

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE

THE STORY OF RELATIVITY WITHIN THE TRANSITIONAL SETTLEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The quality of life and human well-being is often perceived differently, dependable on individuals and groups, as well as within contrasting socio-political circumstances, varying from the many concepts such as respecting the living standard based primarily on income to the benefits that society receives from ecosystems.

From the early beginnings as a professional discipline, landscape architecture has been respecting the quality of life and human well-being to a great extent, as a subject of professional interest and accordingly, through approaches used to address it. While those goals are mostly the same, the engagement in the scope and complexity of the

discipline is significantly increasing over the years, but still targeting the traditional paradigm - to contribute to the improvement of the living conditions and quality of life. However, the majority of the projects are predominantly dealing with urban areas and the life of the urban population related to the upper- and middle-class social groups.

Contrary to the above considerations, there is a layer of social groups of those who are forced to leave their homes in the times of crises, either caused by natural disasters, but even more of those seeking sanctuary due to the political turbulences and wars. The consequences of those tragic events can be found within different communities, including refugee camps or transitional settlements. Those places

bring poor living conditions, lack of space, and numerous environmental problems, where even just the provisioning and supporting categories of ecosystem services are dependable on the input of external factors while regulating and cultural categories seems to be almost out of question.

This paper describes the results of the “e-scape. Transitional settlement” Project, organized by the Department of Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management at American University in Beirut, in collaboration with the International Federation of Landscape Architecture. The goal of the project was to contribute to the improvement of the living conditions in the transitional settlements including the provision of even elementary ecosystem services in, at least, a bit greater extent. The additional intention was to broaden a methodology and guidelines of landscape architectural interventions within settlements resulting from conflict and natural disasters.

Keywords: transitional settlements, ecosystem services, landscape architecture, research by design

INTRODUCTION

The quality of life may be perceived in many ways. It is a broad multidimensional concept that usually includes subjective evaluations of both positive and negative aspects of life.¹ However, it is often defined differently, by divergent individuals and groups, as well as within contrasting socio-political circumstances, since it is based on the perception which individuals

have regarding their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns,² according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). To make the matter more complex (or inane), during the past decades, globalisation imposed understanding of the quality of life with the concept of standard of living, based primarily on income and in some extent even within “appropriate” social status, as well.

Another similar term, introduced more recently, the well-being, is likewise widely used to describe perceptions of the lives of individuals and groups. As there is no single definition of human well-being, it is useful to distinguish between the dimensions of subjective and objective well-being at a generalized level.³ Well-being comprises not only material concerns but two further, interrelated dimensions: the relational, representing the social and political processes which determine the distribution of costs and benefits, and a subjective dimension, which addresses individual, social and cultural norms and values which influence people's preferences and behaviour.⁴ Contemporary research goes much deeper into this topic, as there are numerous methods of quality of life indicators, as well as rather reliable quantitative measurements of well-being, which enables comparisons between social groups or geographical specificities.

From another perspective, the quality of life and human well-being can be assessed through the linkages between provision of ecosystem services, or the benefits that society receives from ecosystems.⁵ “These linkages can be

¹ The WHOQOL Group, 1998: *The World Health Organization Quality of Life Assessment (WHOQOL). Development and psychometric properties.* *Soc Sci Med* 46: pp. 1569-1585.

² WHOQOL: *Measuring Quality of Life, World Health Organisation, Health statistics and information systems.* www.who.int/healthinfo/survey/whoqol-qualityoflife/en/ (retrieved 12 August 2019).

