

Campus in Camps
INITIATIVES



FINAL DRAFT
18.06.2013

04

THE POOL

Re-activating connections



سازمان کیمپس
جامعته فی الضمیم

Campus in Camps

INITIATIVES

THE POOL

Re-activating connections

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AL ARROUB REFUGEE CAMP

Beyond the Camp: Into the Common

The initiatives included in these booklets are the result of a collective effort made by the Campus in Camps participants in dialogue with community members, associations and collaborators*.

They are based on reflections and observations articulated over a year of communal learning in which knowledge emerged not as pre-constituted information but rather as critical understanding of the social and political context. A group of concepts considered fundamental for the comprehension of the contemporary condition of Palestinian refugee camps took the form of what we call the *Collective Dictionary*, the conceptual framework within which the initiatives are inscribed and find their profound and coherent meanings.

*

The initiatives have been inspired through dialogue with Sandi Hilal, Munir Fasheh, Alessandro Petti and activated with Tamara Abu Laban, BraveNewAlps, Ayman Khalifah, Matteo Guidi, Sara Pellegrini, Giuliana Racco, Diego Segatto, Dena Qaddumi.

During the second year, more emphasis has been placed on the kind of knowledge that emerges from actions. Gatherings, walks, events and urban actions are meant to engage more directly with the camp condition. What is at stake in these interventions is the possibility for the participants to realize projects in the camps without normalizing their exceptional conditions and without blending them into the surrounding cities.

After sixty-five years of exile, the camp is no longer made up of tents. The prolonged exceptional temporality of this site has paradoxically created the condition for its transformation: from a pure humanitarian space to an active political space, it has become an embodiment and an expression of the right of return. The initiatives bear the names of this urbanity of exile: *the garden, the pathways, the municipality, the suburb, the pool, the stadium, the square, the unbuilt, the bridge*. The very existence of these common places within refugee camps suggests new spatial and social formations beyond the idea of the camp as a site of marginalization, poverty and political subjugation.

Alessandro Petti,
program director
Dheisheh, June 2013

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History of the pool, *berket Al Arroub*

Berket Al Arroub was built by the Romans nearly two thousand years ago and still serves as evidence of one of the most impressive water systems ever built in Palestine. Today, the pool is located at the eastern end of Arroub camp in the valley of Al Arroub, which became a camp for Palestinian refugees after the Nakba in 1948.

Berket Al Arroub is a large place compared to other empty spaces in Arroub camp. The pool measures 70 meters by 50 meters by 5 meters and was used during different eras as a water reservoir, where water was collected from rainfall and the springs around Arroub camp.

Palestine has passed under various rules through several ages. Many empires and civilizations sought to control this region because of its geographical position and its religious and historical importance. Of these was the Romans, who ruled Palestine in the period

**BERKET AL
ARROUB**
The pool is
an empty,
vaste place in
Arroub camp



The pool and the camp on the background

— ph. Sara Pellegrini

WATER SYSTEM

The network linked Al Arroub to Jerusalem

between 63 BC to 638 AD. Roman mastery of aqueducts and water systems allowed them to transfer water across vast distances. The water system linking the valley of Al Arroub to Jerusalem is still a testament to that.

Construction of the pool

Originally, the Romans built the pool to supply Jerusalem with water. Because of the breadth of the city of Jerusalem and its increasing number of residents, it needed additional sources of water, so it was decided to

