

SU KEMERİ

A Proposal for Reyhanlı

This booklet is composed of two portions of design and research. Project Su Kemerli was designed as a response to the prompt by Building for Humanity competition 'The Integration And Inclusion Of Syrian Refugees In Turkey' The following research has provided the theoretical and methodological framework for the conceptual development of the design.

Design
EKIN BILAL and IHWA CHOI

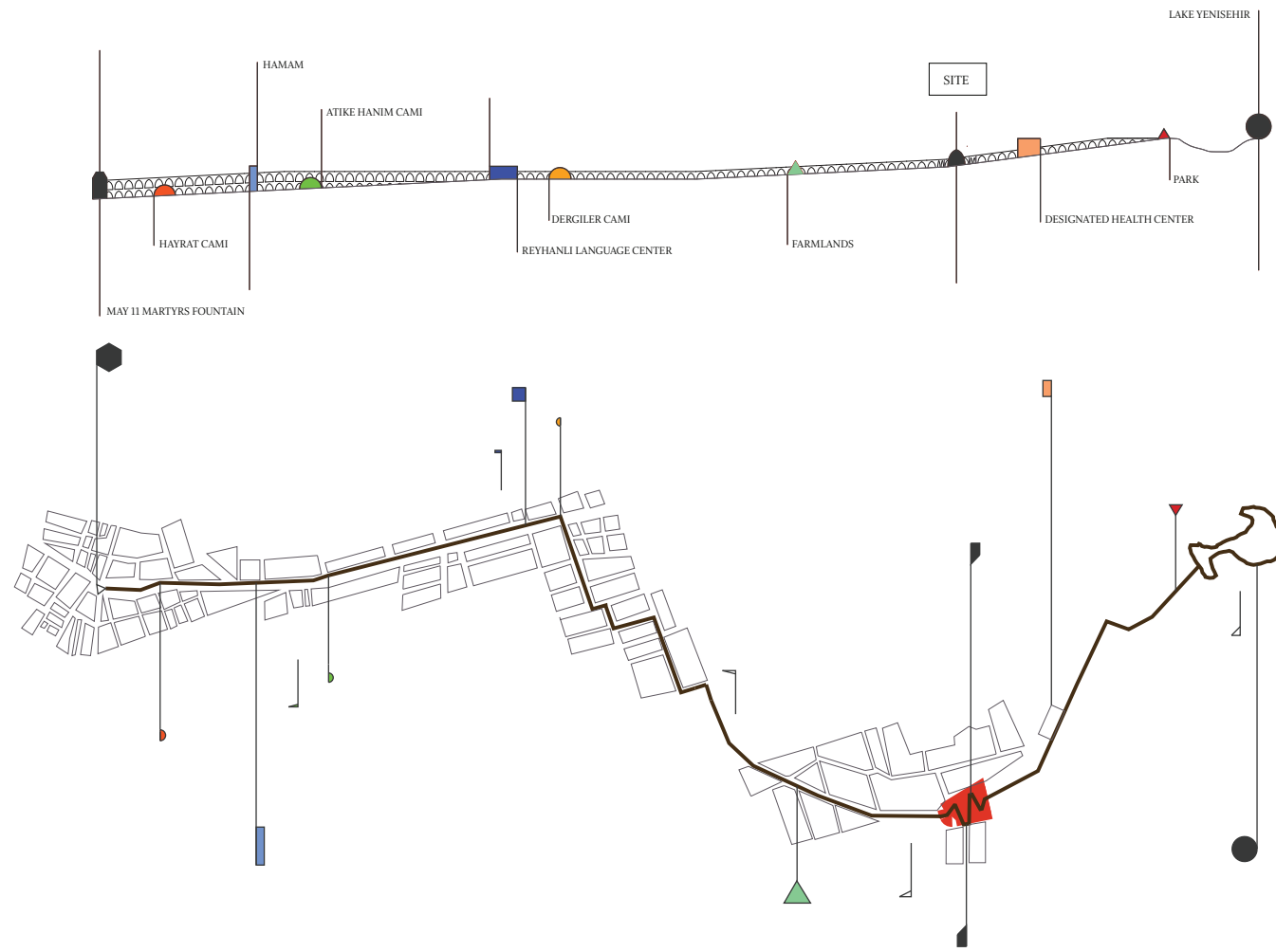
Advisor
ALEKSANDR MERGOLD

Research
EKIN BILAL

Advisor
SAROSH ANKLESARIA

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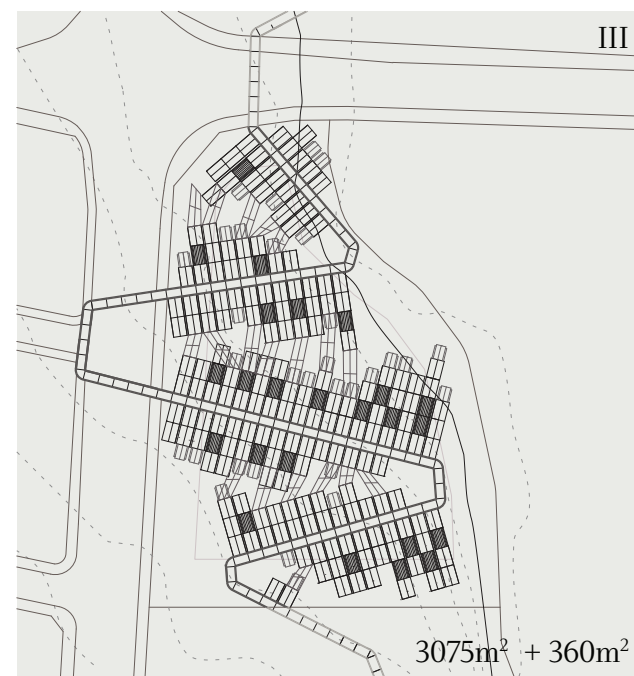
CITY TO LAKE YEHISEHIR SECTION