³ Dawson, N., & Martin, A. 2015: *Assessing the contribution of ecosystem services to human wellbeing: A disaggregated study in western Rwanda.* *Ecological Economics* 117: 62-72. doi: 10.1016/j.ecolecon.2015.06.018

⁴ Gough, I., McGregor A. J. 2007: *Well-being in developing countries: From Theory to Research,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. doi: 10.1017/CBO9780511488986

⁵ Chapin, F. S. 2013: *Overview of Ecosystem Functions and Services. Their Importance and Vulnerability. Climate Vulnerability: Understanding and Addressing Threats to Essential Resources, Vol 4,* 3-11. doi: 10.1016/B978-0-12-384703-4.00401-9

illustrated at all scales, from local to global; in all places in the world, from the least to the most developed; and for all peoples, from the poorest to the wealthiest and the rural to the urban and industrialized.⁶ However, the gap between different social groups is obvious: while some communities and social groups will equate the quality of life with the provision of all categories of ecosystem services, respectively - supporting, provisioning, regulating and cultural, others are forced to be satisfied only with the basic ones.

The relationship between ecosystem services and well-being is not only affected by environmental conditions, but also through social, demographic, political, economic and technological changes which may impact attitude related towards different components of ecosystem services. While evidence of communities' perspectives towards ecosystem services can be found almost everywhere, it is particularly apparent within the transitional settlements (TS),⁷ or, according to Trovato, 2015, within the settlements and shelters resulting from conflict and natural disasters, ranging from emergency response to durable solutions, where displaced individuals and communities are forced to indulge with bare essential.⁸ Although ecosystem services are not the only factor that defines the quality of life and especially well-being, by the most common definitions of terms, they surely play an important role in the overall assessment, notably within the regulating and cultural domain of the accepted ecosystem services typology.

The landscape workshop "e-scape: Transitional Settlement", the focus of this paper, attempts to investigate does whether landscape design has potential to respond in improving the living conditions within TS, with an additional goal to broaden a methodology and guidelines of landscape architectural interventions within them.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE: RELATION TO THE QUALITY OF LIFE

From the early beginnings as a professional discipline, landscape architecture was related to the quality of life in great extent. Subjects of professional interest of landscape architecture, as well as approaches used to address it, are constantly in close connection with human well-being. While those goals are still predominantly the same, the engagement in the scope and complexity of the discipline is significantly increasing over the years, although still quite varied in different parts of the world. Knowledge bases of landscape architecture practice have expanded as academic knowledge advanced especially in the fields of ecological planning and environmental psychology as well as within cultural processes.⁹ The profession is undoubtedly advancing within the specific design skills necessary to meet society's response to environmental change and the need for sustainable development, as well as through engagement with society in order to enhance the perception and awareness of landscape identity.¹⁰

Professional engagement in developed countries with well-established practice shows that the contemporary projects are becoming more demanding, asking for multidisciplinary knowledge, work on different scales, collaboration with other affined professions, and on tasks that often require a significant budget. According to Gazvoda, 2002, there is a great amount of different knowledge that well-educated landscape architects must master.¹¹ Random look on the internationally awarded projects can support this statement, as we are witnessing interdisciplinary projects dealing with the issues of climate change, those that contribute to large infrastructure interventions, sustainable development, restoration of derelict spaces and regeneration of lost habitats, to name a few. If we look on the strategic, planning

6 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. 2005: Chapter 3: Linking Ecosystem Services and Human Well-being. *Ecosystems and human wellbeing: multiscale assessments. Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Multiscale Assessments, Volume 4*, pp. 45-76. Island Press, Washington.

7 Literature also recognize the terms "Informal settlement" and "Refugee camps", which is more frequently used in the past.

8 Trovato, M., G. 2016: Landscape in Emergency, Defining Landscape Democracy Conference Reader. Centre for Landscape Democracy, Norwegian University of Life Sciences: pp. 117-120.

9 Chen, Z., Miller, P. A., Clements, T. L., & Kim, M. 2017: Mapping research in landscape architecture: Balancing supply of academic knowledge and demand of professional practice. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 13(2): 3653-3673. doi:10.12973/eurasia.2017.00751a

10 Minimum Requirements for European Landscape Architectural Studies to Qualify for Professional Recognition, 2011, IFLA Europe, [www.iflaeurope.eu > wp-content > uploads > sites > 2012](http://www.iflaeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2012) (retrieved 29 May 2019).

