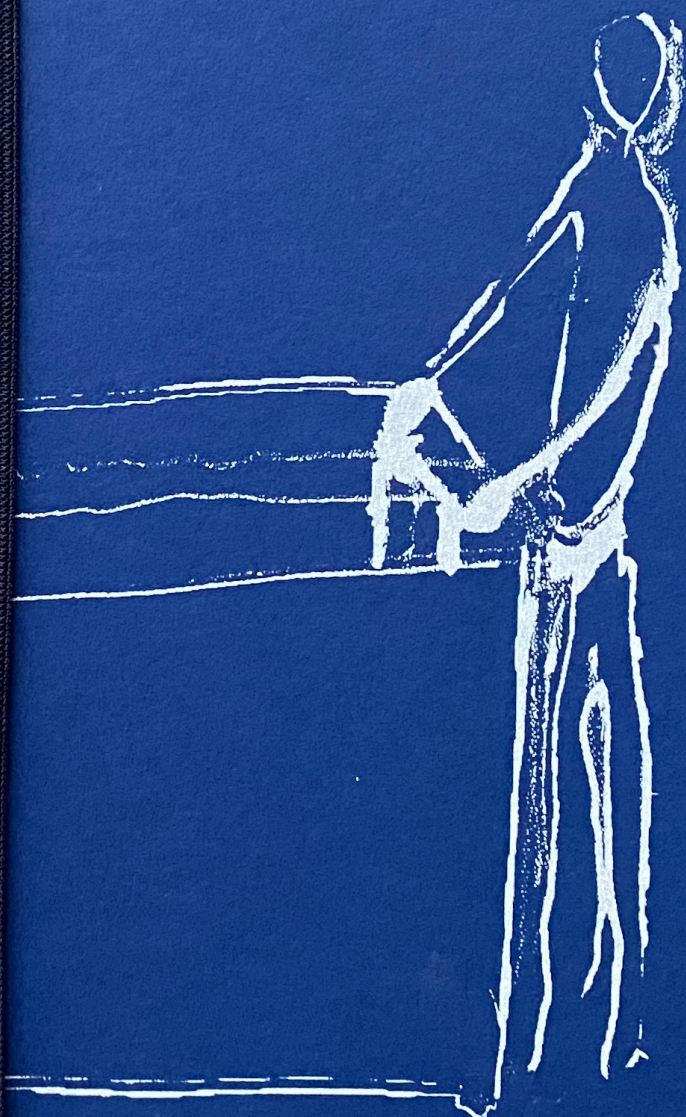


To be a host in a hosting country

Hospitality as empowerment
in refugee camps



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**To be a host
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a hosting
country**

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A

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**How can hospitality to the stranger
be made a legitimate basis for the
narrative of citizenship?**

**How do we move from
a place of survival
to a place of belonging?**

B

PROLOGUE

Much has been said and written on the importance of writing a thesis. Much has been said and written on the necessity to use a thesis as a trampoline for ours, yours, indeed my field of interest after graduation. These, though, are hard inputs. What do they exactly mean?

I write these words trying to understand why I have always thought my passions from one side and my skills from the other, belonging to two different fields, hardly able to meet. I write these words not being focused on the answer, but more on the process. I write these words while sitting inside the library of my university, an Academy of Art. Someone once said to me that to be a designer within an artistic environment is a privilege: able to find solutions through reaching the heart of people.

These are the times when I am understanding that theory and practice don't have to represent incompatible ways of approaching the world. These are the times when I am understanding that theory can produce practice and vice versa. I have always known it but somehow never recognized it.

Lorenzo Pezzani¹ introduced me to² the notion of prossimità critica (critical proximity), to understand that to produce rigorous research I don't need to have a critical distance. I rather have to use the research as an intervention in the present. This is the aptitude I will undertake during this process. The academic contest where I find myself now endorses disciplinary scopes that have blurred edges; that have a “reasonable promiscuity”³ of methods and practises because it sees in this promiscuity the right strength. I, therefore, feel stimulated in pursuing research that might cross boundaries between spatial design and other fields.

The following is then a story. The story of how I tried to disclose a path where my skills and my passions could walk along. What I have faced in these months was a challenge I have never had: to be free in choosing the extent of a project, from the beginning to the end. It indeed represented an opportunity I did not want to miss. Over the last years, I finished studies, started office work, quit it, restarted to study since I have been asking myself where I could have seen my skills and my passions be a relevant contribution to

1 Lorenzo is an architect and researcher in the Centre for Research Architecture, where he currently convenes the MA studio in Forensic Architecture

2 He shared with me some inputs on his methodology of research showing to me an interview he had from Stefano Collicelli Cagol: *Praticare una prossimità critica Forensic Oceanography, fra ricerca e pratica artistica* Intervista di Stefano Collicelli Cagol a Lorenzo Pezzani

3 *Praticare una prossimità critica Forensic Oceanography, fra ricerca e pratica artistica* Intervista di Stefano Collicelli Cagol a Lorenzo Pezzani

one of the most critical phenomena of (this) time: migration and displacement.

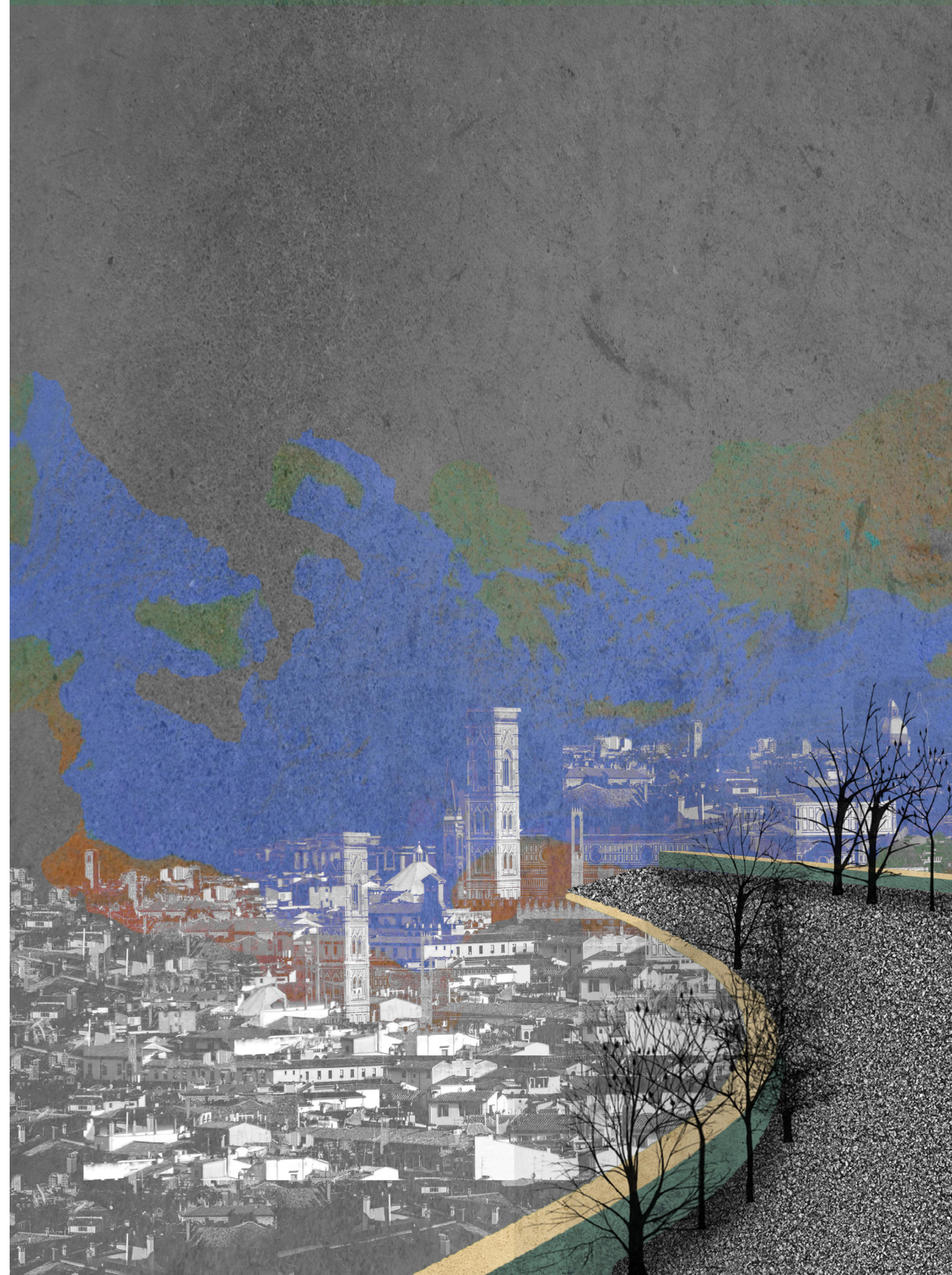
In 2017 I had the opportunity to volunteer for an asylum seeker centre in Sicily, Italy. At the time I had just completed my bachelor in interior design. I was eager to understand where my knowledge could better fit. For the weeks I spent at the asylum seeker centre I asked myself if there could have been a possibility for me to work for these people and these situations.

Much has been said to this extent. Much has been criticised.

Much has also been done. When I approached my research knowing this frightened and discouraged me from pursuing this path. Nevertheless, I wanted to see if there could have been a way for me within this field and understand how my discipline could create a relevant perspective in approaching this topic. I do share Lorenzo Pezzani's visions in believing that it is important "to step out from the presenteeism and from the rhetoric of the emergency which is affecting the mainstream narration on the migration. There is a necessity to take on a more wide vision also from a temporal perspective."⁴

This text will then reveal my research to attempt the above.

⁴ Praticare una
prossimità
critica Forensic
Oceanography, fra
ricerca e pratica
artistica Intervista
di Stefano Collicelli
Cagol a Lorenzo
Pezzani.



C

INTRODUCTION

As the 2021 Mid-Year Trends report outlines, UNHCR estimates that global forced displacement has likely exceeded 84 million by mid-2021, a sharp increase from the 82.4 million reported at end-2020.⁵

This research explores how an understanding of a space can help in responding to the current situation of the increasing displacement of people across the planet. Many possible solutions are being given to the extent of providing shelters for migrants in precariousness. Many of these solutions seem to attempt to normalise precarity.⁶ But so little attention has been given to the perception the migrants have of that precariousness.

Then how can my response to such phenomena go beyond merely providing shelter to understanding the relationship between displacement and belonging?⁷

Within this investigation, I was hoping to better understand what precariousness means in terms of spatial dynamics inside the refugee camps. During my field research, I started getting to know more about the reality of these structures.