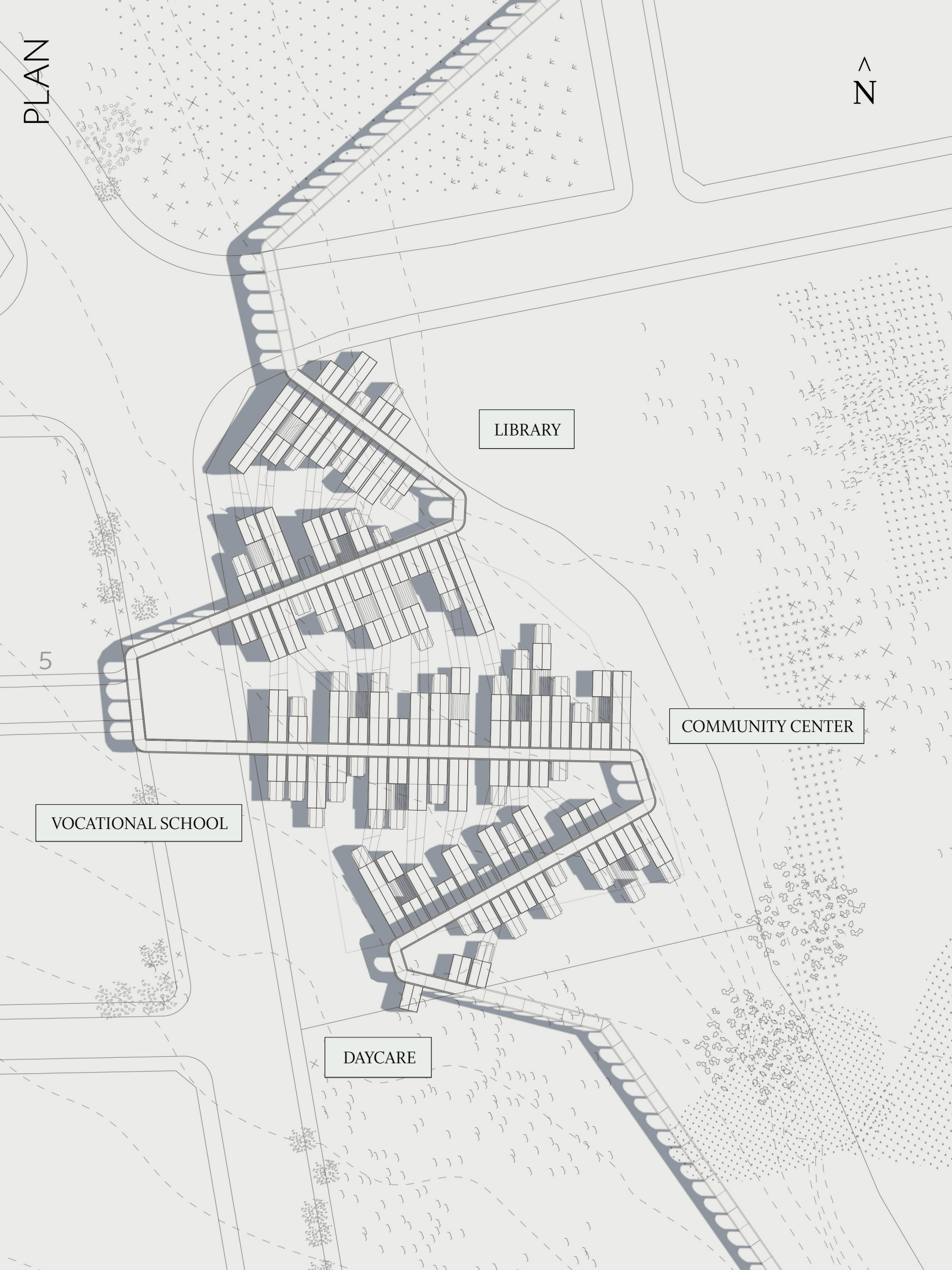
CITY TO LAKE YEHISEHIR PLAN

Lake Yehişehir’s water flows through valleys and farms, streets and homes in Reyhanlı, connecting all people and places, provides life to all. On its path from the lake to the city center, the water provides for plants, animals and people alike. As the need for water surpasses any demographic categories, this proposal makes no difference between the users, the target groups or beneficiaries of the project. On the contrary it hopes to blur any such distinction. Acknowledging the great connection water provides through the complex social and physical context of Reyhanlı, this proposal is an [Aqueduct](#), which forefronts water’s indiscriminate sustaining.

Alongside being a waterway for farmlands it passes through, on the given site the [Aqueduct](#) a spine for houses and programs to plug in, while traversing the city it becomes a portico. Ultimately the [Aqueduct](#) is a monument physically interlacing the urban and the natural, and an ontological bridge phenomenally reminding every user - and beneficiary - the universality of those served on its way.