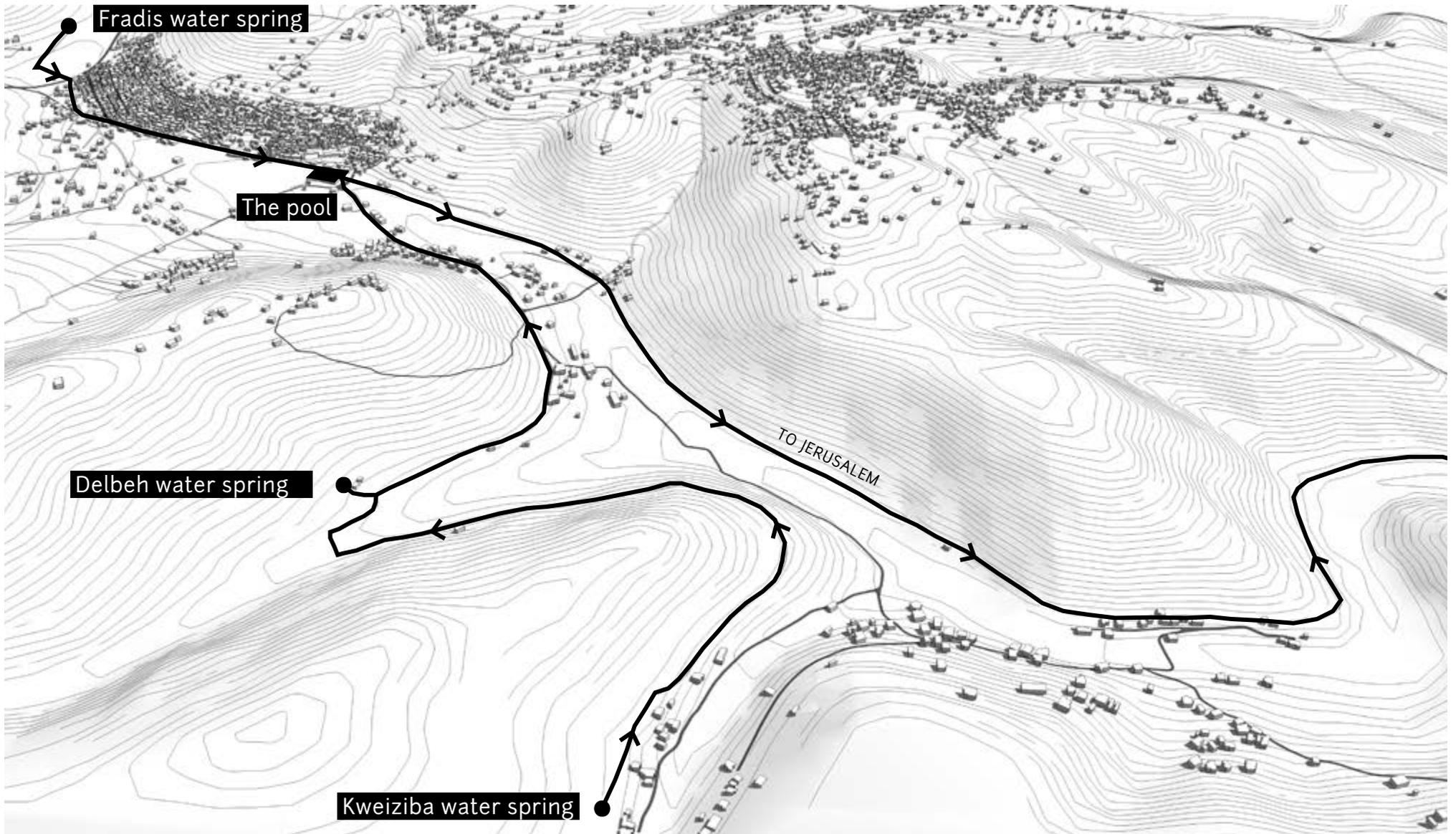
bring water from outside of the city through the canals. The most important of these was the Upper Canal, or Al-Sabeel Canal as the Muslims Arabs named it, and Wadi El-Bayar Canal.

The canal was constructed in three ways, above ground in a covered path, tunneled through the rock, and carved into the natural formation of the rocks.

The water was gathered in the pool through a system of aqueducts that connects three springs near Al Arroub: Fradis, Delbeh and Kweziba. From here, the water flows to cis-

CANALS

Covered path, tunneled and carved into the stone



Flow of water from Fradis, Delbeh and Kweziba Springs to Berket Al Arroub and then north to Jerusalem

terns underneath the old city of Jerusalem along a path that exceeds 60 km, first passing beneath the Solomon's pools in Irtas near Bethlehem city.