Architecture, and especially its practice of design research, starts at the moment of looking. What we choose to notice, to see, to draw, and analyse is equally important as what is eventually proposed.⁸

I started my observations back in 2017 when I took part in the project ATF (At The Frontiers) by CVX-LMS and I volunteered in a SPRAR (Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) in Sicily. I immediately felt a mismatch between my knowledge, my skills, and the condition I was inserted into as a “helper”. Who should I have helped? How? When?

This is the reason why this research exists: to answer these questions by exploring new processes towards knowing and claiming territory. This research speculates on the domestic environment that may emerge through processes of listening, tracing, and drawing together with those living on the front line of precariousness inside refugee camps.

The text will be divided into three parts. The first chapter will present the theoretical framework on the notion of diaspora,

⁵ <https://www.unhcr.org/mid-year-trends.html>

⁶ Andrew Hersher, Humanitarian’s Housing Question: From Slum Reform to Digital Shelter, E - flux Journal 66 october

⁷ Nishat Awan, ‘Architectures of Displacement and Forms on Non-belonging’, Louisiana State University, USA (22-24 Feb 2019)

⁸ Nishat Awan, “Diasporic Agencies, Mapping the City Otherwise”; pg. 3

migration, and multiplicity within urban settlements.

To this extent, the work of Nishat Awan “Diasporic Agencies, Mapping the city otherwise”⁹ has been my main source. The first chapter will also unfold two case studies: one is Glub, a video installation based around the everyday ritual of seed-eating that is prevalent in most Arab societies; the second one is the field research I conducted with a colleague in the Afrikaanderwijk neighbourhood of Rotterdam, in the framework of the one-week studio “ A City of Comings and Goings” by the Independent School for the City.

I refer to these two examples as case studies since they gave me the opportunity to start engaging with migration, precarity, and, what I call, urban-dwelling. The second chapter is a report of my field research concerning refugee camps and further speculation on it. I have to admit it is quite interesting for me, and so may be worthwhile to include in these forewords, that while dealing with the notion of borders and displacement, I encountered so many barriers myself to get into one camp or even to talk to someone living there. This tells a lot about the accessibility, visibility, and possibilities to represent and even talk about these spaces. Rather than see it as an obstacle to proceeding with my work I decided to include it in my research. When I finally realised I was not going to enter and document myself any refugee camps I decided to elaborate a different methodology to research those places. Interviews and drawings, as the second chapter shows, became the tool for me to develop knowledge on the topic I was investigating.

My reflections and observations upon the field research will be fostered in chapter three by the notion of Hospitality according to Derrida¹⁰ and the theory of “ Space of Appearance “ by Hannah Arendt.¹¹

A last word is necessary to anticipate the methodology I operate during the investigation.

Mapping constitutes the main tool I used for my field research and I aim to continue using it in the next phase: the one that will see this research translated into a project.

9 Nishat Awan, Diasporic Agencies. Mapping the city otherwise , Routledge, 2016

10 Jacques Derrida was an Algerian-born French philosopher best known for developing a form of semiotic analysis known as deconstruction, which he analysed in numerous texts, and developed in the context of phenomenology. He is one of the major figures associated with post-structuralism and postmodern philosophy

11 Hannah Arendt was a political philosopher, author, and Holocaust survivor. Her contributions influenced 20th and 21st century political theorists. Arendt was born in Linden, a district of Hanover, in 1906, to a Jewish family

The use of mappings has resulted in a research methodology that is related to what Jane Rendell calls a “ critical spatial practice”.¹² **She describes such practises as those that can “ transform rather than describe” and to “involve social critique, self-reflection, and social change”.**¹³

12 Rendell, Jane. ‘Critical Spatial Practice’. In Art Incorporated: the Role of Art in Urban Development, edited by Sabine Nielsen and Christine Buhl Andersen. Køge: Kunstmuseet Køge Skitsesamling, 2008. <http://www.janarendell.co.uk/essays/criticalspatial-practice>

13 Rendell, Jane. ‘Critical Spatial Practice’ <https://janarendell.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/critical-spatial-practice.pdf>

14 Nishat Awan, Diasporic Agencies. Mapping the city otherwise , pag.7

15 Gerjan Streng founding partner and architect at Bright, research fellow Architecture & Circular Thinking

16 Arjun Appadurai, Traumatic Exit, Identity Narratives and the Ethics of Hospitality, Lecture at the Berlin Institute for Integration and Migration, November 4 2015

I mentioned the work of Nishat Awan as one of the theoretical references for my research. From her, I learned the importance of using maps in a topological way rather than a topographic. This is a way of thinking about space through the difference it embodies, a difference that plays out in degrees and intensities. Thinking of space as topological means “foregrounding relations over static ideas of space as a neutral backdrop”.¹⁴

One of the goals of this research is to establish how mapping can be a design tool. It is indeed sure that different parties can make maps in different ways; as it is sure that different parties can read maps in different ways. One of my theory teachers, Gerjan Streng¹⁵, reminds me that mapping is itself a form of control or, at least, could be presented in this way.

As the second chapter will show, I used drawing as my first way of entry in the precarious living conditions of refugee camps. In my investigation, I considered a drawing not only as a representation but as a tool of a proposition. This is the reason why I consider it to be an act of mapping.

Once I completed the field research I aimed to figure out whether the act of mapping could represent, for those living in these conditions, a tool to reclaim their lives and spaces.

Precariousness goes along with the lack of control over someone’s own life. Mapping as a system of control could be redirected in this direction.

Along with the text you will encounter several drawings I made to elaborate on my field research. They are speculative drawings, and as such they should be read. Be open in accepting the questions and suggestions they might arise in your mind. I hope to be able to trigger the reader’s mind in envisioning new possible scenarios concerning the topic of my research.

As the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai¹⁶ states we need to help the strengthening and deepening of migrant archives, seeing them not only as storehouses of memory but also as aspirational maps. “This effort might allow us to see the common ground between the aspirations of the refugees and our own and thus to find a richer cultural road to the legal and bureaucratic solutions currently being debated. The second approach - finding ways to make migrants’ narratives and identities a basis for secure citizenship- will require re-thinking the very architecture of sovereignty in the contemporary world. That daunting task cannot be addressed today, but I hope I have described the conditions that make it an unavoidable challenge.”¹⁷

The necessity for me to operate together with refugees and people that could help me dive into this reality has been fundamental. As the group Stalker¹⁸ writes: “Being present is often necessary. To be present means to observe sympathetically, to suspend judgement, to pay attention to the process. It also allows a ‘way in’ that is not demanding and gives that which is hardest to give – time”.¹⁹

17 Arjun Appadurai, Traumatic Exit, Identity Narratives and the Ethics of Hospitality, in *After Belonging, The objects, Spaces and Territories of the Ways we stay in transit* pag 40.

18 Stalker is a collective of architects and researchers connected to the Roma Tre University who came together in the mid-1990s. In 2002, Stalker founded the research network Osservatorio Nomade (ON), which consists of architects, artists, activists and researchers working experimentally and engaging in actions to create self-organised spaces and situations.

19 Stalker, Stalker and the Big Game of Campo Boario, in *Architecture and Participation*, Routledge 2005. pag. 231.



D

DIASPORIC
SUBJECTIVITY

“How to find a balance between the need for inclusive spaces and the inability of dominant spaces to accommodate certain traditions and behaviours, as well as handling the push and pull between the host and home cultures that never relate within an easy dialectic is a key question for a “diasporic urbanism to come”.²⁰

When I approached the topic of this research I was lost in trying to define my path within the multitude of aspects migration, displacement and belonging bring along, especially when talking from a spatial point of view. I moreover found it very hard to refer to these terms that can also be very abstract and intangible. Enlightening was the conversation I had with Nishat Awan.²¹ Her work combines the diaspora, as an act, with the spatial agencies it provokes. She let me discover how the concept of spatial agency, which relies on an understanding of architecture as a social relation, can be mobilised²² to work with those situations where the answer is not necessarily lived and localised.²³ The border and bordering are conditions that prompt us to think about distributed and networked relations and to address spaces

that are difficult for us to enter. Sharing with her that the notion of diaspora is still very contested since it has been the locus of several debates around questions of identity, home, and the concept of hybridity, I though find it necessary to speak about diasporic subjectivities when relating to displacement and migration. Nishat Awan drove me into a deep understanding of the term subjectivity. When I met her I presented my attempt in understanding identity in conditions of precariousness inside refugee camps. She immediately let me reflect on the term identity. When considering migration, the word identity remains static.²⁴ Rather subjectivity refers to a more fluid reality, it prompts a reaction. If we think about identity, she said, in our mind, we have a fixed image; subjectivity calls for multiplicity. Nishat Awan told me that diasporas act topologically²⁵ and through these relational exchanges they make their spacetimes. How might one begin to represent the inhabitations of such a community? She challenges a very interesting question I present

20 Nishat Awan, Diasporic Agencies. Mapping the city otherwise, pag.195

21 Interviewed on 23rd November at Tu Delft, Delft, The Netherlands.

22 Nishat Awan, Diasporic Agencies. Mapping the city otherwise, pag.33

23 Ibid.

24 Interview with Nishat Awan 23rd November, Tu Delft, Delft, The Netherlands

25 Nishat Awan, Diasporic Agencies. Mapping the city otherwise, pag.3

here: “ As architects, we are adept at drawing spaces but how do you draw time and how do you draw relations? Specifically, how can these be represented dynamically and in a form that might be useful, for example as part of a planning process?²⁶

This question could open up so many other analyses I don’t want to undertake in this research. What I want to bring along though is one aspect that, to me, is implied in what she asks: diasporas bring with them the culture and practises of another place. How do I recognize these layers in the city space? Am I able to read them? As Nishat Awan correctly points out, the processes of migration necessarily dislocate subjects and involve narratives that can span regions and borders. In this scenario, space becomes a contested domain full of contradictory and conflicting positions. How to read these positions? How to identify them? How to document them?