11 Gazvoda, D. 2002: Characteristics of modern landscape architecture and its education. In *Landscape and Urban Planning*, Vol. 60, Issue 2. doi: 10.1016/S0169-2046(02)0064-6

aspect, such as green infrastructure, we will also witness the same pattern of complexity and interdisciplinarity, facing the contemporary challenges and rising inclusion of scientific components of affined professions. Besides, recent research focuses on issues connected to the specific social groups, which is reflected in projects such as those related to the therapeutic landscape design, older persons social well-being and indigenous cultural groups.

What is common to most of the mentioned project directions? The mentioned activities have several recurrent issues - a) many are increasingly delicate; b) in terms of spatial disposition, majority is allied to the mainstream parts of urban tissue, or the places of special interest, either areas that possess specific, extraordinary qualities like the nature protection sites and; c) most, or at least many of them are still related to the upper- and middle-class social groups. At the same time, according to Corner, 2006, "nature", in many examples of landscape architectural projects, is mostly represented by a softly undulating pastoral scene, generally considered virtuous, benevolent, and soothing, a moral as well as a practical antidote to the corrosive environmental and social qualities of the modern city.¹² As such, the open spaces are still very much perceived only as an amendment to the overall spatial components,¹³ and typically related to the upper- and middle-class social groups, if we relate the problem to the common, most used three-stratum social model.¹⁴ In other words, they are still tackling predominantly urban areas and the life of the urban population within two outlined groups, with only some exceptions. Finally, the last prevailing similarity within the majority of described project directions is corresponding to the question of this paper: they are still targeting the quality of life. By doing so, consciously or just

guided by the nature of the profession, they are at the same time targeting the fulfilment of ecosystem services which are considered within the indicated plethora of scales and projects goals.

TRANSITIONAL SETTLEMENTS: RECURRING PHENOMENON

Contrary to the above considerations, there is a layer of marginal social groups, groups of those who are forced to leave their homes in the times of crises, either caused by natural disasters, which we can, according to all warnings related to climate change, expect much more in the near future, but even more of those seeking sanctuary due to the political turbulences and wars. "The scope of this alarming phenomenon is probably best described in a withering statistic that every single minute, 24 people flee their homes... 50% are younger than 17 years old. Currently, there are 65 million displaced people around the world."¹⁵

An obvious consequence of those tragic events may be found within TS, which is a relatively new term describing settlements and shelters resulting from conflict and natural disasters, ranging from emergency response to durable solutions.¹⁶ The proliferation of camps and camp-like facilities for mass accommodation has recently been described as a process of compilation of refugee accommodation¹⁷ (Kreichauf 2018, as cited in Kandyliis, 2016). It can be expected that those places bring poor living conditions, lack of space, environmental problems and other issues which separate the term landscape from its typical positive imagination. The movements of the people cause creating of spaces that are the result of misuse, waste of natural resources, abnormal production of "rejection", and complaints about the lack of planning the landscape.¹⁸ Usually settled on the outskirts of urban areas, TS are

12 Corner, J. 2006: *Terra Fluxus. Landscape Urbanism Reader*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York. pp. 21-35.

13 Ibid.

14 Brown, D.F. 2009: "Social class and Status. In Mey, Jacob (ed.). *Concise Encyclopaedia of Pragmatics*. Elsevier: pp. 953.

15 Miliband, D. 2017: 4 solutions to ending the global refugee crisis, <http://www.rescuethislife.org/index.php/news/> (retrieved 24 April 2019).

16 Trovato, M., G. 2016: Landscape in Emergency, Defining Landscape Democracy Conference Reader. Centre for Landscape Democracy, Norwegian University of Life Sciences: pp. 117-120.