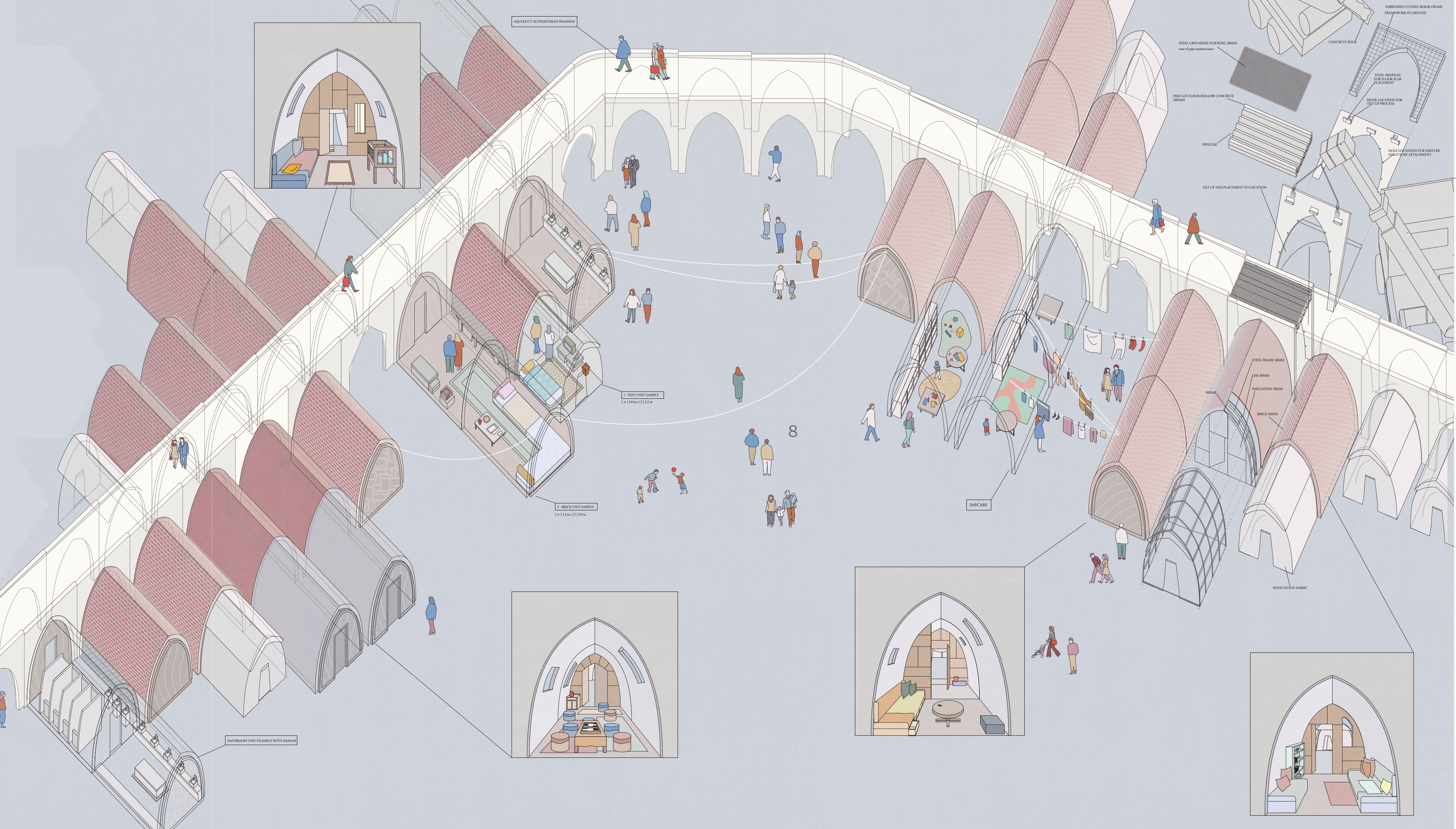
Inspired by the resilient change the waterway can accommodate - a constant flow in a stable bed - the proposal utilizes a shelter design that can transform from a temporary tent enclosure to a permanent brick housing unit based on a unit of the [Aqueduct](#) – the [Arch](#). As time flows, more shelters can plug in to the arches of the Aqueduct and the existing houses can extend utilizing the same structural system, allowing for the growth of living spaces and the number of those who can be housed. As the [Aqueduct](#) bends and folds across the tight boundaries of the designated site, the outgrowing habitation establishes a spectral sense of interiority and exteriority. The misaligned angles of growth allow for the privacy of the inhabitants through discontinuation of visual linearity of the interiors while fostering a sense of community through shared exterior spaces created through the increasing proximity.