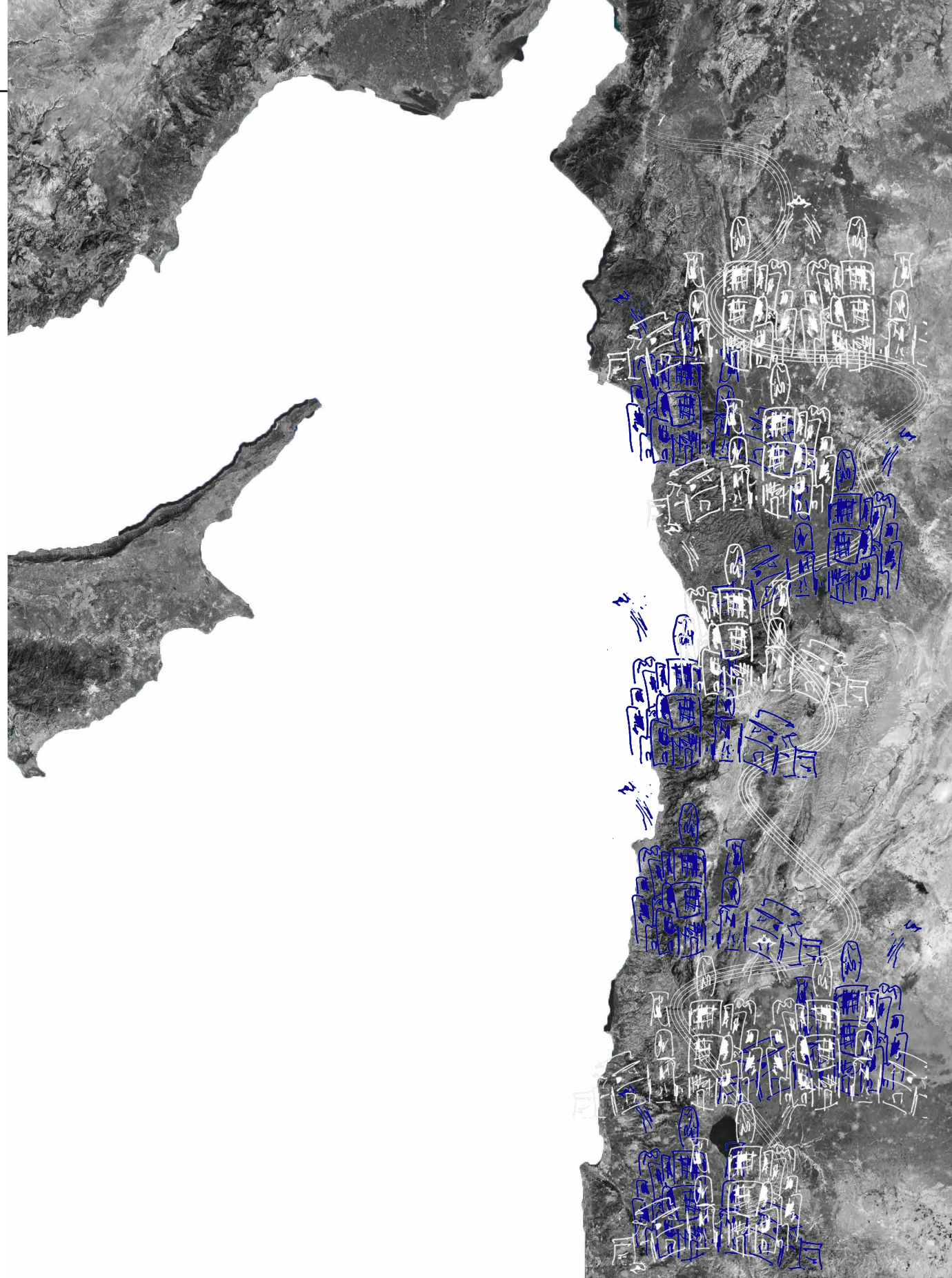
This chapter will showcase two case studies that attempt to answer these questions.

One of them is the subject of a video installation by Mieke Bal and Shahram Entekhabi called Glub²⁷.

The other is the result of field works I conducted in the city of Rotterdam.

26 Ibid.

27 Bal;GLUB (Hearts), 2.



E

1.1 GLUB

Glub is a video installation based around the everyday ritual of seed-eating that is prevalent in most Arab societies; the word ‘glub’ means ‘heart’ or ‘kernel’ in Arabic and is used to denote the seeds as well as the act of consuming them.

It investigates the habit of eating seeds in public as a performative inhabiting of the city that produces its locality²⁸ through the bodily postures of eating: the gesture of hand-to-bag, the shaping of the mouth just so to extricate the seed from its shell, the waste that is produced and shed on to the street. Bal writes about this unconscious act of eating that is at the heart of the project: “This function of seed as unofficial food connects seed to invisibility and formlessness, but its constant consumption, which produces cracking sounds, smells of roasting, and waste that changes the feel of the street and the sound of walking, makes it at the same time hyper-visible.”²⁹

The video focuses on this smallest of gestures that recurs and multiplies in the everyday practice of the former guest workers of Berlin and creates a continuous cultural territory of sorts from the

Middle East through Turkey to Berlin.³⁰

This cultural habit determines the way the street looks, not only since the shells are dropped, but because eating is a communal activity that makes the interaction between people being different- less indifferent. Shahram Entekhabi speculated that it is this aspect, a “ symptom” of migration that only becomes visible once you notice it, that has made Berlin so much more lively, both as an urban place and, indirectly, as an art world.³¹

The practice described in Glub is one way of making home a place through a simple everyday act carried out in difficult conditions that becomes a form of resistance.

28 Nishat Awan, Diasporic Agencies. Mapping the city otherwise, pag.58

29 Nishat Awan, Diasporic Agencies. Mapping the city otherwise, pag.59

30 Ibid

31 <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5848p76c>



Imag 1

Glub
Frames from the
video

E

1.2 A CITY OF COMINGS AND GOINGS

The following reflections represent the result³² of the field research I conducted with a colleague in the Afrikaanderwijk neighbourhood of Rotterdam, in the framework of the one-week studio “ A City of Comings and Goings” by the Independent School for the City.

These reflections have been used, during that week, to introduce one potential theoretical angle from which to look at the places within the neighbourhood that are highly shaped by migration flows over time. Within the area of the Afrikaanderwijk, we focused on two localities: the Cafè Arena and the Koffiehandel Pretoria Espresso bar. We chose these locations since both serve as meeting and recreational spots for the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Hence, in their mere function, they can be compared to each other as they are intended as third space, places besides home and the workplace. However, as will be shown in the following, both cafes attract a highly different audience, partially also due to their interior.

The Cafè Arena is located at the corner of Bloemfonteinstraat and Paul Krugerstraat. While

this particular cafe opened in 2019 it has been a cafè before. The outside looks very generic and doesn't give any hint to the type of current customers. What directly struck us when entering the cafè was that the only woman around was the bartender. The customers were all-male aged 50+. The majority of them sat around tables playing a board game. We approached the female bartender who then told us that they are all “ Turkish men” that are not likely to talk to us.

In retrospect, it is difficult to say whether our first impression was that the interior was quite “Turkish” or if it was because the bartender referred to the customers as Turkish men. This question arose because looking closer, there were still many objects that can be read as Dutch styles, such as blue-white tiles on the wall behind the bar, and gave the hint of the bar/cafè it has been before 2019. Thus, it is difficult to say if we read it as a Turkish bar mainly because of the customers or because the atmosphere created with the interior contributes to the impression to a great deal.

³² During the studio week I collaborated with Eva Spillmann with whom I wrote part of this text



Imag 2
Arena Cafè

Nonetheless, the place now is used by a homogeneous group of people regarding gender, age, and ethnic background. Even though the identity might not be created through the interior, the café itself has a strong sense of place attached to it, may it be intentionally created for a certain type of customers, or created by the latter themselves. In any case, it seems to come with a mechanism of exclusion as the place was not visited by people from other communities in Afrikaanderwijk, women or younger people. This impression is also reinforced by the fact that little transparency is given from outside to the inside: low curtains and sight protections through privacy film almost allow now view into the bar. It then creates the impression of intended seclusion from other places, like an unofficial club with a code that is not accessible to everyone in the neighbourhood. The only element I held to, while being there, was the board game the men were playing. Asking (in a miming way) them which game that was, represented the only interaction I had with them.

The reality of the Arena Café stands in high contrast to

the Koffiehandel Pretoria Espressobar located on the west side of the Afrikaanderwijk. Before the current owner started renting it in 2015 from the public housing corporation Vestia, it had been a retail shop. The café has a huge window front that allows seeing both its interior and customers. The café has two storeys; the upper one with an open view over the ground floor which connects both levels. Small tables are organised on the walls with the counter in the centre. One has the impression that the objects in the room are chosen with care to their effect on the environment and that the interior is a crucial part of the café's overall concept. This has then also been confirmed to us by the owner that works in the bar. He said he wanted to create a place where people feel welcomed and everything is "easy-going". According to the owner, the clients are mixed in terms of ethnic background, gender, and age.

Disregarding its welcoming atmosphere, we observed that the Koffiehandle Pretoria Espresso bar shows

characteristics of what the anthropologist Marc Augé calls "non-places";³³ places that lack a "sense of place" and thus, authenticity. The characteristic of a placeless landscape element is that it doesn't have any special relationship to the place where it is located. While shopping malls, gas/petrol stations, and fast-food chains are cited as examples, we looked at the Koffiehandel Pretoria Espressobar in the same line. It is located in the Afrikaanderwijk but one would not be surprised to find the same café in a different neighbourhood of Rotterdam. In our theoretical analysis of the fieldwork though, we came across another interesting angle from which to look at the research: the difference between space and place according to Michel de Certeau³⁴.

What we found interesting to highlight in the philosopher's analysis, is that the "space" concept is regarded as a site for freedom. This might be particularly insightful to look further into as the owner of Koffiehandel Pretoria Espressobar told us that his customers feel at ease in his café. In particular, he mentioned Muslim women from the neighborhood who come to

the café to be by themselves since they have a few places where they can spend their time alone.

What binds the story of the video installation Glub and the field research in the Afrikaanderwijk is the relevance of finding a tool people can recognize and read as a layer of the city space. These tools, being the seeds, the game board, the freedom inside the Koffiehandel Pretoria Espressobar, represent a way of dwelling on public space by claiming it.

³³ Augé, M. Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity. Le Seuil: Verso. 1992

³⁴ de Certeau, M. "Spaces" and "places". The Practice of Everyday Life. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002



Imag 3

Koffiehandel
Pretoria
Espresso Bar

F

VOICES FROM WITHIN

The fieldwork done in Rotterdam opened up many interesting perspectives and gave me the possibility to experiment with a new methodology of research. Analysing the bars (in the Afrikaanderwijk) as a social gathering spot of a context was a smart methodology to discover the fluidity in between the history of a place.

Being the precarious situations inside refugee camps the main focus of this research, I tried to find similarities between what I learned in Rotterdam and the near-field research I was hoping to do inside refugee camps. I knew I would have had hard times managing to visit even one of these structures. What I didn't know was the reason this happened. Refugee camps represent a system spoken by everyone by so little about its inner dynamics it's known by everyone. The security system around these places is severely high. People living there are under a privacy control system that sometimes prevents even their educator (in case they are minor) from entering the structures. Of course, their political condition determines the secrecy they live in.