17 Kandyliis, G. 2019: Accommodation as Displacement: Notes from Refugee Camps in Greece in 2016. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, feyo65. doi: 10.1093/jrs/feyo65

18 Trovato, M., G. 2016: Landscape in Emergency, Defining Landscape Democracy Conference Reader. Centre for Landscape Democracy, Norwegian University of Life Sciences: pp. 117-120.



enclosed elements, isolated from the surrounding landscape, sharing only borders shaped by linear landscape elements. The refugee camp is usually positioned between formality and informality, mobility and immobility, permanence and impermanence¹⁹ (Grbac, as cited in Kreichauf, 2018). Their internal organization can vary, but often they do not meet the internationally founded basic standards. Conceived as temporal, even ephemeral places, the provisional “bedrooms and kitchens” usually include only elementary infrastructure, without clear spatial functionality and hierarchy of spaces. Open space is polyvalent, interstitial, without any character, multi-purposely influencing to make people anonymous, replicable, and expendable.²⁰ The scope of the overall effects depends on the size and structure of the immigrant population, the length of stay, relationships with the local community and the possibility of using resources.²¹ In those cases, even just the provisioning and supporting categories of ecosystem services are dependable on the input of external factors, while the regulating and cultural services seem to be almost out of question.

Considering the enormous number of refugees displaced within the Middle

Eastern countries (above all in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey) and the growing number of migrants in Europe, it is apparent that the TS will be in the focus for a longer time. If we take as an example Syrian war crisis, from its beginning, Lebanon became a temporary shelter for more than a million Syrian refugees.²² In the situation where coping with daily challenges of survival is the main concern, environmental issues are unfortunately the last one, which results in overall low quality of life and many social issues within the TS.

Having in mind the scope of this phenomenon, but also examples of engagements of other professions such as Médecins Sans Frontières and Architect Without the Borders, it is justifying to ask is there a place for landscape architects too? However questionable this dilemma may look like at first glance, the role of landscape architecture may exist in those places as well, especially if we shift the complexity of contemporary practice for a moment and remind ourselves on the basic questions of professional engagement. At the same time, we should be confident about the role that contemporary landscape architecture has, being capable to contribute to the mitigation of climatic extremes,



¹⁹ Kreichauf, R. 2018: *From forced migration to forced arrival: the campization of refugee accommodation in European cities*. *Comparative Migration Studies*. doi: 10.1186/s40878-017-0069-8

²⁰ Bshara, K, (n.d.): *The spatial practices in the Palestinian refugee camps*, www.campusincamps.ps/projects/khaldun-bshara (retrieved 12 November 2018).

²¹ Čepić, S, 2011: *Migrants and Landscape: Integration and Impacts on Landscape*. *Cultural Diversity as a Source of Integration and Alienation*. *ECONOLrMICUS and University of Szczecin*: pp. 236-246.

²² Operational Portal, *Refugee Situation, 2019*: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations> (retrieved 16 May 2019).



Fig. 1: Al Tyliani transitional settlement, January 2015 (PHOTO BY LARRY HARDER)

Fig. 2: Hierarchy of community development based on Maslow's Hierarchy

address environmental impacts such as water pollution or waste management, utilize the benefits of adaptive planting material and address and improve the quality of open space. Or, to summarize, can landscape architect fulfil the traditional paradigm - contribute to the improvement of living conditions and quality of life? Finally, can the profession influence the reduction of the impacts that transitional settlements have on the environment and in that way address the paradigm of ecosystem services concepts from different poles?

