zaatari camp, claimed to have reached '10 tons' (Al-Dustour 2014). Such events were perceived as a local 'success' (Al-Rai 2014), showing the clear association between cement and national politics. Preventing cement from arriving in Zaatari camp is considered a Jordanian success, in making sure that the camp remains temporary, and is not transformed into a permanent settlement — a scenario that Jordan has witnessed before.

Cement has the capacity to complicate the relationship between temporariness and permanency in camps. The threshold between the two becomes unclear, and a state of 'permanent temporariness' prevails. Cement, in contrast to other materials, glues the camp together, and its incremental, informal, progression and growth becomes in one way or another fixed, and thus irreversible. Building on his experience in Palestinian camps, which represent an extreme case in which cement was used, Abourahme (2015, 15) notes 'It is cement that "concretizes" presence in the camp, and welds futures and fates into its built environment, exacerbating tension between rootedness and return'. Indeed, cement complicates the relationship between temporariness and permanence. The boundaries between the two blur and merge into each other, and the space of the camp becomes more paradoxical than ever.

In Zaatari camp, the use of cement was negotiated. This again underlines the importance of what is referred to in this part of the book as the material dynamics of reassembling. Although the camp has only existed for about eight years, refugees have nevertheless remained aware of the politics of cement and its connotation with permanency. On the one hand, the local authorities prohibit the use of this material for building, yet on the other, refugees have negotiated the politics of cement during their reassembling practices. This was clearly evident in a camp survey during 2014, showing that cement was the most commonly-used material to modify shelters in Zaatari camp (UNHCR and REACH 2014, 16). Nevertheless, if cement is prohibited, then why is it the most used material in the dwellings?

Cement was not given to refugees, or dismantled from the camp. It was smuggled in small quantities by refugees commuting between the camp and the surrounding areas. The acceptance of cement, in Zaatari camp, began with its association to hygiene. During the first years, it was obvious that refugees' reliance on and acceptance of the communal facilities (WASH) was declining, and the tendency to build their own toilet and kitchen next to a shelter became more prominent. While the camp management did not interfere directly in the process (as a site planner

put it 'we did not tell people what to do, but we were watching what they did and followed them'), Zaatari was gradually turning into a swamp. This may sound like an exaggeration, but during 2014, the most common image of the camp was a tent or a caravan surrounded by muddy sand. According to interviews, and as shown in the first case study, an emerging practice was to cement the septic hole and the area surrounding transitory spaces used for bathing, washing and waste. While dwellings were being socially shaped, cement was 'reassembled' on the ground, creating an auxiliary extension of the space. The presence of cement on the ground made it appear less threatening. Cement was turning from a threat to the national politics of Jordan, into a subtle extension of the shelter, used for hygienic purposes.

The use of the cement evolved with the growing complexity of the dwelling space and the advancement of the reassembling practices. Cement gradually found its way inside the dwelling space, forming one of its most important faces: the floor. If Le Corbusier considered the rooftop the fifth façade, we could consider the floorings of the dwellings in Zaatari camp as the 'sixth façade'. The humanitarian actors and the Jordanian police had no objection to this façade. In fact, it is most likely that such utilization of cement was welcomed by relief actors, since it improved the hygiene standards of the shelter. As a housewife explained:

> Of course, we have cemented floor! It is very important, especially for me. I can wash it so it stays clean and prevents sand from entering our Beit … you know, otherwise, we will be living in sand! And the kids play outside every day … they keep coming in and out … so I must wash the floor because my daughter has asthma … Oh and I forgot!! Cement pavement is necessary to prevent rats from entering underneath the caravans … the other day our neighbours killed one. Oh, they are becoming so big these days!

The flexibility of using cement, and its ability to be easily cast and removed, allowed it to be used even during transitional phases, when dwellings were composed of a caravan and few tents. With the replacement of tents, the cemented floor inside the dwelling became the lively core of the dwelling, as the quote shows. Family members would gather there during summers, as it was slightly cooler than the caravans, and people could even install a small fountain in the middle, as witnessed in some rare cases. The physical qualities of the cement — including its flexible use, hardness, smooth surface, ability to insulate the ground, be expanded as needed and even improve the thermal conditions of the dwelling — mean that it gained significant importance in Zaatari camp. Cement also had financial dimensions that had to be negotiated while reassembling. Although tracing cement may warrant a study of its own in the camp, its prices reached about 150 JDs (200 euros) according to interviews. This, of course, includes the support of 'professionals' from the camp, who would be responsible for casting the floor and ensuring that the finishing was well executed.

Cement allows us to trace the shifting contours of temporariness and permanency in Zaatari camp. On the one hand, it was tolerated for being connected to refugees' hygiene and well-being. Thus, its presence in the dwelling was perceived as a *necessity*, just as dwelling itself is a necessity, unfulfilled by the shelter, and therefore tolerated and allowed in the camp, even though it violates the initial planning regulations. On the other hand, this does not mean that it could be used extensively around the camp. In fact, to reassemble with cement, refugees had to use it *discreetly*, and in areas where it is least visible. This means mostly inside the dwellings, and sometimes in common areas — for example the cul-du-sac shown in the first case study — where it creates a smooth surface that can be washed and where children can play. Yet most importantly, it must stay away from the eyes of the police officers and relief workers and be used in moderate amounts.

