

# Abstract

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Quality of life depends largely on the ability to plan (choose) and thus self-determination; since refugees live basically without these opportunities, their condition is one of extreme suffering. Depriving them of this right to choose is forcefully manifest in the built environment in which they normally live: a planned refugee camp.

This dissertation reflects on the direct link between refugees' loss of citizenship rights and the protocols for the design and management of refugee camps.

A comparative analysis examines this link between current camp design, its application in the *Zaatari* camp in Jordan, and the *summerisation* project for this camp.

The universal design type, defined by operational guidelines and applied in *Zaatari*, is a short-term solution based on a rigid, modular spatial hierarchy. The average lifespan of camps around the globe contradicts this alleged impermanence; likewise, the size and population living in *Zaatari* make it comparable to a city.

Failure by the *Zaatari* design to meet not-vital needs was tackled by refugees through reappropriation of the social and physical spaces in the camp. By modifying the predetermined military-style layout of the shelters in which they live, refugees modified the relationship between private and public space based on community dynamics.

Observing this behaviour was the basis of the *summerisation* project analysed in this dissertation and jointly designed by *FAREstudio* (Rome) and the author. In the request for consultancy by the UNHCR's implementing partner, the term *summerisation* meant measures to improve the summer performance of prefabricated shelters inhabited by Syrian refugees in *Zaatari*. The project designed a kit for a flexible, self-built veranda rationalising the self-managed layout of the shelters and facilitating spontaneous reconstruction of community relations. The project tried to solve non-specific problems (providing shade from the sun, and encouraging self-design) using specific tools (design project) in the hope it would spark an albeit minimum process of redemption for a large group of individuals. In short, this analysis supports the idea that the final goal of architecture is to redistribute resources and rights in a dire emergency situation.