Talking with people that work in refugee camps I discovered there

is another reason why these places are closed off. In particular, I had the chance to learn more about how the system works in Italy where these centres are offered by a local organisation, private institutions.³⁵ According to Italian law, only some members of the parliament have full permission to go and visit the structures to see if all the living requirements and standards are fully respected. I spent one entire month contacting people, institutions, ONG, and other organisations in Italy, my home country, and in The Netherlands, where I am currently living, trying to get into one camp. I didn't manage to enter into any of them but indeed I created a network around me. Encountering so many obstacles to get to visit and document refugee camps, I started to wonder what would have happened if someone living or working in these structures would have told me something about those places. I then began to elaborate field research-based not only on my observations but on someone else's ones.

³⁵ The "Prefettura" announces the possibility of getting money to open a refugee camp. Private organisations will then apply to this.

I created a way of documenting a place and getting to know it through, at first, impressions of others, of the ones dealing with its reality. Once I understood it would have been hard to enter any refugee camps, I organised interviews (sometimes online due to the pandemic situation) outside the centres. I was interested in discovering what kind of image of that place people would have given back to me. I was interested in understanding if refugees have a sense of belonging in these structures or not. As part of my research, I pursued a complete view of the reality I was about to research. To this extent not only I wanted to meet refugees living in the centres but also people working or dealing with these spaces. I had the opportunity to meet: Carol, volunteer in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon; Limon, refugee who just left the refugee centres in Italy; Ted, refugee who obtained the status of a refugee 3 years and now lives autonomously; Norman, volunteer in a refugee centre in Italy; Caterina, legal defender of a minor refugee in Italy; Viola, educator in a minor asylum seeker centre in Italy; Khalid, member of the “We Are Here” activist group of

undocumented migrants in Amsterdam. With an exception for the case of Carol, my field research mainly regarded second-level centres for refugees that in Italy are known as Sprar.³⁶ By second-level centres I mean places where refugees go after being identified at the hubs that are the first arrival points they meet. The main difference between centres and camps lies in the construction of the shelter which, inside camps, is mainly a tent, sometimes also self-made. I believe this clarification is needed before going into the details of my field research which will, nevertheless, spot the precariousness of the living conditions inside refugee centres. This chapter will unfold the methodology I engaged with during the different phases of my research. With all the forewords done I only have to add that for legal and privacy reasons I am not allowed to use the real names of some of the people I interviewed. I cannot either make any indications on some locations of the centres mentioned in the interviews. This is the reason why I invented fictional names. As concerns the locations I used random initials.

³⁶ The SPRAR project (Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) is financed by the Ministry for the Interior through the National Fund for Asylum Policy and Services. Its aim is to support and protect asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants who fall under other forms of humanitarian protection. Now with the new law they are called SAI - Sistema di Accoglienza e Integrazione (Reception and Integration System)



F

FIELD RESEARCH BUILDING TRUST

I started my interviews asking all of them, refugees and people working in these structures, what their days looked like. I firmly believed talking about activities and programs would have easily driven me into knowing more about the physical and social dynamics of the centres. More than that, I was looking for a way of approaching the interviews, without imposing my aims or guiding the conversation towards my purposes. Mostly I wanted to avoid having already a goal where to go with the interviews. I needed to be open as much as possible to gather any kind of inputs or reflections these conversations could have given to me. Of course, I have to admit, I had in mind a set of questions to ask, to follow my interest in understanding how spatially the precariousness of life was perceived by refugees themselves.

I am happy to say that I barely followed them. Asking how a day looks like when living in temporary structures, having uncertainty in all moments of a simple daily life, shaped the talks in many interesting ways. By this, I mean that I gained trust from the people I was talking to and the same happened for them with me. This allowed me to engage with the conversations and listen to the implicit signs they were giving to me.



F

FIELD RESEARCH GIVING THE IMAGE

The second phase of my field research consisted in asking them (sometimes I didn't have to ask) to draw for me the spaces they were talking about. Although I did not manage to observe myself, the structures I am investigating, interviewing, and drawing turn out to be a magnificent tool to give a particular perspective to my research. I was surprised when I realised how powerful the act of making a drawing was.

I asked the people I met to give a shape to the description they were doing about the structures they lived in. The drawing immediately became a tool for a deeper dialogue. It represented for me a tool to speculate on the very deep meaning of architecture, the one of dwelling in a place having all the rights involved in doing it. It represented for me the opportunity to create communication from inside these closed-off places to the rest of the city scale.

Not only did I had the chance to reflect on the importance of the given image, but the people I was talking to experienced something new: they realised they were having a crucial role in my research. Basing my further reflections and conclusions on what came out from those

drawings and talks represented the first step towards my design question. I was indeed deeply interested in understanding the perception refugees have of the space they temporarily live in. I was indeed curious to explore new (at least for me) processes towards knowing and claiming territory. I think what I started during the interviews with the drawing is going in this exact direction. We, together, during our talks, recognized some elements in the spatial layout of the refugee centres that were determining the way they perceived their precarious condition in those places. These drawings represent the voice from within.

The words of Badiou³⁷ pop into my mind. He outlines the distinction between belonging and inclusion as follows: "What is included, philosophically, equals all that is possible in the world, whereas what belongs equals all that can be presented in a given worldview."³⁸

37 Alain Badiou is a French philosopher, formerly chair of Philosophy at the École normale supérieure and founder of the faculty of Philosophy of the Université de Paris VIII with Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault and Jean-François Lyotard

38 Van den Hemel, "Included but Not Belonging: Badiou and Rancière on Human Rights", pag. 23.

Imag 4

18th December 2021
Drawing by Carol volunteer in a refugee camp
in Lebanon

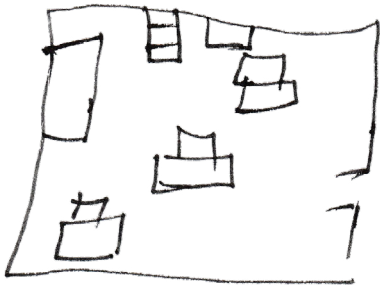
- 1. Locations
- 2. Towers
- 3. Carpet and rosary and pans
- 4. Sun is not passing through



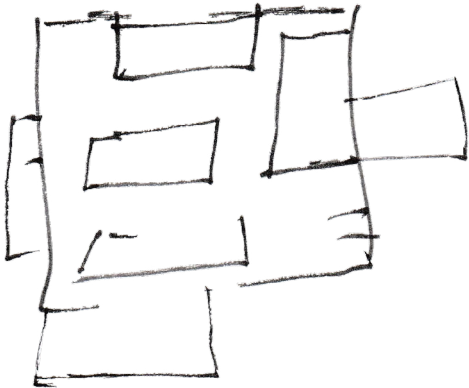
Imag 5

30th December 2021
Drawing by Limon who has been living in
refugee centers till couple of months ago

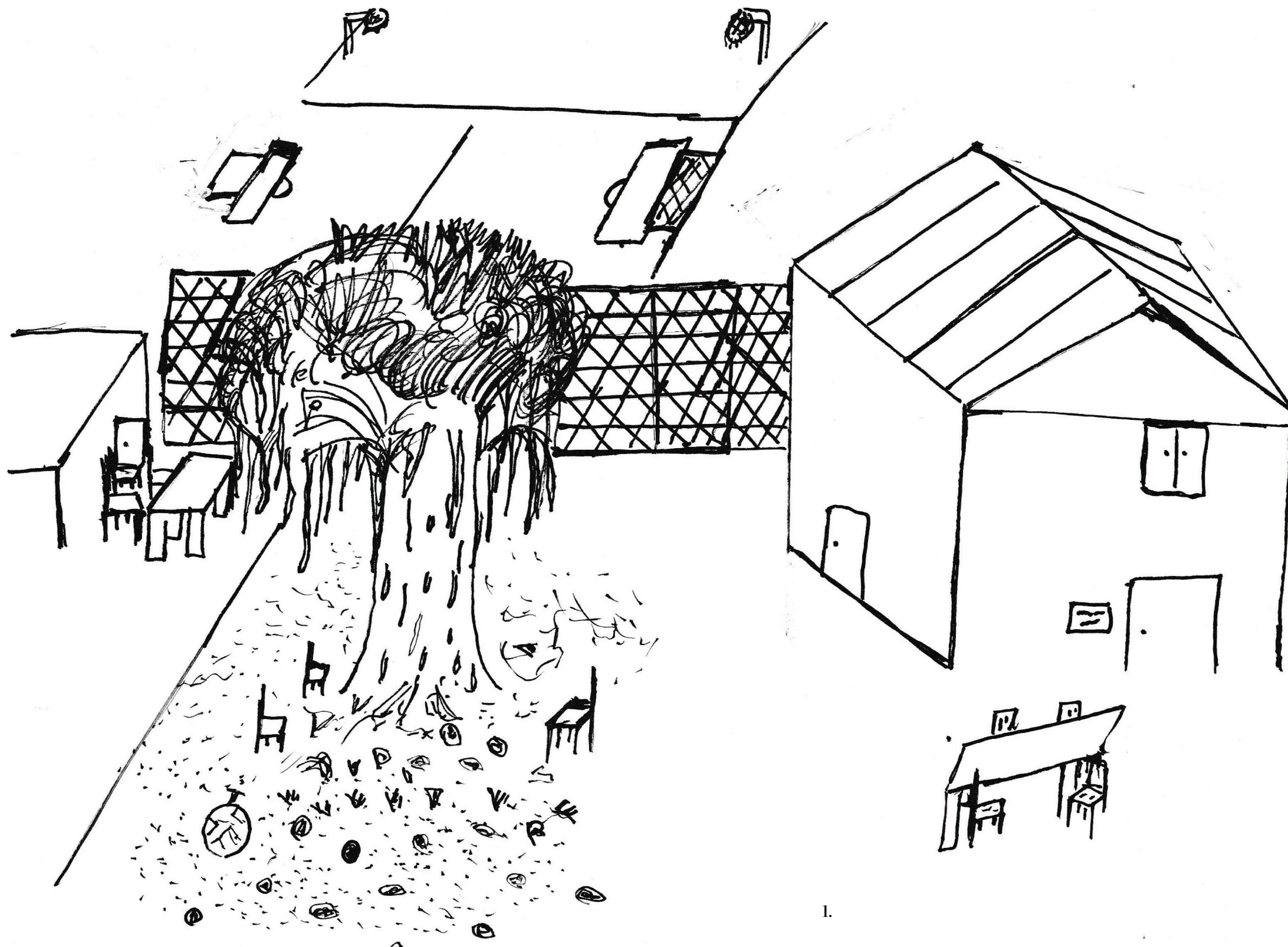
- 1. Room in location G.
- 2. Room in location P.



1.



2.