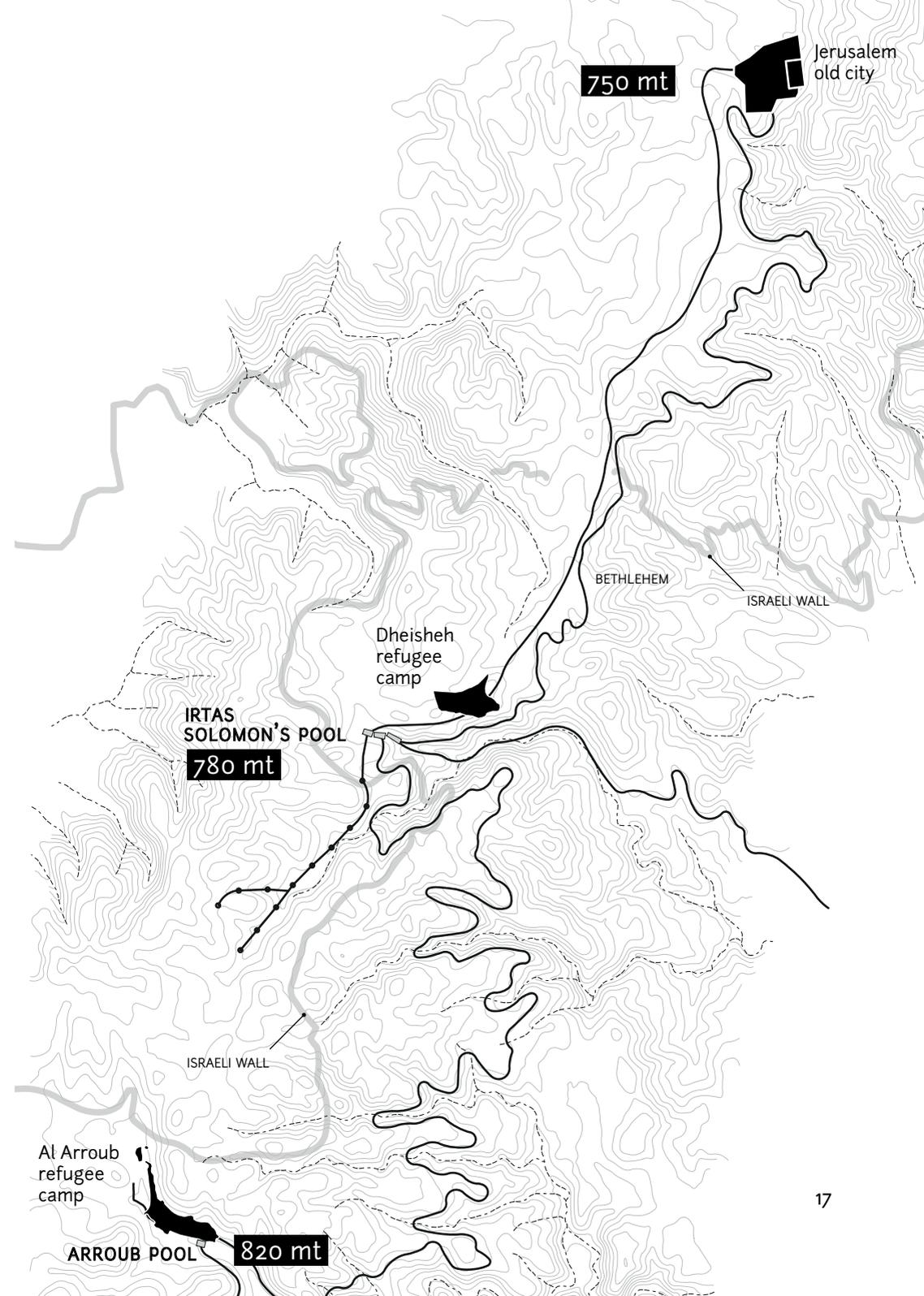
Covered path above ground

— ph. Matteo Guidi

WATER

The flow of water relied entirely on gravity

The flow of water from Arroub to Jerusalem relied entirely on gravity. The aqueduct began at an altitude of 820 meters above sea level and crossed 68 km to reach Jerusalem at an altitude of 750 meters above sea level, a difference in altitude of only 70 meters and the degree of inclination 0.059%. Between the Arroub pool and Solomon's Pools the difference in altitude is 40 meters for a distance of 44 km and at an astonishing degree of inclination at only 0.052%.



From the Romans to today

The pool was used in ways through the fall of the Roman Empire, the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. Under Ottoman rule, the water system was still used and renovated up to the beginning of the 20th century, when Sultan Abdul Hamid II constructed an additional 16km canal connecting Solomon's pools to Jerusalem. At the end of the Ottoman era, Palestine was ruled under the British Mandate. But when the British withdrew from Palestine in 1948, the Arab-Israeli war broke out, which resulted in the Israeli occupation of parts of Palestine. It was at this point that refugees gathered in Al Arroub under UNRWA responsibility next to the old Roman pool. This camp came to be known as Al Arroub refugee camp.

We interviewed two people about the history of the Roman pool: Ismael Nassar Warasna, a farmer from Sheukh Al Arroub who was born in 1944, and Ziad Halaiqa, also a farmer from Sheukh Al Arroub born in 1960.

Ismael Nasar Warasnah said:

"When I was young, 15 years old or so, I don't remember the exact age, I would watch the water pour into the Roman pool from the west through the aqueduct. In some seasons, the water used to fill the pool entirely. I would swim in the pool and do two rounds. We were using the place as a swimming pool back in the day when it was full of water, but not anymore. Farmers also used it for cultivation, benefiting from the canal that carried water to Jerusalem as it passed through their fields and the sub-pools."

Ziad Halaiqa, related that:

"There was an aqueduct that started from Delbeh and flowed along where the street is currently to empty into the external pool. From here, it went to Jerusalem, where people there drank this water. We used the water from the pool to fill the sub-pools in order to water our plants. This sub-pool was able to irrigate 50 Acres."

They also mentioned the pool's use during the Jordanian rule. Ismael Nasar Warasnah:

1960s

The pool still collected water and was available for swimming

“During the 60’s, the Jordanian army was using the pool for training soldiers to swim. They built a stand above the wall to be used as a jumping board. People from different places came to this place to swim”.