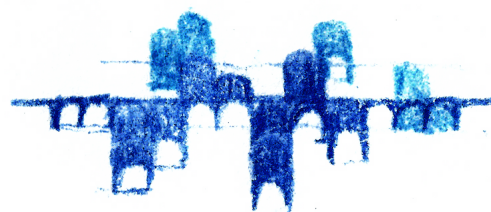
On the scale of the city, the folds of the [Aqueduct](#) become an armature for the existing built environment on the eastern portion of the site and the designated park on the west. By folding and tightening at the streets the [Aqueduct](#) gradually opens into the surrounding nature. Each of the folds holds a different program: a community center to encourage conversation and a sense of community, a library to create access to knowledge and archive the knowledge created, a daycare to educate and kindle imagination in the youngest, and finally a vocational school teaching skills necessary to ensure the resilience of growth.

Through skills gained at the vocational school ranging from culinary arts and local crafts to agriculture and construction, the inhabitants can participate in the local economy they are connected to through the passageway the proposal provides. In time, these skills can also grant them the insight to oversee the continuation of growth of habitation units as well as the management of the logistical necessities of the community which can be discussed and decided collectively. As the community grows in between the folds of the **Aqueduct** and folds of time it becomes more connected through having the agency to self-manage and sustain.

The resilient growth of the community and the settlement is also accommodated through the adapted mode of construction. The **Aqueduct** is constructed through series of tilt-up concrete panels, gradually adapting to the topography of the site to ensure the flow of water across the city. For each concrete panel's formwork proximate ground is flattened and shaped. This is indexation later becomes the flattened surface where the structures for the plugging in shelters can be set up, and linearly perpetuated. The tilt-up process also allows for customization of the openings as desired, allowing for implementing visual language reminiscent of the vernacular architecture recognizable to the inhabitants, catalyzing a sense of belonging through visual familiarity.