Another important dimension that refugees had to negotiate when reassembling was *form*. Cement can be used as long as it remains close to the surface of the earth, but should not be used to construct columns, roofs or walls. In fact, the absence of this concrete structure became a symbol of temporariness. A cement frame, such as in Le Corbusier's Dom-Ino house, became the 'spine' of modern housing today. Yet it seems to have disappeared in many dwellings constructed by displaced Syrians, in Jordan near the camp, and in Syria all around the borders. As the urban planner of the municipality pointed out during a visit to the informal housing constructed by Syrians around the camp: 'Look. Whenever you see a building built with concrete blocks, but without a concrete structure, then you will know that it belongs to Syrians'. In this case, the physical qualities of the cement that had to be negotiated are not only related to its pure and immediate form, but to the ways in which it is structured and formed.

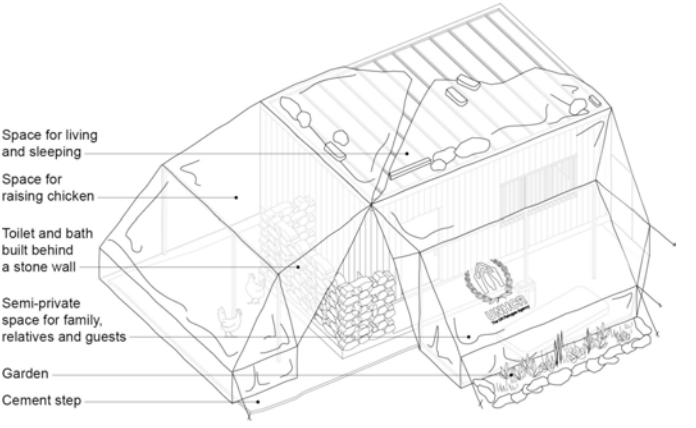
Lastly, despite the discreet and subtle use of cement within the dwellings in Zaatari camp, one could say that it differs from all other materials. This is because using cement has an irreversible impact. Its solid structure remains evidence of a certain socio-spatial and politico-material composition within the space of the camp. A manifestation of this point can be seen in the remnants of the dwellings that one can come across in the camp. As shown earlier, refugees often relocate and change their residence area in the camp, or even return to Syria.[1] Being 'on the move', and having to live in the camp and reassemble dwellings using cement, shows the liminality of dwelling under such circumstances. In such instances, one is likely to encounter the 'sixth façade' on the ground of the camp: a concrete surface vaguely marking what used to be on top of it (rooms, caravans, zinco walls and so on), and looking like ruins or an archaeological excavation site where dwellings of previous civilizations had been built. Indeed, if cement is the 'binder that brings

1 Mostly voluntarily, but sometimes involuntarily, especially when breaking the law or being suspected of having connections to ISIS or other terrorist groups in Syria.

and then holds the built assemblage together' (Abourahme 2015, 11), it may be worth looking at how it captures, records and allows us to trace the transformation of the camp through dwelling, and how the boundaries between what is temporary and what is permanent start to blur.

Concrete blocks used to construct different parts of dwellings

An example of a dwelling in which tents are used as walls, cement is utilized for flooring, and stone and concrete blocks are used to demarcate the garden and construct a low-height wall



Cement is used inside the dwelling to create a front yard and a garden

From the material to the synthesis

Dwelling in a temporary space, such as a refugee camp, poses a 'material question'. What materials are available on site? What elements can be used for that purpose? And what qualities do these materials possess? And consequently, where and when should these materials be used while dwelling? Materials are part of the dispositive of the refugee camp. Their physical qualities, and fragile presence, remind refugees of the exceptionality of that space. It reminds them that camps are never the norm, but the deviation; not the permanent, but the temporary. To start dwelling, refugees begin to *negotiate* and *explore* the qualities of these materials vis-à-vis the politics of the camp that they find themselves in. The main focus remains the reproduction of social space in camps, but materials serve or hinder this process. Politics begin to emanate from materials that are deemed 'normal' for us, such as cement and concrete blocks. Others, such as canvas, zinco sheets and caravans become the norm in the camp. The use of these materials, although it could occasionally be based on aesthetics, is directed to serve one purpose: to make dwelling possible. However, in this process, materials and social needs sometimes become conflictual. In the following, I will highlight this point, paving the way towards the conclusion of this book.

Refugees as Architects

During 2018, I was invited to co-curate an exhibition showcasing the architecture of refugee camps in the Middle East. In Jordan alone, there are striking differences between newly built camps such as Zaatari and Azraq, and many of the Palestinian camps that have developed over the years. However, one similarity remains: all these camps were eventually *built* by refugees. This applies to all scales: from the internal layout of the dwellings, through the ways in which buildings and infrastructures are interlinked, and to the furnishing and use of semi-private and public spaces. The idea at stake here is that *refugees are the real architects of the camp*. Dwellers excluded from provisional housing, such as those who end up in slums and squats, produce their own built environments — and so do refugees. One of the pioneering books that comes to mind here is *Housing by People* by John F. C. Turner (1977). In that book, and inspired by the practices of self-building in slums, Turner explores the possibilities of adapting this model to the economically-driven housing market found in cities today. While his book looks at the technicalities, the main question remains and can also be extended to refugee camps: What can we learn from refugees' self-build practice?

