The ambiguous reality of Palestinian refugee camps between urbanisation and humanitarian emergency

10/04/2007
1. the origin of the refugee crisis: refugee camps in the Middle East
The birth of the refugee problem: location of camps in the Near East
A growing population: UNRWA’s officially registered refugees

800,000

4,500,000

Refugee population structure: registered refugees in camps

1948
- Refugees inside refugee camps: 150,000
- Refugees outside refugee camps: 500,000

2007
- Refugees inside refugee camps: 1,5 million
- Refugees outside refugee camps: 3 million
Refugee population structure: refugees inside and outside camps

WEST BANK
- Refugees inside Refugee Camps: 500,000
- Palestinian Non-Refugees: 450,000
- Refugees outside Refugee Camps: 450,000
- Total: 800,000

GAZA STRIP
- Refugees inside Refugee Camps: 500,000
- Total: 800,000
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2. campcitess as ambiguous sites: urbanisation vs. areas of exception
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2. *camp* cities as ambiguous sites: urbanisation vs. areas of exception

3. camp locations in West Bank: urban, sub-urban and rural context
The Region: Location of West Bank Camps
Context typologies: selection of three case studies

- urban context (2)
- suburban context (11)
- rural context (6)
Urban Location: Amari within Al Bireh Municipality
Sub-urban Location: Deheishe next to Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Doha, Artas
Rural Location: Al Fawwar
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4. Historical evolution: horizontal growth, verticalisation, saturation
Map 1: Neirab camp in 1948

- Yellow: Barracks only
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5. building patterns and architecture: informal growth
Building patterns and architecture: the growing house

1948
1967
1987
2003

7 persons
31 persons
Building patterns and architecture: micro studies
Building patterns and architecture: distribution of staircases
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6. relation to context: interaction, informal spill-over and expansion
Relation to context: closed borders
Relation to context: engaged borders
Relation to context: border zones and gates

1. Jerusalem-Nablus Road (shops, Car services)
2. Samira Street (car services)
3. Western edge (black smith, car services)
Relation to context: spill-over

spill-over: blurring official UNRWA boundary by extended and self-built shelters
Relation to context: unofficial expansion

approx. 4000 people or 40 per cent of the registered camp community live beyond UNRWA borders

Lifta cluster

En El Sharayit
Relation to context: out-Migration/ unofficial expansion in West Bank
Relation to context: conflictual landscape

No formal mediating body/structure is currently in place to facilitate the relation between camp bodies, UNRWA and external stakeholders for:

- conflict negotiation
- the identification of areas of mutual interest
- the negotiation of joint initiatives or strategic visions
Relation to context: work migration until 2003/ 2004

- camps as hubs for low-skilled workers in Israel: peripheral location as an advantage
- even access of work opportunities for all West Bank camps
Relation to context: construction of separation wall/ fence

likely long term impacts for the future:

- **increase of polarisation**: more opportunities/ potentials for centrally located camps

- **possible new internal migration** towards the centre (refugees are more mobile than ordinary citizens)
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7. strategic master plan: mapping of needs, assets, potent. action areas
Problems and needs:
- lack of expansion for businesses
- condition of main road

Assets and potentials:
- passing traffic as business opportunity
Problems and needs:
- dispersal of institutions
- UNRWA campus as ghetto

Assets and potentials:
- formation of institutional clusters
- possibilities to expand
Problems and needs:
congestion
buildings risks
social polarisation

Assets and potentials:
→ agricultural land around camp as possible zone for expansion
Problems and needs:
- lack of access in some camp areas (bottle necks)
- condition of main road/danger passing traffic
- bad road connection to expansion zones of camp

Assets and potentials:
- central agricultural zone as green zone
- external open spaces in quarter
- Hierarchichal road system
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8. urban accupuncture: community driven small-scale interventions