One of the stories they told related to the aqueduct system:

“When the aqueduct was completely finished and ready to bring water to Jerusalem, they tested it and found it did not function. The story goes that there was a man who knew the reason but refused to give the solution unless he was paid. The person in charge of the water system at that time was smart enough to solve the problem without paying the man. He suggested holding a celebration, claiming that they succeeded in supplying Jerusalem with water. When news spread, the man heard about it and said, ‘Certainly they opened vents in the roof of the channel.’ What he meant was that the air pressure blocking the flow was released through the vents. The news was spread again, and the problem was solved using his idea.”

They added also that the pool is a dangerous place when it’s not fenced in, since many people drowned.

With the outbreak of the Palestinian Intifada, Jordan announced the delinking of legal and administrative ties with the West Bank in the year 1987.

Due to the urban expansion of the camp and the villages near Arroub, most of the aqueduct was destroyed. Few parts were still preserved, and finally the water stopped flowing. Moreover, Israeli policies are complicating ownership and tampering with groundwater sources.

Ismael Nasar Warasnah told us:

“People from different places came to this place to swim. I remember that the occupation ordered the people to fence in the pool, but they could not do that. I remember Abu Baker from Zakaria drowned in the pool, and a woman whose name I do not remember, and others from Beit Fajjar village. Farmers used the water for cultivation. There is a key that opens the pool-lock for draining water, and farmers would have to ask for this key to irrigate their crops.”

1990s
Due to the urban expansion most of the aqueduct was destroyed



The pool and the fields on the background

— ph. Yuvraj Chauhan, Liesbeth Hautekiet, Sedaile Mejias

Since the end of the 1980's, the pool has been abandoned. Water no longer fills it as it did previously. Some water gathers inside, but only because of rainfall. The aqueduct system is destroyed, neither used for cultivation nor for swimming.

Today, the place is being used as a garbage dump, unfortunately. Not many actions have been taken to care for this pool. At one point, the Ministry of Antiquities came and made some repairs and built a fence around the top, but then suddenly they

disappeared and are no longer interested in the pool. The fence they built has been destroyed. Since that initiative from the Ministry of Antiquities, the pool has been left to fate.

In general, the pool is not used in ways that reflect its historical importance. Rainwater is gathered during winter and doesn't evaporate until summer. Most of the year, it looks like a swamp. Young people usually come and sit on the walls of the pool in the afternoon, but they leave their trash in the water.



01

APPROACHING THE POOL

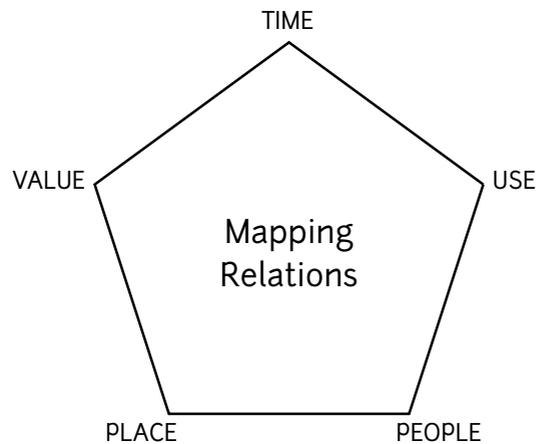
A series of actions about
and around the historical site

Building relations: time, value, use, place, people

We believe that the pool is incredibly important, particularly because of its location inside Arroub refugee camp. The camp, like its peers, suffers from a lack of common spaces to serve the residents of the camp. With this in mind, we hope to transform the area from a place used to gather water to a place for people to gather.

During the Campus in Camps experience we had a chance to focus on the place and take a closer look at it. It began with the *Collective Dictionary*, a tool in Campus in Camps through which participants investigate their surroundings and express themselves through their experiences. I suggested to work on the term relation, the RELATION between past and present, between people and places, between the asset and usage, between value and place, between ownership and area.

A number of initiatives began in relation to the pool. The story started with our first visit to Arroub with Giuliana Racco, a project activator in Campus in Camps. We had a tour inside the camp and looked at some sites around the camp.



The pool is a site that deserves a moment of meditation. We began talking about the pool and its situation. From what I knew, I explained to Giuliana the function of the pool and how it was used to supply water to Jerusalem through a network of canals that gather water in the pool and then transfer it to Jerusalem. I was thinking out loud, hoping to follow the aqueduct and trace it to Jerusalem. In fact, many questions came to mind.

How was this system was built?

What materials were used?

How many people participated in it's construction and use?

How much time did it take to complete it?

What types of knowledges did these people

*have to complete this great construction in comparison to what we have today?
What did Jerusalem mean to them?*

After several discussions, we decided to walk along the route of the canal from Arroub to Irtas, where Solomon's pools are. Today, the pool is a place that suffers from a lack of concern in general, the use of this historical site does not reflect its value; it deserves better than this.

We explained our work to the Popular Committee of Arroub, and through the work of the Popular Committee, the local committee, and UNRWA's Camp Improvement Program, we were able to become further involved with the site.