To think of refugees as architects involves a few implications that need to be addressed. First, it gives agency to refugees – a group of people who are often portrayed abstractedly as 'victims', and who thus lack capacities or skills. In that sense, calling refugees architects, or even 'city-makers' (see Fawaz et al. 2018), is a form of empowerment. The strength here lies in the ability to show refugees as *knowers and dwellers*, whose active participation in shaping the built environment around them produces new urban spaces, vibrant markets and lively neighbourhoods. This image contrasts with the ways in which refugees are often portrayed or imagined: lost in space, and unable to find their place in cities, villages or camps. Second, considering refugees as architects can lead us to question the limitations and potential of architecture as a practice. In schools and universities, the architect is trained to find solutions and to design spaces that are not only functional and sustainable, but also aesthetically pleasing. In the context of emergencies, architects are not necessarily welcomed by relief actors. In fact, they are considered as a unnecessary 'luxury', promoting what has been leading to a 'humanitarian-architect

divide' (Scott-Smith 2017b). Nonetheless, many architects have shown interest in the current refugee crisis, trying to find suitable solutions for designing camps or shelters. In this context, the rise of the refugee as a knower, a builder, and thus an architect who is capable of designing and co-producing space, puts the profession of architecture into question. If refugees are already architects, what then is the role of those already trained in that field? Here we need to keep in mind that many people might have been trained as architects prior to or after becoming refugees. The answer to the question, therefore, is not about timing, roles or defining responsibilities, but about opening up the field of architecture so that it becomes a medium of communication and exchange, where knowledge circulates and where dwellers have a say in shaping their built environment. At times, refugees may be the most suitable for telling professional architects and planners how they want to live and dwell. Their appropriations in Zaatari camp and many others are a clear expression of that. At other times, refugees may need assistance with regard to how to technically build or enhance their dwelling structures. The need for a professional architect and planner may be pressing. In this new dialogue, refugees' knowledge of space needs to be considered seriously, and of course, architects' training and immense capacities for understanding, structuring and advancing the construction of space also need to be utilized. Architecture in that sense is *co-learnt* and *co-produced*. However, while this may be a topic worthy of its own book, let us turn again to Zaatari camp.

Claiming that refugees are architects is a provocation that hides behind it an inevitable fact: *refugees are dwellers*. No matter where they end up, all refugees and displaced populations will eventually dwell. The act of dwelling is quintessentially creative, as Heidegger (1971b) suggested. In that sense, the dwellers become the masters of their own environment, and they create a 'speech' and a 'narrative' that suit their conditions, their exile and their state of being. This is why displaced persons may dwell differently. Although they use the same 'language', their practice of dwelling differs, for it seeks to tell us about who they are, and where they are in this life after exile. To bring that close to what has been discussed so far in this book, it may be worth looking again at what the 'social dynamics' and 'material dynamics' mean, and how they are synchronized. First of all, each of these dynamics has been assigned a different chapter, but by now, it should be understood that they can overlap, or even work against each other, as illustrated by the following examples. Second, these dynamics seek to lay out the *main patterns* or *forces* that have affected the process of dwelling in Zaatari camp. Thus, they are camp specific, although they may be witnessed in other camps. They are also group specific: in this case, Arab refugees displaced mainly from villages and towns located in the south of Syria. Third, the presentation of these dynamics should not be understood as representing a certain order or fixed amounts. This is why the word 'dynamics' describes them best: they can change in their timing, importance and capacities as