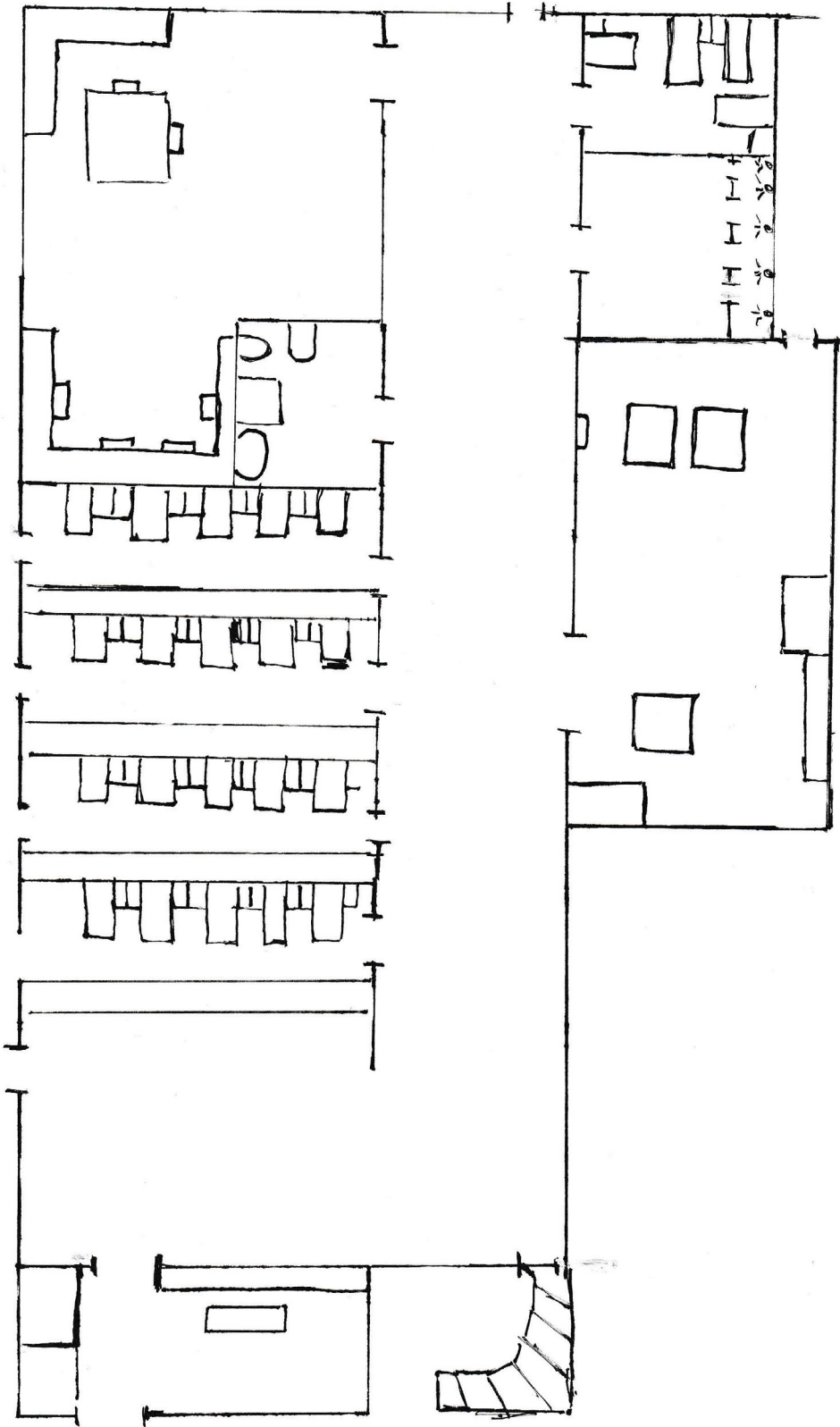
1.

Imag 6 and 7

31th December 2021
Drawing by Norman volunteer in refugee
centers

- 1. Outside area of the center
- 2. Inside area of the center

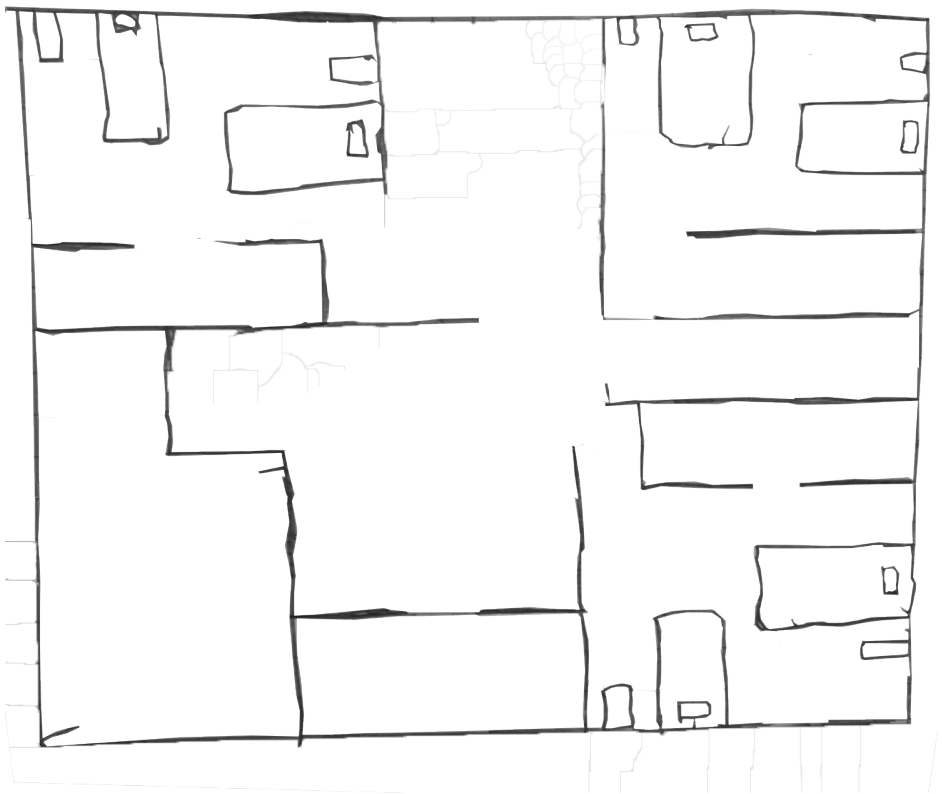
2.



Imag 8

6th January 2022
Drawing by Ted refugee in Italy.
He left the centers three years ago

Third refugee center where Ted have been



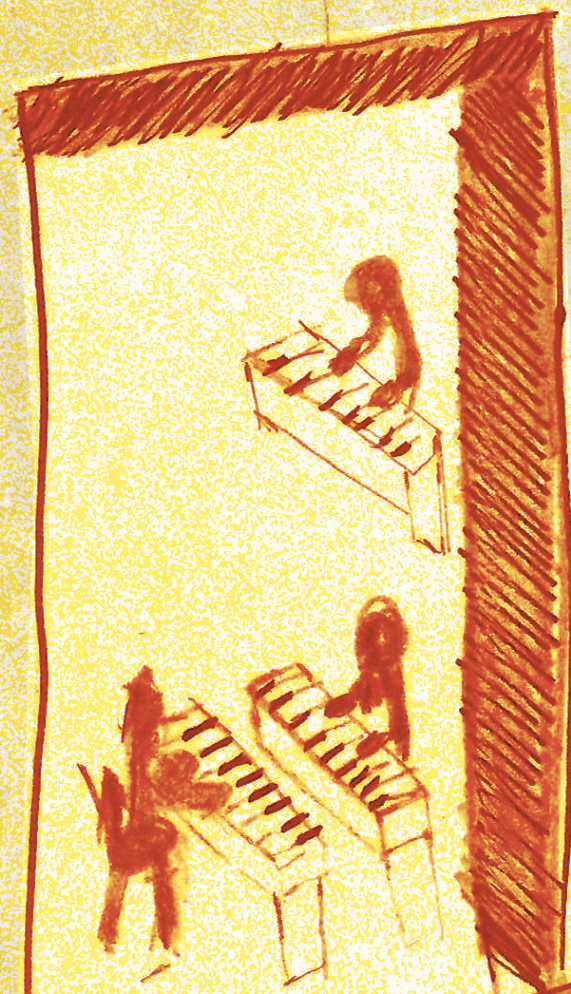
F

FIELD RESEARCH THE DIALOGUE

Having the chance to collect the drawings represented a further step in my research. Almost all the people I met contacted me afterward to ask me if what they drew was clear enough. They said they realised they could have added more. They needed time to process it.

This confirmed what I was slowly understanding: the drawing represented a communication tool in many ways. Not only does it constitute an image of these structures, an image coming from the inside. Not only does it give to who made it the opportunity to tell a personal story through a space. Not only it represents the reconstruction of a space-based memory. Not only the drawing serves as a way to mediate and document. These drawings were the fundamental tools through which I and these people are still now in touch and communicate.

I reported the drawings the people I met did during the interviews. All along the text you encountered my personal elaborations and speculations on the content of that interviews. This allowed me to investigate some interesting scenarios that helped me in formulating a design challenge.



G

OPERATIVE MAPPING FIELD DRAWINGS AS DESIGN TOOLS

“Properly used, maps become a highly valid format for dealing with aspects of reality that are difficult to approach using the classical tools of design. Maps let us approach design in procedural and performative terms, furthering a direct connection to a contemporary reality that is always in flux”.³⁹

The field research offered me the opportunity to investigate needs and problematics within the spatial dynamics inside refugee centres. I aim to let this research take a step further and propose an intervention. This is the reason why I needed to elaborate on the subjects I gathered and envision them in a design scenario. I chose to trace the common elements from the interviews and try to combine them to discover a design challenge. If the drawings assembled during the field research work perfectly as a communication tool between the people I met and me, I found it necessary to create a new communication between me, the knowledge I gathered, and a wider audience.

It took me a while to proceed with this methodology. I was not sure if the elaboration of a drawing made by someone else was the right and honest thing to do. But this research aims to represent a way to express a reality that indeed is subjective. I found myself incapable of documenting any of these locations with the common documentation tools like photography for example. For some of these centres, it is forbidden to take any kind of documentation at all. I then found myself in friction between documentary and fiction since I aimed to report the voices I gathered and to combine them with my observations and reflections on what I have been told.

I do see the drawings people did for me, as a valid document to get to know the reality and dynamics of the refugee centres. I do see fiction not as a utopia but as a tool to facilitate and elaborate elements to enlarge possible design scenarios. This methodology gives an image of a space we barely know but constantly talk about. More than that it reveals possibilities on the spaces in between, the ones lived by refugees at first, in their daily life, but not reported as such. This methodology aimed to create an operative mapping.⁴⁰ Representing the drawings as they were made and then combining them with other elements allowed my research to use maps not only to inform but to propose.