As 'water will flow and find its way' (*su akar yatagini bulur*), the proposed **Aqueduct** will persevere through not subduing and simplifying existing sociocultural and geographical topographies, but by adapting and growing with them.



selected pieces from:

Grid, Pavilion, Wall:

Architectonics of the Refugee Camp

The Power and The User

In order to understand the architectonic composition and goals of the refugee camp, the identity of refugee and the powers that construct these spaces of refuge should be investigated. In *Beyond Human Rights*, Agamben problematizes the identity of the refugee as not one that is a mere product of unfortunate disasters. For Agamben the existence of the identity of refugee as a mass phenomenon is a display of the breakage of the existing socio-economic power structures, namely nation-states. The refugee becomes the spectacle of the dysfunctionality of the existing nation based identities: *“by breaking the identity between the human and the citizen and between nativity and nationality it brings originary fiction of sovereignty to crisis. (...) Inasmuch as the refugee, an apparently marginal figure unhinges the old trinity of state-nation-territory, it deserves instead to be regarded as the central figure of our political history.”* (90) Though such theorization of the mass phenomenon of the refugee aims to empower the identity, it is of necessity to note that this role is being “bequeathed” upon it. The identity of the refugee is not one of altruistic activism, it is of survival necessity. The refugee’s marginalization, by definition, is not self-imposed, likewise their theoretical centralization is not either. The utilization of the refugee as a mass phenomenon as purely a framework for dismantling the existing systems of power can translate to further demarcation and an academic disconnect from the multitude of individuals’ suffering. Emphasizing the issue as to be *massive* allows for its problematization and presentation as the concept end of the existing power structures, however in the process it threatens to conceptualize and homogenize the individuals that are identified as refugees. Such a simplification is what has been already adapted by nation-states, given for completely adverse motives, and led to the justification for physical marginalization of refugees. The lumping up of a heterogeneous group for a greater ideological motive becomes detrimental to the individuals of the group when it translates into physicality. Though the Agambenian approach to the identity of refugee as a mass phenomenon is useful to understand the motives of the Power (any state that justifies its means of governance through a national identity) - it should not be directly translated into architecture as it could result in a detrimental architectural outcome similar to the existing refugee camps.

“We should not forget that the first camps were built in Europe as spaces for controlling refugees, and that the succession of internment camps, concentration camps, extermination camps represents a perfectly real filiation.” (93) The realities of the habitat of the camp is the physical manifestation of a conceptual approach that homogenizes the identity of refugee. The nation-state will not tolerate any questioning of its validity of its claim of power, and thus by utilizing the camps the Power aims to erase, suspend and confine the identities that bring it about by their mere presence. Looking at the architectonics of the camp structures implemented by the Power will reveal how erasure, suspension and confinement of the “marginalized” identities is achieved physically.

As with any typical large residential project the refugee camp typology is composed of a layout, a form of enclosure and a definition of site boundary. For the refugee camp these can respectively be identified as the grid, the pavilion and the wall. This identification is to emphasize how these three elements are widely used as tools of architecture and that they are not inherently detrimental to the inhabitant. It is precisely the mode of their utilization and combination in the refugee camp typology that allows for the motives of the nation-state to be physically implemented. Thus it is possible for the architect to alter the implementation of these three elements in order to manipulate the outcome of the design.