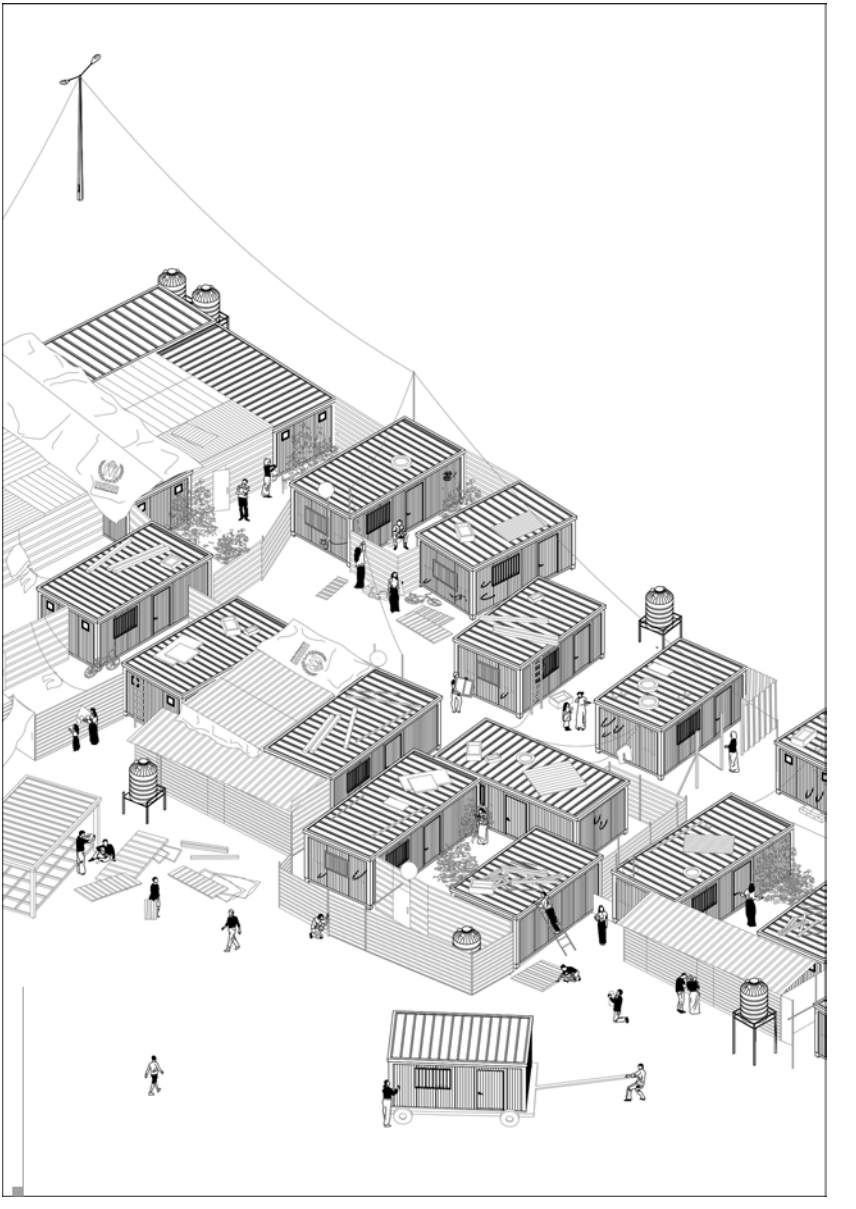
dwelling unfolds (initially vis-à-vis the available shelter). In that sense, refugees — the architects and the dwellers — become the ones who design the dwelling space as they maneuverer and coordinate between these different dynamics, which are sometimes synchronized and sometimes conflictual. The decisions are thus made by the dwellers, and this is why their role is crucial for understanding how the camp is 'dismantled and reassembled' and how the 'perilous territory of not-belonging … where in the primitive time peoples where banished, and where in the modern era immense aggregates of humanity loiter as refugees and displaced persons' (Said 2012, 177) is then inhabited and reclaimed. To highlight the important role of the refugee as an architect and to blur the lines between the dynamics presented earlier, I offer two brief examples from the field.

Hamada is a 28-year-old man who lived with his parents and three young sisters. Their dwelling consisted of three caravans, positioned around an inner courtyard, to which a kitchen, a bathing area and an entrance door had been attached. The dwelling was bought by the family for about 3000 JDs (3500 euros), as they were in dire need of somewhere that was already built and well equipped. The ground was cemented, and the courtyard, kitchen and bathing area were roofed using zinco sheets. The dwelling was very stereotypical — if we can use such terms. However, when Hamada decided to get married, the family was already deprived of financial means. As shown earlier, the formation of family units often justifies detachment and separation from the extended family for reasons of additional privacy. Although the son was given a caravan after marriage, he had to sell it to service the debt. As he said: 'I couldn't leave my parents in need of money just so that I could live together with my wife. This wasn't possible. So I sold it for 400 JDs, gave them 250, and with the remaining 150, I constructed a bathing area attached to our caravan.' This decision can be interpreted as an attempt to find a compromise, a middle ground between different forces: financial capacities, caravan prices and quality (thus material dynamics), family relations, and above all, the need for visual privacy (thus social dynamics). Evidently, the social and the material dynamics were at odds here. What needed to be prioritized? Most importantly, how could that be achieved? Hamada was able to find a suitable solution where the social and material dynamics were simultaneously considered. Eventually, he worked out the design and asked a professional to execute it. One of the caravan sheets was removed and replaced with a door, and adjacent to the caravan a small room was built using zinco sheets, with a cemented floor, a few shelves, water supply and drainage. This unusual solution is an example of the creativity of the dweller, and evidence of a certain tension between the social and material dynamics described earlier.