“E-SCAPE. TRANSITIONAL SETTLEMENT” PROJECT

With the aim to approach the problem of the TS from the other perspective, Project “e-scape. Transitional Settlement” was organized by the Department of Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management at American University in Beirut (AUB), in collaboration with AUB Centre for Civic Engagement and Community Service, the KAYANY Foundation and the International Federation of Landscape Architecture (IFLA) within IFLA Landscape Architecture Without Borders Working Group.²³ The

coordinator of the workshop was assistant professor Maria Gabriella Trovato, who led two intensive workshops in Lebanon in January and May 2015. Workshops included a group of international university professors, lecturers and practitioners, together with Lebanese students and local communities, intending to contribute to the improvement of the living conditions in the transitional settlements. At the same time, participants were searching for an answer about the role that landscape architecture can have in the settlements that are emerging across the globe in a larger number than a couple of decades before. The “e-scape Transitional Settlement” Project, used as a case study, had an additional goal to broaden a methodology and guidelines of landscape architectural interventions within the TS.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY

The research object was Al Tyliani TS, located on the edge of the village of Bar Elias in Beqaa Governorate in the Eastern part of Lebanon. The refugee camp covers 9,000 m², with 63 tents that accommodate 350 inhabitants. The

²³ Trovato, M., G. 2016: *E-Scape: Landscape and refugee influx*. *Landscape Australia*, <https://landscapeaustralia.com/articles/e-scape-landscape-and-refugee-influx-1/> (retrieved 30 May 2019).

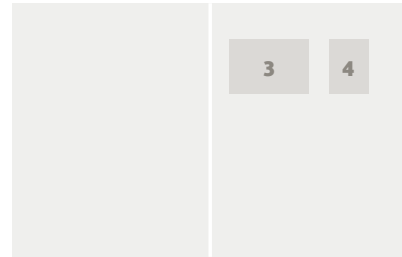


Fig. 3: Student's project proposals done within the scope of Studio work at AUB, 2015 (PHOTO BY PROF. LARRY HARDER)

Fig. 4: Artificial tree, at the end of redesigned pedestrian connection at Al Tyliani transitional settlement (PHOTO BY MARIA GABRIELLA TROVATO)

layout in the camp and the functionality of architectural and constructional elements was initially done in accordance with UNHCR principles and guidelines,²⁴ while the organized informal settlements are mostly controlled and managed by land or religious associations.²⁵ However, pressure coming from an extensive number of dwellers which exceeded minimum spatial standards, influence both interior of the settlement and the surrounding area, which is suffering from many issues, mainly hygienic and environmental ones (Fig. 1). (Landscape) architectural problems are equally numerous, ranging from the rough, impermeable paths, absence of gutters and poor drainage system, to the almost complete lack of any public space organised for the fulfilment of basic social needs. Typically, there is little initial planning done for the management of natural resources and no awareness of environmental issues and the sustainability of the ecosystem. Subsequently, refugees deplete all resources available and running wastewater and sewage devastates the plant and animal life on the site. As a result of overcrowding and the desperate need for space, there are very few green and/or open spaces left in the camp. In addition to the physical effects, all of the mentioned have a psychological effect on refugees, who find themselves disconnected from the land, to which they have a strong connection, coming mostly from the rural areas.²⁶

The “e-scape. Transitional Settlement” Project was organized in two connected stages. At the time of the first workshop in January 2015, apart from site visits, significant effort was made to understand the complexity of the situation. Understanding the spatial and socio-cultural context was needed to be extensively analysed both externally, includes driving forces which influence many aspects of settlements functional and spatial organisation, as well as within internal organisation of the community, incorporating an overview of the everyday life of the inhabitants. Those aspects are crucial phases related to any intervention within settlements of this kind.

The theoretical framework was based on several principles. Methodologically, it was related to the concept of ‘Research through designing’, close to the constructivist concept approach, where the researcher’s intent is not to find general and quantitative knowledge, but rather to ‘make sense’ of situations in a qualitative and contextual way.²⁷ Time, flexibility, utility (not aesthetic but ethic), human well-being and absence of maintenance where the basic criteria established to drive the design process,²⁸ including the methodological framework which defines landscape process capable to interrelate (recognize, protect, maintain and develop) with the ongoing transformation and the unstable and mutable situations of the territories affected by the migratory effect.²⁹ In addition, the general attitude of the

²⁴ UNHCR *Emergency Handbook 2019: Camp planning standards (planned settlements)*, <https://emergency.unhcr.org/> (retrieved 16 May 2019).