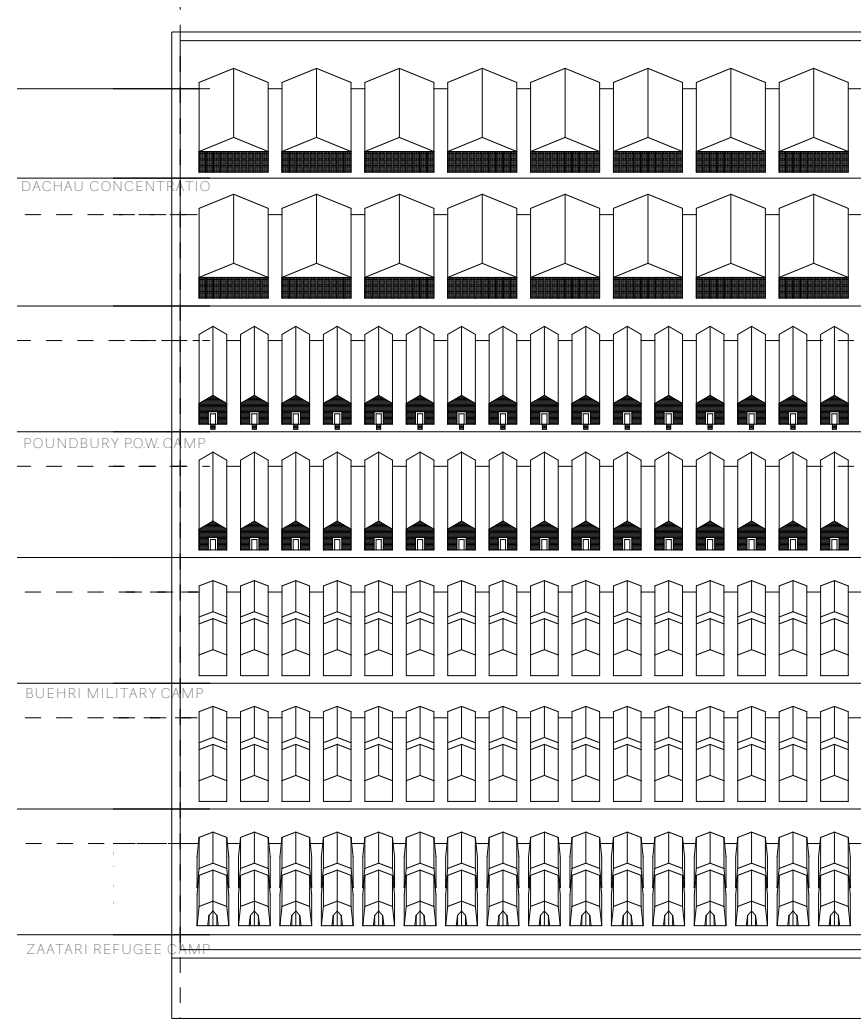
The Grid

Alteration of the grid element in a new refugee settlement is perhaps the most convenient and also most widely adapted form of creating fractures within the typology of the refugee camp as it does not necessarily require any extra expense on the behalf of the Power. Grid's abstract nature allows for its alteration to be relatively easy, fast and inconspicuous in terms of its motive. Rather than isolating each dwelling into a predetermined plot of rectangular land, the linear divisions can be understood as the moments of connection, and the rearrangement of the dwelling units along them to create new possibilities of communal areas. Such a layout is achieved by Fred Cuny's site plans for UNHCR Holding Centers for Kampuchean Refugees in Thailand. While the grid is still existent within the layout, it no longer is adapted severely as a form of division. The dwellings are laid out in a cluster form still abiding by an overall grid allowing for the layout to utilize efficiency of the grid in terms of transportation and management. Cuny's cluster based arrangement also allows for a spectrum of interiority where scales of public and private spaces are made possible. Such an

affordance, prevents

isolation of the individuals, and allows for the conservation and construction of socio-cultural relations amongst the residents. As with any of the fractures within the architectonics of the refugee camp typology, the alteration of the segregating grid in favor of cluster based layout can and should occur in myriads of ways as proclaimed in *Towards A Rationalisation of the Construction of Refugee Camps* by James Kennedy through an extensive analysis of the existent application of layout methods: "Clustering' is also something that needs to be examined intelligently, if it is to be well implemented (...) There is no universal solution for the construction of an optimum refugee camp or no universal

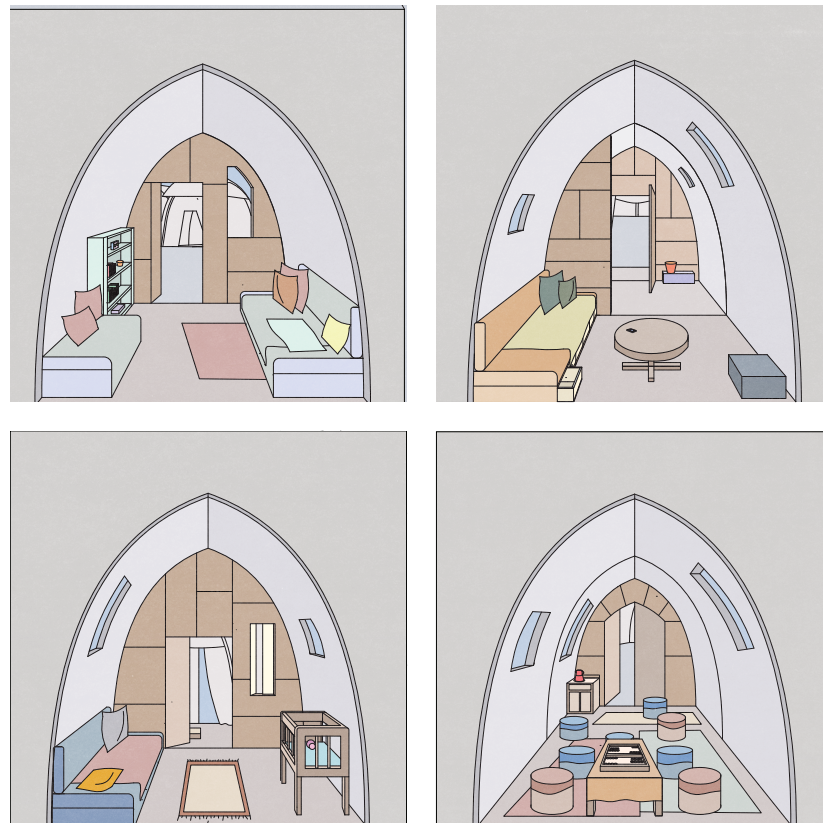
solution for refugee situations." (30,130)