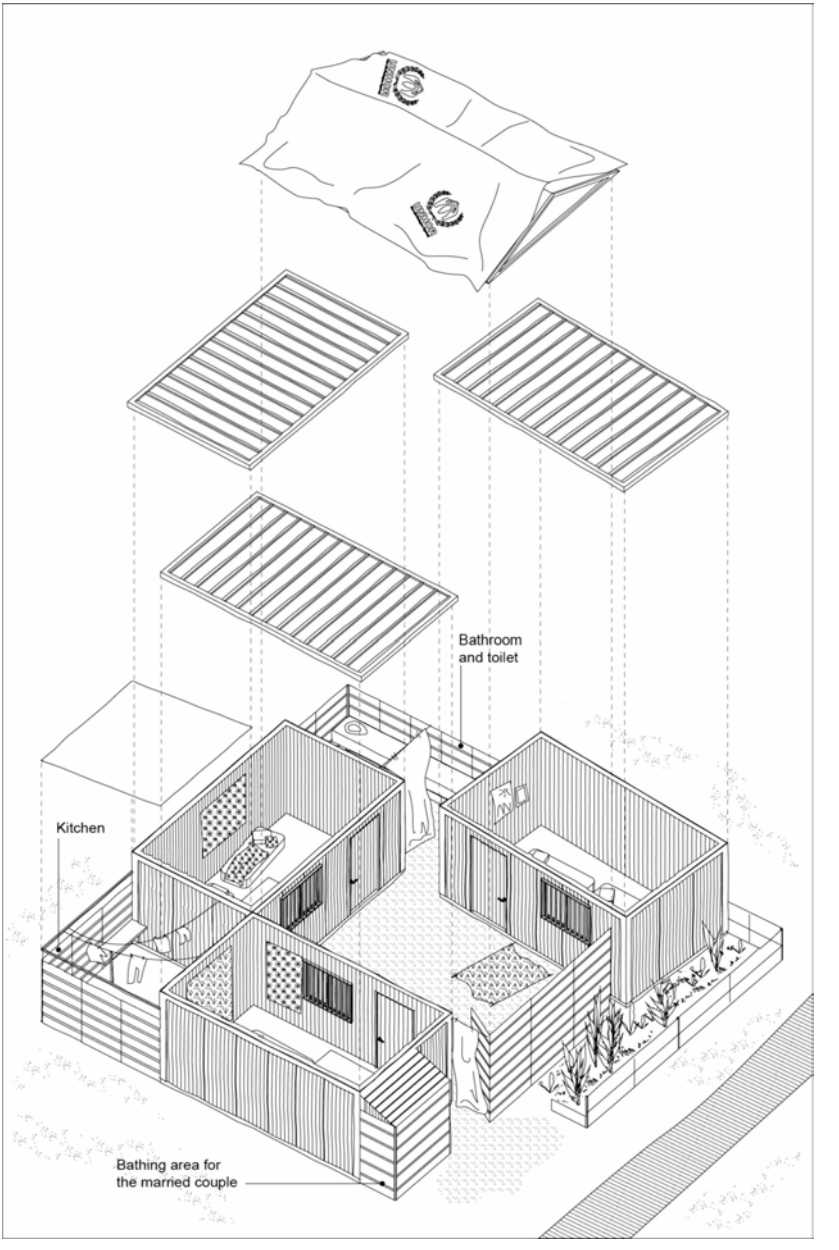
Another example is a family that consisted of a younger son (Sinan), his widowed mother, and his elder brother with his wife and young daughter. On the one hand, the design of their dwelling had to accommodate the social dynamics and

particularly their strong family relations. On the other hand, it had to navigate the absence of financial capital to purchase sufficient materials, and thus to create separate dwellings. The result was a dwelling with a unique layout. On their arrival in the camp, they were given two caravans: one for Sinan and his mother, and another for the elder brother and his family. During their first year, both families struggled to secure enough money to purchase additional caravans. Gradually, this 'material dynamic' affected the layout of the emerging structure. The family could not afford to buy zinco sheets to demarcate their dwelling in the way that others did. Therefore, they instead used the two sides of their neighbours' caravans to create 'walls' for their dwellings. This solution was also found to be socially convenient, as it incorporated the requirement for privacy. As the mother explained: 'we are not bothered by these two caravans … They belong to my sister and uncle. They are relatives, so that is no problem for us, but if they belonged to someone else [a stranger] we wouldn't allow it [placing them so close]. Eventually all the neighbours here are relatives and have done the same as us.' The absence of financial means, and the close-knit relationships, engendered this solution, which was disseminated locally as a form of emerging knowledge (building technique), producing something similar to 'terraced housing'. Eventually, the family was left with two open façades and two caravans in between. Due to the lack of finances, and the close nature of their family relations, dwelling was practiced in what could be described as follows: One shared semi-private space where the kitchen and the main entrance were located, and two private spheres. The first was for Sinan and the older mother located directly by the courtyard, and the second for his brother's family, separated from the courtyard with a partition made from textile painted like a wall. The courtyard was attached to a small bathing area with a toilet and covered by a canopy raised on wooden beams attached to Sinan's caravan. This basic layout contrasts with the brother's 'space', which was furnished to function as a separate unit including its own bathroom and toilet, adding more privacy for the wife of Sinan's brother. Although this example reminds us of the complexity of family relations (for example, Eyad's case), by contrast it illustrates the tension in the final physical layout. The inability to afford additional materials, and the quality of those available, became the basis for how dwelling is practiced, and how it is reassembled. As Sinan explained in hesitation: 'We don't have much zinco here like the others. Only a *Baṭṭanīyh* covered with plastic sheets, tied together using sewing thread … but anyway, *Al-Hamdu-li-lāh* [thank God], we are good and comfortable like this.' Further, despite the fact that the family managed to earn money later, the layout was not changed. Instead, solar panels were installed on the roof, connected to an accumulator, and knowledge about dwelling from the past was used to enhance the space: a small room was made, in which a pottery bottle was stored in the ground to store cold water. In this example, it is difficult to determine which of the 'dynamics' had the biggest influence, but it is clear that the creativity of the dweller —