³⁹ Paez R., “ Operative Mapping. Maps as Design Tools” Actar Publishers, ELISAVA, 2019, pag 308

⁴⁰ Ibid.

“Maps are propositions. As long as we conceive of maps as representations, our imagination will be fettered by the received picture of the world that it is claimed maps no more than mirror. Far from being pictures of the world, maps are instruments for its creation; that is, they are not representations but systems of propositions, arguments about what the world might be .”⁴¹

The drawings presented in this chapter aim to unfold some features highlighted during my field research. Certainly, I wanted to understand how people manage their belongings in a situation of precariousness and if, after all, we can indeed talk about belonging, what I discovered was different. The interviews revealed that a sense of belonging is not what refugees seek in their time in the refugee centres. Their aim is of course to spend as little time as possible inside these structures. Besides that though, one interesting aspect raised: even if a sense of belonging is not explicitly what they look for, there is a will to gain control on some spaces of the refugee camps, especially places meant for social life.

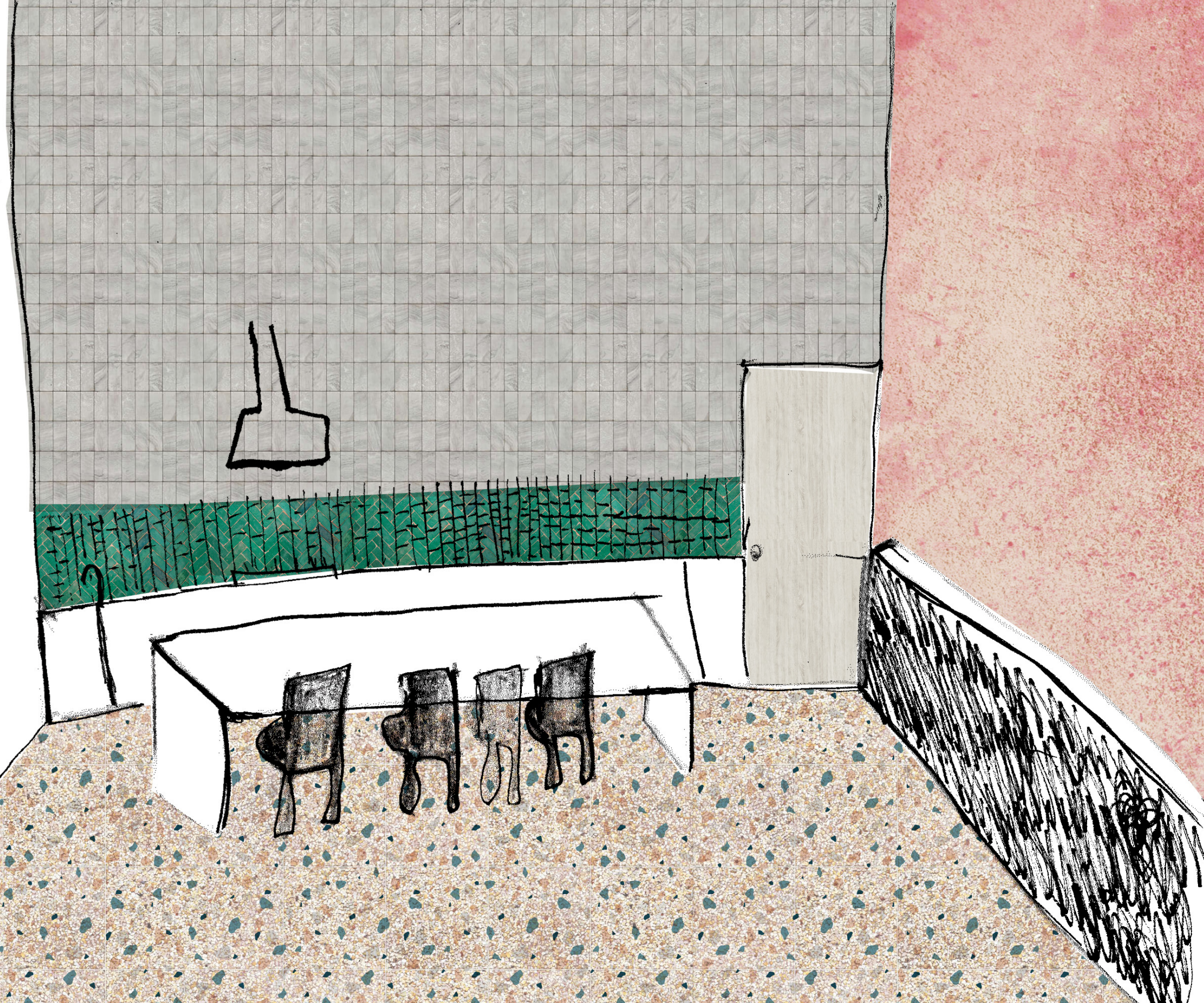
Was extremely interesting to notice that even if they drew the rooms where they were sleeping, most of the conversations were focused on the use they did of the kitchen and the toilet. A lack of use for the shared spaces has been manifested during the interviews.

They mentioned how hard it was to live in a place where they couldn't cook or take care of the cleaning of the toilets. They realised how important these things were for them only when they were all transferred to a centre where they had this freedom back again. I witnessed this myself. During the time I volunteered in Sicily, I and refugees did not have the opportunity to cook. I lived as they were doing so I adjusted my habits. But they were receiving food from outside, in boxes, already cooked. They only had to sit and eat it. This deprived them of making social use of the place they were living in. Refugees referred to the “not nice”⁴² conditions they were living in, not specifically for the spatial configuration of the space, but for the prohibition they had to invite friends to their place. The question then would be: to which extent shall they consider the place they live as their “own”? Or, to frame the question even more: **When do we move from a place of survival to a place of belonging?**

⁴¹ Paez R., “ Operative Mapping. Maps as DesignTools” pag 47 Wood 2010a:3,39

⁴² From the interview with Limon





H

SPACE OF APPEARANCE
AND HOSPITALITY

The field research so far allowed me to explore my research questions from different perspectives, allowing me to reflect, together with the people I am researching for, on different elements within such a complex topic. From the beginning of this journey, my research questions have become different, sharpening their focus and getting to understand better notions that before were too abstract for me.

I see the relevance of my research in unfolding the agency refugees have inside refugee camps. Despite their denial of any physical form of belonging, my research revealed a necessity for a typology of space that is missing. Refugee camps are institutional places. They live under a severe ownership regulation and a security policy. Within this system is not a public space that is required, nor a private space, but a social one. A social space creates a dignity of conviviality and allows those who live there to be recognized.

Hannah Arendt introduced the notion of “ space of appearance.”⁴³ In her writings, the image of the polis recurs often. With this word, she didn’t simply refer to the political institution of the

Greek - city-states, but to all those instances in history where a public realm of action and speech was set up among a community of free and equal citizens.⁴⁴ “The polis, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organisation of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be”.⁴⁵ Arendt defined polis as the space of appearance meant as a space “where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their appearance explicitly.”⁴⁶ These spaces can be constantly regenerated wherever individuals can be together politically. The space of appearance needs to be recreated by action. It is always a potential space that finds its actualization in the actions and speeches of individuals who have come together to undertake some common project.⁴⁷ This capacity to act in concert for a public-political purpose is what Arendt calls power.⁴⁸

43 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arendt/>

44 Ibid.

45 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arendt/> (HC, 198).

46 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arendt/> (HC, 198–9).

47 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arendt/>

48 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arendt/> (CR, 143–55)

I find this notion particularly relevant to my research. There is a general belief that refugees can't have a feeling of belonging inside refugee centres. This is understandable. As also my field research showed, at first, a sense of belonging is not what refugees strive for. Nevertheless, there is a deep necessity for them to be recognized. And here is where comes into place the "space of appearance" investigated by Arendt. I believe this is a crucial step to understand my position within this topic and the message I want to send with this research. What is expressed by Arendt is that even though a communicational level and the possibility to have a shared goal is what binds people - and I relate this to refugees - there will always be a need for a space where this is visible. In an Arendtian "space of appearance," the common visibility of actors generates power as the potential for collective action⁴⁹

What gradually arose from my research was the friction between guests and hosts inside refugee camps. We are used to seeing refugees as hosted in a hosting country. What if there could be the possibility for them to become

hosts in the places where they are temporarily living?

The debate around hospitality, with a particular lens on migrants, has been the subject of the work of Derrida. The relevance of Derrida's philosophy to this research lies in the content of his essay " On Cosmopolitanism"⁵⁰. Derrida wrote about the rights of asylum-seekers, refugees, and immigrants, paying attention to practical proposals as well as general principles. In particular, he discussed a proposal, currently at that time, to establish cities of refuge that would be open to all, of any nationality or none. Here too he evoked a Biblical precedent (from Numbers 35:9-32) advocating cities to which anyone could flee from persecution.⁵¹ In Derrida's analysis, there is a dilemma. On one hand, there is a moral imperative to show hospitality. In particular to people fleeing from danger. On the other hand, dismantling the borders would obliterate the home into which they are being invited; there would no longer be a place for safety - and home - to enter. ⁵²

Derrida elaborates on this dilemma in " Of Hospitality".⁵³ He asks: " "How can we distinguish between a guest and a parasite? In principle, the difference is straightforward, but for that you need a law; hospitality, reception, the welcome offered, have to be submitted to a basic and limiting jurisdiction".⁵⁴ As Derrida explains: "Between an unconditional law or an absolute desire for hospitality on the one hand and, on the other, a law, a politics, conditional ethics, there is a distinction, radical heterogeneity, but also dissociability. One calls forth, involves, or prescribes the other". ⁵⁵

Certainly, Derrida's reflections are still relevant today in a more wide discourse about migrations and refugees. What I find interesting though to the extent of my research is the general vision western society has when thinking about refugees and hospitality. The connection between these two conditions - being a refugee and being hosted- is often univocal. My research aims instead at proposing hospitality as an agency for refugees. As a tool to engage with the spatial dynamics of these structures.

I have to say hospitality is a word that contains a lot of history and politics. Hospitality is a notion that, as we saw with the example of Derrida, is at the core of many debates. Some could refer to hospitality with a capitalistic vision. I strongly disagree with that. I see hospitality almost in an empirical way, as a form of physical intervention inside refugee camps. An intervention able to empower those who live in precarity, letting them be in precarity but still have the agency to be generous.