Particularly, in the early stages of the project, these groups helped facilitate our engagements with the space, the camp, and the local residents. One of our first steps, before we could begin integrating a larger system of facilities, was to locate an operating space to serve as an extension of Campus in Camps in order to meet people from the camp and involve them in the program and our initiative in Arroub camp. The Popular Committee welcomed the idea and offered us a room in its building. They, along with the local committee and the Camp Improvement Program, were very encouraging and supported our work on what we called the CAMPUS IN CAMPS OFFICE /ARROUB.



Collective meeting among all the participants at Arroub Campus in Camps Office

– ph. Abed Khatib

In Between Camps

Walking from Al Arroub refugee camp
to Solomon's Pool (October 2012)

The first initiative was the walk from Berket Al Arroub (the Roman pool) to Solomon's pools in Irtas near Bethlehem city, tracing the path of the aqueduct system. We invited everyone at CIC to join us. Because we were not sure about what we would face during the walk (were we crossing area A, B, or C?), we collected information that could help us in understanding the area we were going to walk through. That was a great experience in the wild, which personally emphasized my engagement with this place.

“

What interested us about this project is how it touches upon a simple everyday practice, such as walking, one of Saleh's favourite pastimes, to then develop into something which read through the filter of the concept of "relation" – in this case – becomes an investigation into man's connection with



– ph. Matteo Guidi

nature and the landscape, the link between the past and the present, between two periods of colonization, between one point and another, between one camp and another, passing through contended lands.

