EXPLORING PERMANENT TEMPORARINESS:

A LOOK INTO THE PALESTINIAN EXPERIENCE THROUGH REFUGEE CAMPS

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A poem that I have carried with me throughout my academic career...

F*ck Your Lecture on Craft, My People Are Dying
By Noor Hindi

Colonizers write about flowers.
I tell you about children throwing rocks at Israeli tanks
seconds before becoming daisies.
I want to be like those poets who care about the moon.
Palestinians don’t see the moon from jail cells and prisons.
It’s so beautiful, the moon.
They’re so beautiful, the flowers.
I pick flowers for my dead father when I’m sad.
He watches Al Jazeera all day.
I wish Jessica would stop texting me Happy Ramadan.
I know I’m American because when I walk into a room something dies.
Metaphors about death are for poets who think ghosts care about sound.
When I die, I promise to haunt you forever.
One day, I’ll write about the flowers like we own them.
PERMANENT TEMPORARINESS

per·ma·nent tem·po·rar·i·ness

a term used to define experiencing an indefinite waiting period before earning the human right to return to your homeland.
For all Palestinians, the phenomenon of permanent temporariness and waiting indefinitely is commonplace. With this said, the presence of Palestinian Refugee Camps indicates a grave violation of human rights under international law. The refugee camp is the embodiment of permanent temporariness. With Palestinian refugees living in extremely poor conditions in these camps, some not able to gain citizenship in their country of refuge, such as in Lebanon, others experiencing routine colonial violence and oppression as is the case for camps in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Additionally, after getting in touch with a few architects who work for the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees, it became apparent that no improvement in these camps will ever improve the Palestinian's conditions so that they will have a truly good quality of life or somehow feel less strongly about their right of return, something that has been used as a rebuttal or argument against improving camp conditions. Furthermore, while the experience of permanent temporariness is universal for Palestinians, it is important to combat the narrative that our history and people have not evolved in the face of colonization and displacement. In fact, the culture of exile that has been produced since the colonization of our homeland is now a significant part of our history as a people. Continuing to archive Palestinian history while experiencing the effects of colonization is a significant form of resistance against erasure. Therein lies the exploration and design of an archival space that references the traditions of the villages in Palestine, while simultaneously archiving the new culture of exile produced in Palestinian refugee camps.
LIFE IN THE REFUGEE CAMP: ELECTRICITY & CLEAN WATER

Especially in camps in Lebanon, Palestinian refugees often experience electricity outages. During extremely difficult times, these camps will go months without electricity. Another major issue refugees face in camps, mainly those located in Lebanon, is access to clean drinking water. The factors of their lack of access to clean drinking water include inadequate sewage systems, water pollution, and overpopulation.
Overcrowding and extremely dense camps with little to no open space is a major problem in many of these refugee camps. The overcrowding and density of these camps indirectly leads to problems related to electricity, lack of access to education, infrastructural problems, and more.
With the help of a few Architects from UNRWA (United Nations Relief Agency for Palestine Refugees), I was able to collect data and site information on Jerash Refugee Camp, located in Jerash, Jordan. I used this specific camp as a catalyst site to better inform my design of an archival shelter and aid me in fully realizing the reality of implementing this type of project. With issues of high unemployment, dense infrastructure, asbestos issues in the roofs of many shelters, and more. Jerash was an ideal site to base the design of my intended archival project. Jerash Camp is a medium density refugee camp where the rooftops are usually used as resident’s patios and gardens which led me to designing this structure specifically for the rooftops of the camp.
The idea of an active archive and a space that emboldens and strengthens refugee camp communities brought me to the design of modular, temporary community spaces. I studied the living conditions at Jerash Refugee Camp in Jordan and used this camp’s site in order to gain a more in depth look into the reality of this design. The archive aspect of the structure is through these modular panels made of recycled textiles. Notably, the memories, stories, and culture produced in exile causes the refugee camp to engage in two different sites simultaneously: the site of exile and the site of origin. Therefore these detachable panels will have traditional and historical symbols that come from the refugee’s villages of origin in Palestine on the outside and the inside is blank to allow for contemporary art forms and archival processes of the younger generations of Palestinians who grew up in these camps. Significantly, the structure’s temporary nature creates an archive that can be disassembled and then reassembled in Palestine as a monument and archive when Palestinians gain their right of return. Ultimately, this structure and archive serves as a continual affirmation of Palestinians determination of gaining their right of return while also resisting the narrative that the history of the Palestinian people has been halted due to their exile.
After studying methods for building temporary shelters, I was heavily inspired by Shigeru Ban’s DIY refugee shelters for the structural frame of this space. Therefore, the columns would be composed of modular recycled paper tubes and the joints would consist of recycled plastic.
AN ECOSYSTEM OF ARCHIVAL SPACES
&
A COMMUNITY INITIATIVE
REFERENCES