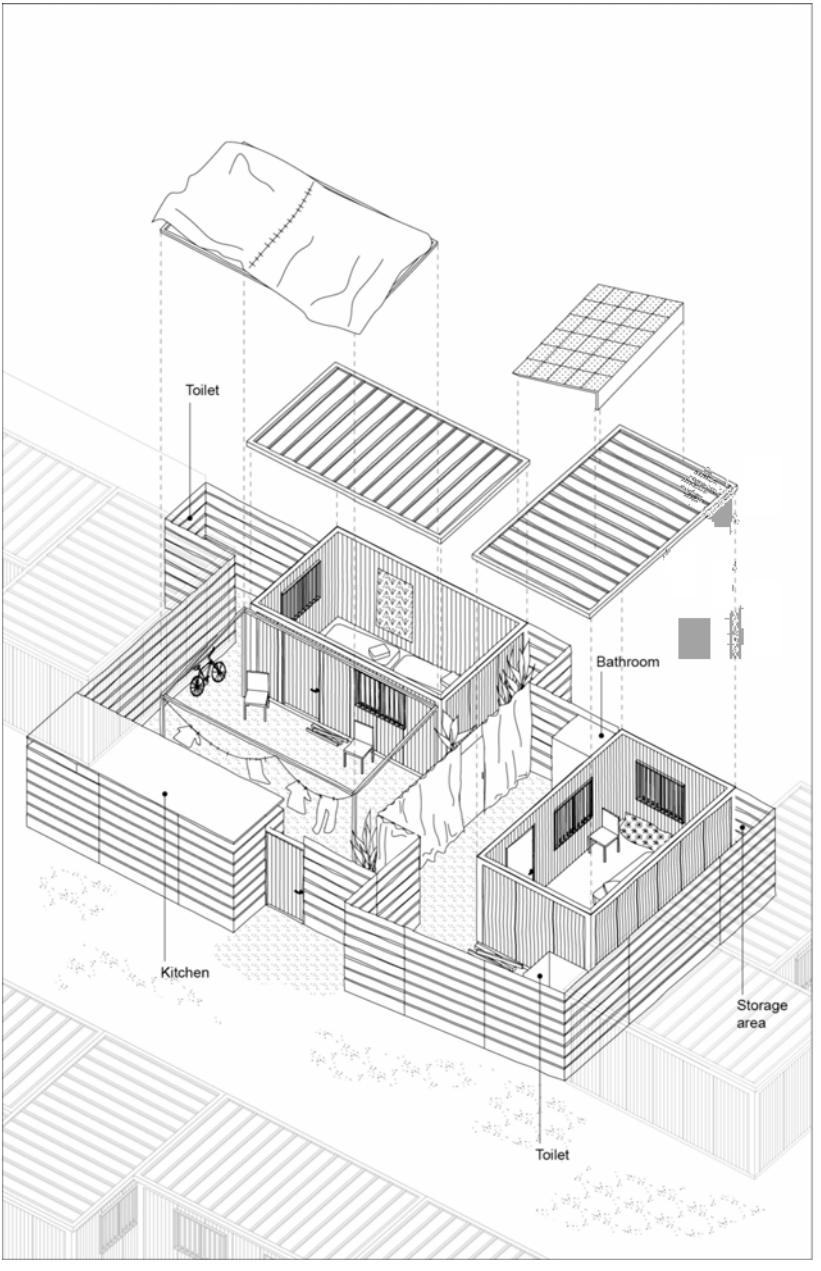
the refugee, the architect — was key for resolving conflicts and finding solutions that could make dwelling possible, again.



The result of negotiating privacy, family relations and the prices of caravans (The case of Hamada)



The result of negotiating privacy, family boundaries and economic constraints within the dwelling (The case of Sinan)



Conclusion

This book portrays a confrontation, a battle, between the refugee — presented here in contrast to the norm as a dweller — and the shelter and the camp, which are spaces that seek to inherently prevent dwelling, or at least limit it to the bare minimum. Studies on refugee camps have always addressed a 'spatial transformation' occurring in them. This was projected onto other ideas, such as 'urbanization', the 'city' and 'agency'. What I strive to do in this book is to pull together a sporadic set of ideas on refugee camps that have appeared in previous literature: the refugee camp as a form of 'temporary residence' (Agier 2011, 118), whose 'occupants necessarily appropriate it in order to be able to live in it' (Agier 2011, 53), and where 'the act of dwelling may impose the most basic features of placemaking' (Peteet 2005, 111), leading to the emergence of different types of dwellings such as the 'growing house' and the like (Herz 2013; Misselwitz 2009, 222). The idea of dwelling has always been there, but it has never been paid the attention it deserves.