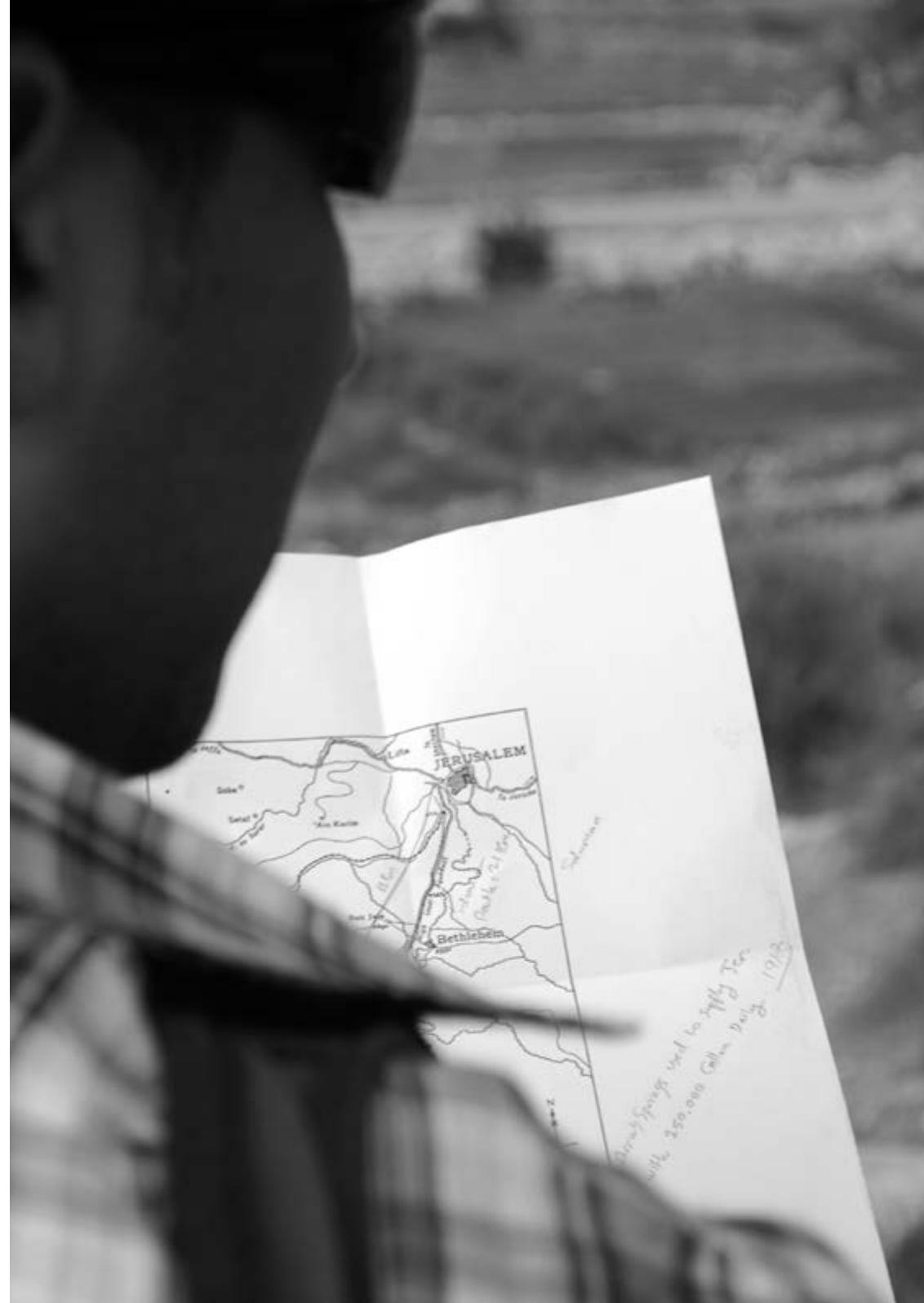
– Matteo

Walking is a simple everyday action. It is a moment of reflection. When we walk we think: thus, could we say that walking and thinking "walk" together? When we walk we communicate, first with ourselves, then with the environment. When we walk we are writing history.

October 24, 2012

We meet at dawn and head for our departure point, the pool. The sun has risen and we begin documenting the incredible site. As with all ancient monuments and ruins, it produces the incredible effect of putting one in direct relation to the civilization that created it, and particularly to those whose hands laid the stones. Who were the workers? Where were they from? How long and hard did they work? How many of them worked in order to produce this incredibly complex and sophisticated system that connected a number of distant points, transporting water across a landscape which has repeatedly been contended and is still today the site of huge conflict?

(Giuliana Racco, Matteo Guidi, *Between point A and B*, from the Collective Dictionary RELATION)





"In Between Camps", HD video, 7'25" (ENG-AR subtitles), 2013

Cleaning and Claiming

A day of collection of garbage and cleaning of the pool (December 2012)

The pool is an open space that can be accessed from all directions. Clearly, the space is unsafe, unless certain actions are taken to overcome some obstacles that complicate the use of the pool:

Draining the rainwater

Removing debris from inside and around the pool

Securing the area around the pool for pedestrians

Accessing the pool and delivering materials.

We noticed that the pool suffers from dirt and negligence. We thought of cleaning activities to run inside the pool. Some of those who participated in the walk returned to the pool for cleaning and others joined us. We bought garbage bags and gloves, and borrowed some tools from the popular committee. We started cleaning and collecting garbage to bring

attention and a sense of concern to the space. Simply put, we moved an everyday event, cleaning, to the public. This simple intervention was important to understand what it means to clean a place that is not private, but public.



"Cleaning and Claiming", HD video, 4'27" (ENG-AR subtitles), 2013

It was a great moment to have the feeling of doing communal work that could further impact the society and enhance the relation between this historical legacy and the local society. We are looking to make this pool the direction of tourism in the camp.

“

Approximately one month later [the walks], the group returned to the source, Arroub, to focus on the Ancient Roman pool itself and spent a day collecting garbage within the giant structure. This act of cleaning was intended as a first step in preparing the site to become a common space for future events related to Arroub and other camps. Can a simple daily action such as cleaning take on a political and social meaning if shifted from the private indoor sphere to the shared outdoor sphere? Can a voluntary and participatory action such as this incite a popular rethinking of an important historical site, thus re-activating it in contemporary camp life?

Some moments of the recent past have seen different sites being reclaimed through the humble and quotidian act of participatory cleaning:

The day after President Hosni Mubarak was forced to step down, protesters began cleaning the space, an act that highlighted the end of a regime and the beginning of a possible new era for the Egyptian people. The space was no longer perceived

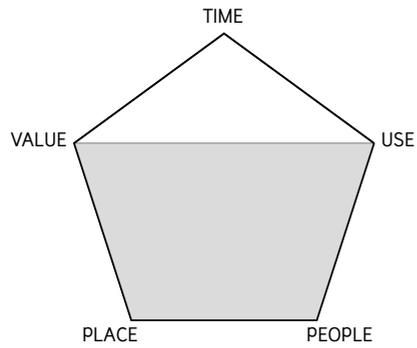


¹
Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal, *Beyond the Public, A Common Space in Fawaar Refugee Camp*

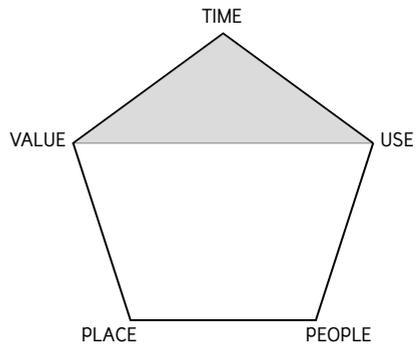
<http://theatrum-mundi.org/>

as public - the space of authority - but rather as the space of the people. Owning the space implied owning the future of the country. Cleaning the square was a gesture of reappropriation, ownership, and care. In fact, this apparently banal act demonstrated a sense of reconstituted community and collective ownership.¹