49 Ibid.

50 Derrida J., " On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness", Routledge, 2001

51 https://philosophynow.org/issues/123/Xenos_Jacques_Derrida_on_Hospitality

52 Ibid.

53 Mieke Bat and Rent de Vries, Editors " Of Hospitality, Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond" Stanford University Press, 2000

54 "Of hospitality" pag 59

55 "Of hospitality" pag 147





I

EPILOGUE

Although research could be endless, it never is. This is the time when I stop my journey, grab the knowledge I gathered and get ready to bring them along into a new one.

I have in mind some words from the book “ The Good Life”⁵⁶ by Inaki Abalos. In the introduction of the Italian version, Bruno Melotto invites the reader to approach the content of the book “with the same curiosity we have when we are invited for dinner at someone’s place and we took advantage of a moment when our host is out of sight, to sneak into his library or his records looking for some clues on his personality, on his behaviour, on the kind of person he is beyond the image he wants to give of himself”.⁵⁷ I believe I made use of the same curiosity during this research to discover what is accessible for me within the inaccessibility of refugee camps.

This journey has been constantly enriched by an open mindset which allowed me to experiment and test methodologies to research environments of migration and precariousness. Each step of this research is the result of an exploration I then put into practice. Every time I made a step, be it the field research in Rotterdam or the conversation with Nishat Awan or the drawing as a mapping tool, every time I had the possibility to transform the knowledge into a basis for the further step of my research. One step after the other, I learnt by doing.

Eating seeds in the streets of Berlin as a performative inhabiting of the city that produces its locality is, in this research, connected with the necessity of claiming bars by the turkey community in Rotterdam and with the use of drawing to get to understand how to claim control by refugees in refugee camps.

I do see the words of Nishat Awan be confirmed by this research that unfolded an investigation about subjectivity. During my journey, I encountered so many obstacles and barriers. Only by encountering them, I had the chance to learn a lot about the system that regulates social and spatial life in refugee camps. Only by finding alternatives on how to get hands-on that reality I manage to discover what Nishat Awan told me: look for subjectivities not for identities.

⁵⁶ Abalos I, *Il buon abitare, pensare le case della modernità.* Marinotti, 2009

⁵⁷ “Il buon abitare, pensare le case della modernità.”Pag 8

This has been a journey where I had to constantly face an honest and rigorous method of approaching and analysing the reality I was researching. Having such a personal and untouchable tool as a drawing made by those who live in the refugee camps, let me confront the methods I should have used to elaborate upon that drawing; to include it in a design thinking; to use it as a design scenario.

Choosing to re-prose the content of the interviews and the ones of the drawings according to my elaborations and observation wasn't easy. I constantly doubted the honesty of such an operation.

In the end, making this choice helped me in defining my position as a designer. The speculative aspect of my research allowed me to discover my position along with the path I was making. I understood my role while adapting to the research and discovering perspectives. Being able to express my impressions on what I collected during the field research defines my position as a designer, which, ultimately is to mediate between spatial relations, to be able to read them, and to re-propose them with a more inclusive approach than the one I knew.

The drawings I asked the people I interviewed to do, not only represent reality, they work like mind maps. They propose reference points, they are based on memory, they are the results of a selection. Many things that people said to me are not part of the drawing, and vice versa. The drawings as mind maps work with a tight focus on the spatial dynamics of refugee camps. The drawings place in practice a participatory process which is the core of my research and I hope will be the core of my design as well.

With my field research, I sharpen my research questions getting closer to a design challenge.

This speculation revealed how a sense of belonging to a place doesn't always lay in a physical claiming of territory. It rather showed how the use of typology of spaces could be a fundamental tool to gain control of that territory. A control that

could be support over the uncertainty of living in refugee camps. That control passes through the notion of hospitality. As the interviews showed, refugees are not allowed to have visits in the place where they temporarily live. They are not allowed to have friends over for dinner, sometimes they are not even allowed to cook. Refugees don't want to feel like they belong to these temporary structures. But indeed they spend a lot of time there and being in charge of the organisation and management of the social spaces inside the structures could be the tool that would empower them, giving dignity to their precarity.

It is important to remark that even if refugees don't explicitly look for a sense of belonging, there should be a right for them to dwell in the place where they are. By dwelling, I mean the possibility to create their use of the social space inside the refugee centres. Otherwise, it would be a prison.

I am very curious to discover what people living in refugee camps would do, which spaces would they organise if they would have the chance to invite someone over; to invite someone in a place that legally doesn't belong to them; a place that is not a public one, but a place where they, after all, live.

My design will attempt the above and pursue the creation of a meeting point space where refugees can have the dignity of experimenting with conviviality.

Having had the possibility to trace two common patterns among the infinite inputs I received during my interviews led me to further investigate them. I aim to meet the same people again and explore with them the theme of hospitality within second-level refugee centres.

Refugees should be empowered while living in this precariousness by allowing them to be at least hosts in these structures. To be a host in the hosting country.



J

APPENDIX

The following pages are
a report of the interviews
made during the field
research

18.12.21
Interview with CAROL.
Volunteer in a Palestinian refugee
camp in Lebanon.

He Went into Palestinian Refugee
Camps with Prima Materia with the
project Music and Resilience.

C:

I went in 2013 and 2017. 3 or 4 weeks,
in order to be able to be at least
one week in each camp. We brought
instruments through donations and
funds.

Me:

How did your day look?

C:

In the morning we gave an instrument
lesson. In the afternoon, music
community. To create a community.
Recently they had a big flow of people
coming from Syria. They put everyone
together but the Palestinian and the
Syria together were a clash. There
was a need to build up a community.
Music, to create a system able to
continue - aim to create professor

Me:

Where did you sleep?

C:

In the camp, in the school. School of 4
floors. In school we rehearsed. There
was a roof but the building was very
rough, with “naked” bricks.

Me:

What was the relation with the city?

C:

These camps are very small in size.
But tall. They are in between cities.
1km2 but with high towers. Sharing
shower with salty water. They are
Illegal migrants. I saw people being 3rd
generation there.

Me:

Did you do something all together?

C:

Final concert made out with money
of the sponsors or fund. Concert took
place in a theatre in the city. This was
the possibility for people to have the
permission to leave the camp.

Me:

What did the place look like?

C:

There were high towes. Raw brick all
around. Is a city in a city. These places
are no - man's lands.

At the basement of the towers
refugees set up shops. There was a lot
of contraband. The sunlight is hardly
entering the streets since the towers
are too tall.

Me:

Who assigned the rooms?

C:

Its a historical perspective. Families
that are there for longer start to expand
and take place.

There isn't much sharing in "public" places. Some of them invite you home.

Me:
Who else stays in the cam?

C:
In the camps there are buildings for the associations. They work there and check. Refugees can't go out. Only some young people to study. There are different integration programmes to take them to study away, Toronto and Berlin mostly.

Me:
Did you recognize any object they were particularly close to?

C:
I remember they had only pens on the walls of their places. They looked like frames. It was the only thing that recalled the idea of furniture. They brought this from their hometown. Also they had the carpet to pray. And all of them were usually holding in their hands.

30.12.21
Interview with LIMON
Refugee in Italy

He has been living in refugee centres till a couple of months ago.

L:
Do you want to know my story?

Me:
Yes of course

L:
I arrived in Salerno from Gambia which is my hometown. I moved through Senegal, Mali, Niger and Libya where I paid for my boat. I arrived in Salerno but I don't remember anything about that city. We arrived overnight. My mind was empty. I only know I slept in an Hotel. The day after I was moved to E.

Me:
How many people were there in the camp in E.?

L:
I don't know. In my room 15 but many people came and went. I really don't know. Then I was moved to another place, a centre for minors. There I had a room with 4 other people. Each of us had his own bed. I stayed there for 4 months. Then I had to change again. And I arrived here in F.

Me:
How long have you been here then?

L:
Only 6 months because then they closed this centre and I was moved to another still here in F. but so far away from the city. I was starting to get into the programme for school, getting friends. Being so far from everything was horrible.

Me:
How was your room?

L:
The room was ok. Ila, you know, it is just a room. But it was horrible to be so far away from the city. Also the window was broken and guess what? My bed was just under the window!!

Me:
How long did you stay there?

L:
For 4 months, they moved me to a better place. When I arrived there, after a little bit, I started my process to get asylum status. But then they moved me again to the last centre. I stayed there till couple of months ago. Now I obtained the status, I have a job, I have my own house.

Me:
I am happy to hear that. I have only one question, just to know something about this last place where you have been. How did your day there look like?

L:
Ila, I told you, these places were just places, But in this last one I remember once I was very upset. I wanted to invite a friend to my place, to stay together and eat together. But they didn't allow me. I don't know why. I always behave correctly, I always did everything right, and they don't allow me to have people to visit me. I remember this was not a nice condition.

But also the second place where I was, I forgot to say. The room was ok, but the time was so strict. They were severe.

Me:
What do you mean?

L:
We couldn't really go out. Only in certain times. They were strict with that.

Me:
And how did your day look?

L:
When I started to go to school I went then in the morning. Then nothing more. Over summer days were very very empty. I am happy now that I have a job. Finally

Me:
Do you have something with you that you carried from the centres?

L:
Ila, I don't know.

Me:
Did you want to have a special thing in your room to remind you of home?

L:

No no. I didn't really want to stay there for long.

Me:
I can imagine. I know you are happy now with your spaces. Do you like to cook?

L:
Yes, normally, like Africans.

Me:
Could you cook in the centres where you have been?

L:
Mmmm it depends. Sometimes yes sometimes no. When I was in C. there was this cook. Ila he was so bad. We didn't want to eat this. Slowly slowly they allowed us to cook.

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31.12.21
Interview with NORMAN
Volunteer

He has been volunteering in a refugee centre in Italy till couple of months ago

Me:
In which kind of refugee centres have you been?

N:
I volunteer in two of them mainly. There were economic migrants and refugees. I am not a hundred percent sure of this because I didn't have access to this information. In this centre we didn't offer a place where to sleep. But the rest. So like, food, a big big bath to clean clothes and also psychological assistance.

Me:
What do you mean by big bath to clean clothes?

N:
I had a separate toilet than the one the refugees were using. For igenous reason. I had a washing machine but they didn't. I don't know why. And there was this big bath where they washed their clothes.

Me:
And what did you do in this centre?

N:
I was in charge of the welcoming of the refugees, checking their ID, and I

cooked for them. Also there I collected clothes and stuff that people offered to the centre, for the migrants. So then I had to sort out clothes and any kind of thing we gathered.

Me:
And what about the other centres where you have been?

N:
It was different. There were rooms and refugees living there. Several big rooms with beds and drawers. I remember there people wanted to be together. We even had a place where they could gather.

Me:
Was this the kitchen?

N:
Also yes. We helped them but they were free to cook. Me and the other volunteers did the grocery but then they cooked. Was a nice moment all together.