The aim of this book is to place dwelling at the centre of camp studies. It suggests that there is no possibility to speak of the latter without the former. The act of dwelling is an inevitable extension of the camp and the shelter. It may be that the boundaries between the three shift and merge in ways that we are yet to learn. Nonetheless, the act of dwelling will always remain the beating heart of any camp and shelter around the world. No matter how limiting these camps are, or how temporary these shelters are meant to be, or even how well-designed and good looking they are; their spaces will endure, in one way or another, a form of spatial transformation due to the dwelling practiced in them.

Dwelling and the camp

In Zaatari camp, the social and material dynamics included a set of issues such as visual privacy, family relations, knowledge (identity and culture), the material quality of shelter, its economics (prices and trade) and eventually its politics (and how temporary or permanent a material could be). The sum of these dynamics vis-à-vis the vision of the architect — that is, the refugee-dweller — dictated the shape

of the final outcome. However, what happens when the conditions are different, for instance in regard to the refugee groups, camp design and shelter typology?

The dynamics discussed in this book should offer orientation for further research on the subject matter, but they should not be taken for granted. What remains a fact is, however, that these dynamics appear in camps as a series of appropriations. On the micro scale, they may appear to be mere attempts to beautify space or make it more functional, but on the macro scale, the sum of these practices brings us back to the main alterations of the camp: its dismantlement and reassembling.

The practice of dwelling in camps reveals their political contours. This is because dwelling in camps — which requires dismantling and reassembling — shows us the limits of this process: particularly its potential, and the challenges it faces. For instance, in some newly built camps, the disciplinary order may be strongly enforced. Appropriations are policed and the camp design is intended to ensure that refugees turn into manageable objects in space, where shelters are supervised and refugees' informal economy is constrained. In such camps, dismantling and reassembling may prevail over time — that is, requiring much longer to be fully expressed — or can remain contained and limited to certain aspects of the camp. In Zaatari, for instance, we have seen how this process was excessive to the extent that it entailed aspects of economy, camp layout, shelter, infrastructure and other fundamental elements of the camp. In other camps, such deep alterations may take a longer time to occur, but it is expected that they will eventually prevail. An example of that is the well-policed Azraq camp in Jordan that was built shortly after Zaatari was opened, and which was intended to reflect the ideal model of what a camp should be like. A 'disciplinary machine' par excellence. Yet despite attempts to control refugees and 'fix' things in space, evidence of inhabitation practices emerged all across the camp. On a small scale, it could be seen that refugees were gradually encroaching on the empty spaces surrounding the shelter; yet on a larger scale, the camp was being — and after extensive efforts — dismantled and reassembled. The truest example of this may be the empty shelters on the camp's fringes, ready to receive new arrivals. These were being literally dismantled and taken to pieces, to then be collected, formulated and reused to enhance the inhabited shelters.[1] In this example, the political contours of the camp hold a somewhat traditional form that fails to maintain its power as time passes, and exhausts those who govern it and try to keep it in shape. In other camps, however, these boundaries can be softly controlled and given a modern look. For instance, Berlin's Tempohomes are newly built camps that are much smaller in size, looking more 'urban'. They are integrated into the city, and the shelters resemble two units, opening to a shared bathroom and kitchen. A first look at such camps can be tricky, as it may suggest that they

1 For a more detailed analysis of Azraq camp, see Dalal, Heber and Palomino (2021).

are so functional and good-looking that they would not be appropriated; however, this is far from true. The appropriations carried out in this camp do nevertheless take a different form. Due to the regulations and management supervision applied to shelters in this camp, the act of dwelling is limited to rearranging pieces of furniture. On a small scale, this may appear as a normal act of personalization. But on the macro scale, one could observe how the arrangement of the standardized elements (in this case furniture) is taken out of their original layout and placed differently to create dwelling spaces inside the strictly designed and controlled shelters. The most expressive example of dismantling and reassembling would be to trace how pre-given elements such as bunk beds are dismantled in one room to be reassembled in another.[2] In both Azraq and Tempohomes, refugees have dismantled parts of the camp and reassembled them to create a new order of space — to create the opportunity for bridging the gap between 'the shelter' and 'the dwelling'. If anything, this shows not only the applicability of this concept in other camps, but also its ability to reveal the political and disciplinarian contours of these camps beyond what they may be visually conveying. Tracing the practice of 'dismantling and reassembling' allows us to examine how 'the camp' on the one hand, and 'dwelling' on the other, relate and interact with one another. The former being the exception, and the latter being the spatial representation of being that will prevail in every context and across all mediums.