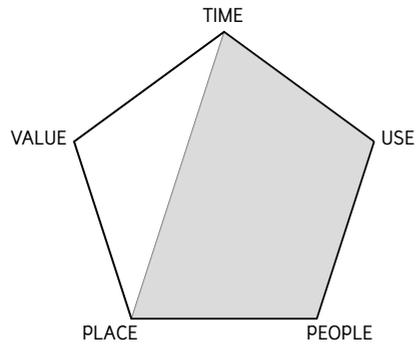
(Giuliana Racco, Sara Pellegrini, *Daily practice in public spaces*, from the Collective Dictionary PARTICIPATION)



In Between camps

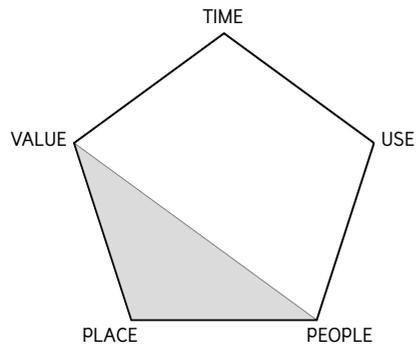


Understanding the water system

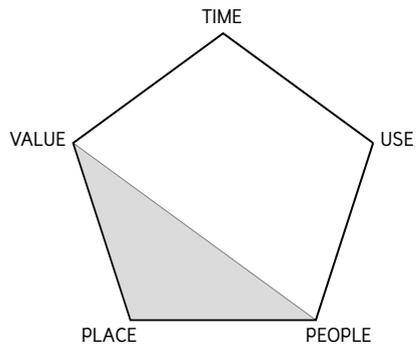


Recent history of the pool

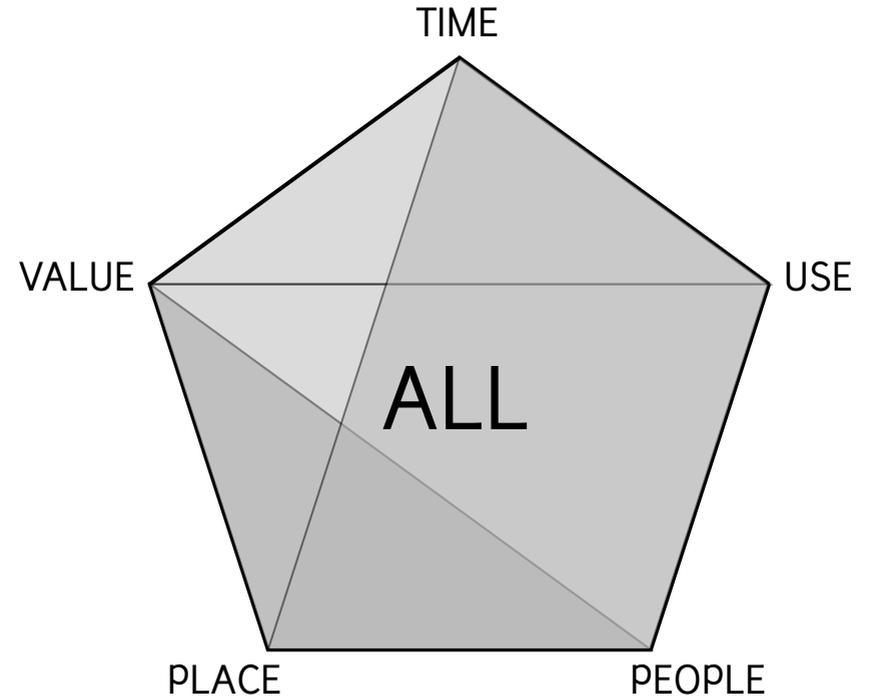
The diagram is a means to understand how the dimensions of actions can be understood in relation to one another.



Campus in Camps Office



Cleaning and claiming



02

VISIONS AND MUTATIONS

Transforming the Ancient Roman Pool
from a place for collecting water
to a place for gathering people

A bridge for access

Testing strategies for entering the pool
(March 2013)

During different visits to the site, we found that access to the pool is dangerous, especially in the standard way that people use it: they use the sloped duct where water exits the pool, and then they stand directly over a 5 meter edge high edge of the pool without any kind of railing or separation.

We suggested to direct the entrance of the pool to the stairs along the southern side of the pool in front of the a paved street. This entrance leads directly to the stairs inside the pool, so in this way we create a safe path both to and into and out of the pool. Currently, there is a 4 meter wide ditch between the external stairs and the street that makes it difficult for people, especially the elderly, to reach the stairs. Because people's safety is an important issue, we started investigating a solution to this problem in order to avoid the risk of someone becoming hurt. The idea of a bridge was proposed. We would build a simple bridge to connect the street to the external stairs and passing over the ditch. We started taking measurements for designing the bridge with help from the architects who worked with Campus in Camps.