The Pavilion

It is important to reject the analysis that tent typology is the form of enclosure the refugee camp utilizes. The camp enclosures do not fulfill the requirements of the tent typology: there is no freedom of movement afforded to the camp inhabitants, and secondly identities present in the refugee communities are commonly not of nomadic tradition; they are architectonically imposed by the Power. Thus the enclosures of the camp are reduced from being spatially transient to simply temporary.

The inconsistent temporal qualities of the dwelling typology of the pavilion needs to be stabilized. Its inherent architectonic understanding as a pavilion need to be challenged. Its temporal necessity should not come at the expense of its structural dependability. A blatant proposal for stable structures would not be welcomed by the nation state due to its obvious implications of the permanence of the refugee in the region, thus the proposed dwelling needs to cleverly utilize a morphology that can be both understood to be temporal, or adaptively transient which would allow dependability. Such a transience of the dwelling typology already occurs extensively within the existing camps despite the provided ineffectual shelters. Though the materials of the UNCHR “tents” have an extremely short life-span, approximately three years, the residents of the Zaatari Refugee Camp, altered them in ways that have not been foreseen or encouraged by the design of the unit.¹³ By utilizing found and self-bought materials, the tents are expanded and reformalized to create nooks and courtyards, where fountains and other decorative elements are placed. Though the materials are still as temporary, small scale addition and aesthetic alteration allow for the repetitious units to reflect and allow socio-cultural identity. As seen in the black tent typology of the Ruwallah, the dependability of the shelter was not through permanence of materiality but its adaptation in accordance with the necessities of the residents. Looking through such precedents of adaptive reforming of the provided units by the residents, the architect can learn how the fracture should be created in order to provide adaptable reuse of the proposed design. Rather than trying to be an all-encompassing solution to the complex set of needs of the residents, the proposed shelter should encourage editing and adding, reusing and dismantling as needed. As the dwellings become more easily editable, the residents will be able to take ownership as they create spaces more reflective of their identities. The increase of ownership in return will allow for stability and dependability of the structure not necessarily through physical permanence but through the affordance of a new identity.



The discrepancies between the needs of the user and the desires of the Power has led to immensely detrimental spaces of the refugee camps. However, as these spaces are designed and physicalized the nation-state, perhaps without active intention, lends its power to the Architect. In this transference of power, the architect has the opportunity to create inconspicuous fractures in the architectonics of erasure, suspension and confinement allowing a hope for the empowerment of the marginalized.

The Wall

Perhaps the most complex to problematize out of all three elements is the wall, as the desires of the Power when constructing it are not as clear in terms of its temporality. As seen in the previous elements, the argument of the time constraint has been also used to be an excuse for the short life-span of the developments. (i.e. simple grid due to its efficiency, short-lasting shelters due to their rapid delivery.) However the wall of the refugee settlement holds an inconsistency, as the rest of the refugee camp it is built with the hopes of temporariness, however its probable temporal shortcoming would result in complete failure of the nation-state's ability to exert power and control the inhabitants. While the wall needs to be stable enough to protect the citizens of the nation-state from the non-citizens, concurrently it needs to be as temporary as the residents of the settlement it encloses. This paradoxical quality of the desired wall by the Power allows for the architect to problematize the element in multiple methods. Firstly and more commonly, a more stable wall can be proposed. The new stability of such a wall would allow its infrastructuralization, This can be understood as to what has happened to the ancient Aleppian wall, where the element has lost its ability to territorialize and become a host for new developments.

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