Me:
Could you tell me more about the sharing spaces in the centres?

N:
The place is quite close to the centre of the city. And this is honestly interesting and rare honestly. As I told you they had the chance to cook together so I think the kitchen is a shared space. But there was also a big and nice garden, opened not only for

the refugees but for the whole neighbourhood.

Me:
Oh that is very nice. So the centre was in relation to the city?
N:
Not really. Unfortunately none really comes there.

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06.01.22
Interview with TED
Refugee

He left the refugee centres two years ago. He now has asylum status in Italy.

Me:
I know you have been living in refugee centres but now you have your own house. Do you want to tell me how the days in the centres look like?
T:
Yeah I arrived in Italy and at first I remember I stayed in a Hotel.

Me:
For how long?
T:
For one week. I was sleeping with 4 other people but the toilet was outside. I don't remember much, I was finally sleeping. You know after Libya I was empty.

Me:
Just tell me what you feel like. Don't worry
T:
Yeah there are some things I really don't want to talk about. But I can tell you about the refugee centres here in Italy. There is a lot to tell.

Me:
I am all ears then
T:
So after the hotel I was moved to C. That place was interesting. I felt a bit like home there because I had a room with only two other people and we cleaned our spaces, room, toilet and so on.

Me:
So you had a sort of nice experience in the first centre you went to?
T:
Mm ila yeah, this thing in the room was ok, but this centre in C. was so far from the city. I couldn't even go to church. How could I integrate? This was the first step for me into Italy. Was very sad.

Me:
So what did you do during your days there?
T:
Ila, when I arrived there was basically nothing. We didn't have any place where to play, any tv, anything. Slowly we asked for these things and we obtained something.

Me:
How long have you been there?
T:
One year then I was moved to R. I think they put me there because they

wanted me to integrate. I started to be included in the programme and I went to school. In this centre there were only people from other nationalities than mine. And none spoke english. We had to learn italian.

Me:

Well that’s a sort of nice push no?

T:

Yeah yeah. I had a nice time there. Also because we had the chance to cook. Was so nice. I really missed this. To cook together with others. Also because we don’t have tv or other things to really do together.

Me:

Did you have something you were particularly related to in your room?

T:

No, we couldn’t have much in our rooms.

Me:

Is there something, an object you would like or already have that reminds you of home?

T:

No ila, I don’t know.

But there is one thing. When I arrived in Italy, the very first moment, I felt the perfume of Italy.

Is like if you now go to Africa, you will smell the air of Africa. I remember the smell very well as soon as I left the boat. I would love to experience it again. Because now of course, I already forgot it.

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17.12.21 Interview with CATERINA

Legal defensor for minor refugees

Me:

Could you explain to me how the system works? Since when is there the possibility to be legal defensor for minor refugees, and what does it exactly mean?

C:

Yes, of course. In Italy thanks to the Law Zampia of 2017 anyone can apply to become legal defensor for a minor refugee. We work together with the operator of the centres where they are to decide for the programme and education they can or not have.

Me:

Who manages these centres?

C:

In Italy there are two typologies of centres. The CAS and the SPRAR, now called SAI. The CAS are structures for the emergency.

For both of them the Prefettura makes a call for bids and any local entities can apply. Only who fits the requirements can, in the end, offer the location to the government. But the owner of the location is still private. The Prefettura is in charge of the

working people for the centres. Generally in Italy the owners are Church, laical authority or NGO or cooperatives.

Me:

Do you know why it is so hard for us to enter these places? Can you easily have access?

C:

Not at all. I meet them in what I call “filter spaces” . Not everyone is allowed in. Generally parliament members once in a while go inside because for law they have to check if the living conditions are ok and if the requirements for that are respected.

Me:

According to your experience, how important is it to have a social space inside these structures?

C:

I know that inside the centres they are quite autonomous. It depends of course. There are very strict regulations for the time they have to spend outside. And they cannot receive guests. But I noticed that sports is a very big bonding element, more than music and theatre. I noticed there is a big willingness to adaptate to the place, which is good. But these people have a lot of empty times, especially over summer. They are always with their phones. One thing that is missing is a computer room. There is a lack of digital education. They don’t even

know how to open a bank account.

Me:

How is the relation between these centres and the city?

C:

It is horrible. Even though centres are in the middle of the city, there is a big neglect by the neighbourhood to really be open to the refugees. Of course the centres have to be recognizable as such, so there are names and things on the door. They need to be identified. There is one nice initiative I know about. It is called Welcome refugees. It is a nice initiative of civic participation. People offer furniture or any kind of objects and needs to the new refugee centre being opened in the neighbourhood.

Me:

Is there any object you noticed they are particularly related to, in their domestic environment?

C:

I don't know if its about their domestic environment, but their backpacks are their homes.

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16.01.22
Interview with Khalid
Refugee, activist and representant of
the group WE ARE HERE

Group of undocumented refugees in
the Netherlands

Me:

Hi Khalid, it's very nice to meet you. Can you tell me about the story of “We Are Here”?

K:

Sure. Did you see our instagram page right?

Me:

Yes yes.

K:

Our main aim is to be seen and to speak out loud. In the Netherlands there are so many bullshit laws that are in horrible conditions. When I was in the first camp, after a while they just kicked us out. But we didn't have anything, documents, a job, a place, anything. We lived on the streets.

Me:

Are the members of We are Here people that you met in that situation?

K:

Yes and no. I mean. I was sleeping in the same station for a long time. I met people, and then we had this idea. We were evicted and we didn't know

where to go. We raised our voices and people started to help us. We started squatting in places that people showed us. But we could stay there only for a couple of weeks, then police came and everything was starting all over again.

Me:

How did you manage your belongings? K:

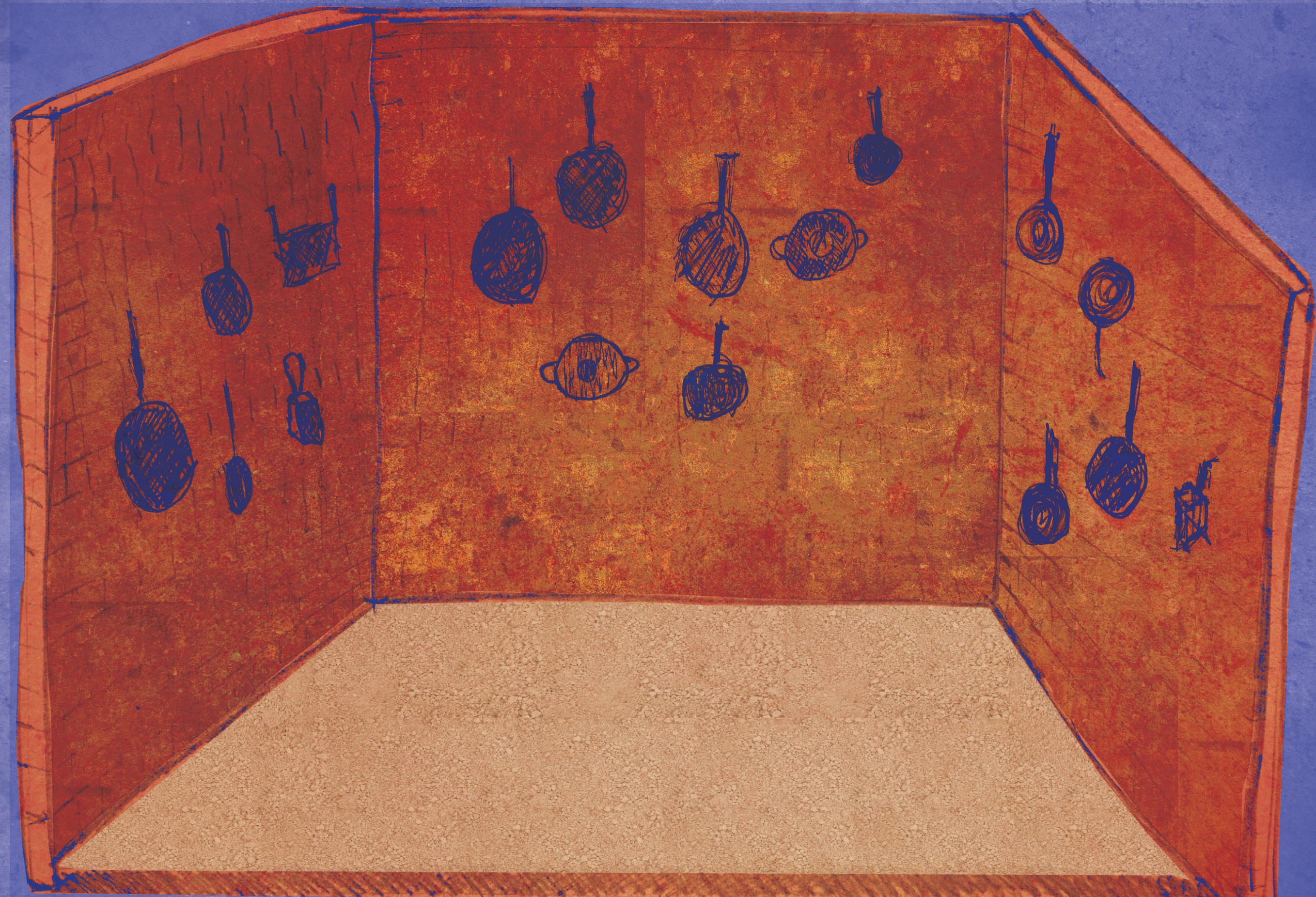
We didn't have much. We needed to be able to move the mattress and that's' it. People helped us do so, with cars. We were the refugees squatting in those places, but there were a lot of people there. Not only us. People from the city wanted to host us in their house but this stupid law came out, according to which one couldn't host a refugee in his/her house. Isn't this ridiculous? Can't I decide what to do with my private house?Who to host?

Me:

How long have you been living like this?

K:

For 16 years Ilaria. Now I have the documents, my own house and everything, and I want to tell our stories. That's why we really appreciate talking with students. We always do that. I do conferences and I want the future working generation to know how to deal with that. Displacement is a horrible thing. They took out dignity from us.



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LIST OF IMAGES

Image 1 © Mieke Bal

Image 2 and 3 by Ilaria Palmieri, November 2021, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

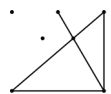
Image 4 by Carol, 18th December 2021

Image 5 by Limon, 30th December 2021

Image 6 and 7 by Norman, 31th December 2021

Image 8 by Ted 6th January 2022

All the other drawings by Ilaria Palmieri



Royal
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Master
Interior Architecture
(INSIDE)

INSIDE



To be a host in a hosting country

Hospitality as empowerment
in refugee camps