We considered which materials to use, how much it would cost and who could implement the design. We visited several places in Hebron that supplied wood and metal, and we checked available materials and shared information with them so they could help us in defining the suitable sizes and types according to the purpose of the bridge. One of our proposals is to build a bridge with metal support beams and a walkway of treated wood that would resist rain and sun damage.



— visual by Diego Segatto

The green fence for safety

Testing strategies for making the pool
safe (April 2013)

Since safety is a top priority of the pool transformation project, some system must be devised in order to prevent curious visitors, especially children, from falling over the 5 meter high edge. However, a crucial problem immediately arises: How to create a barrier in a context where fences form part of the oppressive landscape and where borders excruciatingly limit mobility on a daily basis? We first thought of a wire fence and rejected this immediately because it would remind people of military zones.

We wish to find a solution which combines safety, aesthetics, ecology, economy and community participation.

We spoke with a landscape architect who suggested planting trees around the pool such as pomegranate trees or prickly pears, fast-growing indigenous plants.



– ph. Yuvraj Chauhan, Liesbeth Hautekiet, Sedaile Mejias



We also thought of using abandoned tires in the spaces between the trees for the following reasons: tires are cheap and available and, if unused, generally pollute the environment. Also we can plant trees and vegetation in them to create more

density in the spaces where the other trees leave gaps. Furthermore, it could be interesting to see this element, often used as protection during protests, reapplied as a form of protection in this context. We are still evaluating proposals for protecting the pool.

A place for gathering

In order to create a space where people can gather, we hope to build an operational office inside the pool, a space to meet people and explain our project and the history of the pool.

Here, we would be able to show films, such as "In Between Camps", hold lectures and exhibitions, and introduce Campus in Campus. We are looking into different models for structures that would support the other aspects of this project. One possibility would be to construct a dome, connected to a circular platform, that would organically compliment its environment.

– ph. Matteo Guidi





– visual by Yuvraj Chauhan, Liesbeth Hautekiet, Sedaile Mejias

Aquaponics and café: relating food with society

Aquaponics is a food production system where fish are harvested in a tank whose water, rich in fish waste, is then pumped to grow-beds containing gravel and plants. The gravel naturally becomes the host of bacterial colonies which convert the fish waste into plant food. Once purified of fish waste, the water returns to the tanks.

Some of the advantages:

- Very low maintenance
- Can be scaled to work in a variety of contexts
- Produces plants as well as animal protein (fish).
- Uses very little water: once the system is functional, the only water lost is through evaporation and plant transpiration
- Eliminates waste produced by aquaculture systems and waste produced by regular hydroponic systems (including water waste)



Though the goal of the project is not just agricultural, the camp's governing body is interested in developing and investing in the production of healthy organic food for the camp community. Nonetheless, the agricultural aspect is mainly perceived as a way to make the site inviting to the community in order to enable its transformation into a container for socio-cultural activities.

Thus, this space, which once was used to gather water, then became a receptacle for garbage, is now

beginning to become a site for gathering people.

The aquaponics system will recycle and reduce waste, produce organic food and harvest fish – difficult to obtain due to the lack of access to water resources – while encouraging open-air activities.

The entire transformation project will increase knowledge of ecological sustainability and the nearby geography. It will change the way of representing what occurs inside the camp.

Since the camp itself is over-crowded, with almost no public space, providing an inviting common location for social gathering will allow the inhabitants to spend more time outdoors. The Popular Committee is interested in developing organic agriculture and aquaponics in order to provide the inhabitants with healthier fruits, vegetables, and fish, which is greatly lacking in the West Bank due to blocked access to the sea. A proposed meeting point structure will provide information, workshops and general didactic activities regarding the historic site, the surrounding area and the benefits of organic food, while the cultural programming will allow Arroub, characterized by its rural isolation, to enjoy moments that are normally not accessible. This also provides the potential for the inhabitants to change the way they perceive and represent the camp beyond its circumscribed limits.

How to get involved

THE POOL. RE-ACTIVATING CONNECTIONS

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Campus in Camps

Campus in Camps is a two-year experimental educational and project oriented program, engaging the participants from the West Bank's refugee camps in an attempt to explore and produce new forms of representation of camps and refugees beyond the static and traditional symbols of victimization, passivity and poverty. The program aims at transgressing, without eliminating, the distinction between camp and city, refugee and citizen, center and periphery, theory and practice, teacher and student.

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Campus in Camps is a program by Al Quds University (Al Quds/Bard Partnership) and hosted by the Phoenix Center in Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem. It is implemented with the support of the German Government through the GIZ Regional Social and Cultural Fund for Palestinian Refugees and Gaza Population, in cooperation with UNRWA Camp Improvement Program and in coordination with the Popular Committees of Southern West Bank Refugee Camps.

The content of this publication does not necessarily represent the views and opinions of the institutions mentioned above.



جامعة القدس
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INITIATIVES

The Pool. Re-activating connections

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EDITION

Printed in June 2013

COPYLEFT

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