Dwelling and the shelter

There is a burgeoning discussion about the shortcomings of shelter, exposed by the recent and continuous refugee crisis in the Middle East and Europe. The UNHCR (2016) *Shelter Design Catalogue* is only a small example of the many attempts the agency has made to diversify its shelter strategy in the hope of responding to cultural and climatic differences faced across the regions. Nevertheless, what needs to be underlined here is that shelters cannot substitute for refugees' need to dwell, no matter how advanced these shelters may appear or how well designed they may be. A shelter is eventually a 'cell', an 'abstract space' par excellence (Lefebvre 1991). In fact, one of Berlin's most advanced refugee shelters, termed MUF (*Modular Unterkünfte für Flüchtlinge*), resembles a form of modern and good-looking housing; buildings that, in their aesthetics, architecture and construction methods, could better many of the dwellings that refugees have left behind. However, this does not mean that they are more habitable or less restricting than the tents and caravans in Zaatari camp. 'My friend calls this place a big prison. Even if we want to put a clock on the wall we need to ask for permission', said a refugee who had lived in

2 For a more detailed analysis on Tempohomes, see Dalal, Fraikin and Noll (2021).

one of them for over three years. What is needed in shelters today is to make them inhabitable as much as possible. In practical terms, this means designing them in ways that can be easily appropriated and altered by their occupants.

Dwelling and appropriations

When shelters are appropriated, new spaces emerge. Precisely, hybrid spaces that stand somewhere between 'the shelter' — its original layout and clean design — and 'the dwelling', with its personalized space and its multi-functional use. The transition 'from shelters to dwellings', should therefore not be understood as a *complete, linear* and *static* transformation. Instead, it represents a form of individualized *journey*, and a *process* in which the gap between 'the shelter' and 'the dwelling' is sought to be bridged. The result is always hybrid and fragile, making the boundaries between the shelter and the dwelling in constant flux.

Calling for the 'right to appropriate' in refugee camps and shelters is an extension to what has been already called for in cities and urban areas (Purcell 2002). It is a statement and a demand — that there is no dignified living for refugees in camps or shelters without letting them be appropriated. Further, because these spaces are more politically 'sensitive' and often heavily 'controlled', it is unlikely that those in power will accept this call and adopt it. Humanitarian agencies and governments will probably resist it under the accusation of being 'chaos-inducing', or the fear of implicitly dissolving 'temporariness' and 'normalizing' the camp. Nevertheless, at least awareness of the significance and impact of these appropriations should be raised.

Every act of appropriation is an attempt to dwell. No matter how large or how small it is. This is why the 'right to appropriate' should be granted to every dweller in camps, including all refugees and displaced persons, and even those sheltered in cities and urban areas. Here we need to be careful not to romanticize appropriation, but to articulate it on the roadmap I laid out earlier: the confrontation between the refugee-dweller, and the camp-exception. It also important to keep in mind that appropriations may differ between intensity and scarcity. Some may appropriate their space every day, while others may keep it to a minimum. Eventually, the shelter could appear overwhelmed by these appropriations, or be only minimally affected by them.

What is at stake here, however, is that every attempt to appropriate the shelter is an attempt to dwell, and consequently, to resist the disciplinary apparatus of the camp. This is what makes these appropriations very valuable and important. Each small appropriation holds the key to understanding the tension between what a camp is and what refugees' needs are. To appropriate in a refugee camp is to

practice politics in its most explicit form; to bridge the gap between 'the shelter' and 'the dwelling'.

From Syria to the world

This book tells the story of a camp that has emerged in the desert, up in the northern part of Jordan. None of its current dwellers ever imagined being exiled from what once used to be home, and finding themselves striving to inhabit a tent or a caravan, in a 'temporary' space, and for an unforeseeable period of time. What this book does is to narrate the story of its dwellers, exposing to the world their resilience and strength. What was first an empty tent or caravan has become a vibrant space, an expression of *being* in a certain space and time; a space in which bits and pieces of the camp were put together to create remnants of what used to be, and what could be. The outcome is exactly what Lefebvre (1996) once called the city, an oeuvre, a piece of art; and the refugee-dweller is the artist.

Syrians in this camp, and many others, including those who have settled in new cities and countries around the world, struggle to overcome the trauma of loss and the hardships of displacement. It is within this book that their experience is honoured. Refugees are always, and will forever be, dwellers, and camps and shelters will consequently always dissolve. If not entirely, then at least they will be dismantled and reassembled.

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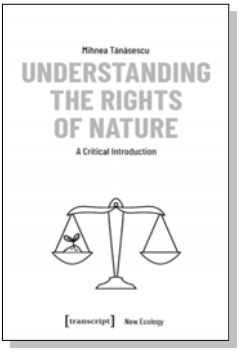

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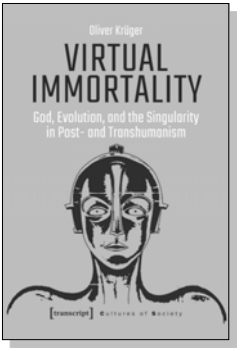

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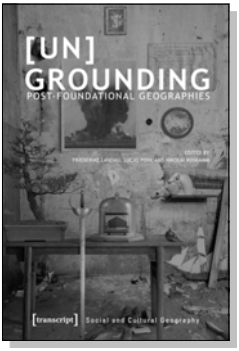

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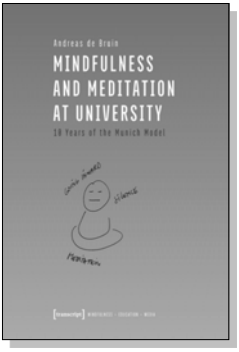

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