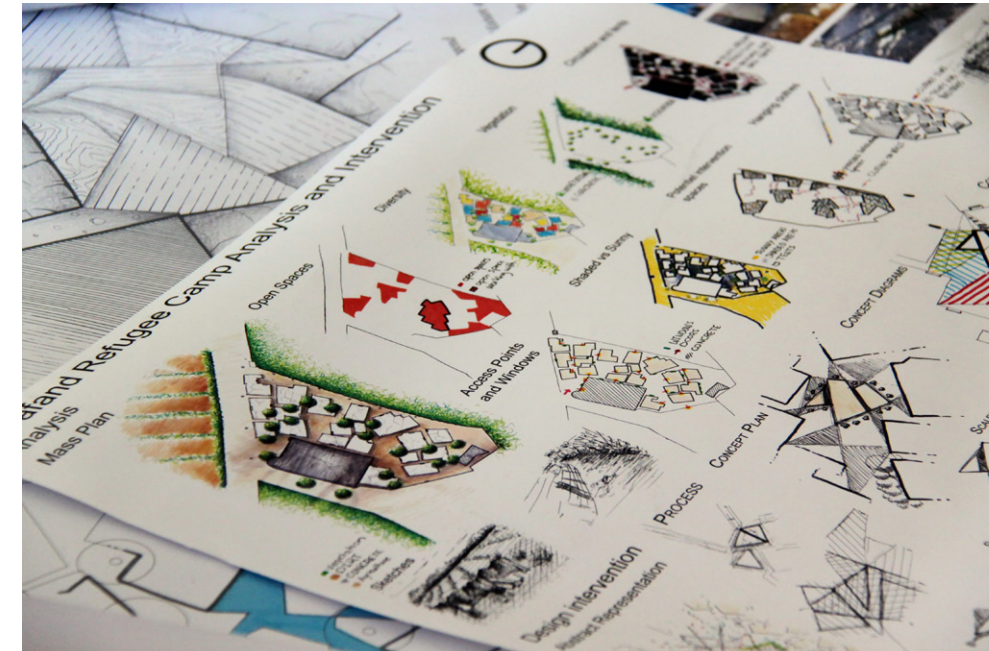
²⁵ Trovato, M.G. 2018: *Borderscape: Forced Migration and New Spatial Practices. [Co]Habitat Tactics: Imagining future spaces in architecture, city and landscape*, Conference proceedings, POLIS University, Tirana, pp. 453-463.

²⁶ Masad D. 2009: *Moving Towards Self-Reliance: Living Conditions of Refugee Camps in Lebanon and Opportunities for Development. A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo.*

²⁷ Lenzholzer, S., Duchhart, I., & Koh, J. 2013: “Research through designing” in *landscape architecture. Landscape and Urban Planning, Volume 113*, pp. 120-127. doi: 10.1016/j.landurbplan.2013.02.003

²⁸ Trovato, M., G. 2016: *Landscape in Emergency, Defining Landscape Democracy Conference Reader. Centre for Landscape Democracy, Norwegian University of Life Sciences*: pp. 117-120.

²⁹ e-scape. *Transitional settlement Project description. 2015: iflaonline.org/uploads/2015/04/e-scape-workshop-May-2015* (retrieved 16 May 2019).



project team was that there should be no difference between the well-known design postulate which state that the designers are the servants of the community: whatever we do should serve the people³⁰ (Meyer, 1929, as cited in Lepik, 2016). In any usual situation, clients employ professionals and have their expectations as how they will fulfil consumer needs. This should not be any different when it comes to responding to refugee crises, except concerning to the priorities (Fig. 2).³¹

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Much needed meetings with stakeholders, including humanitarian organizations, local authorities, camp owners and TS tenants, were followed by discussions on setting the methodology for the second workshop, which is planned to include actual implementation of design proposals within the Al Tyliani TS. The interviews with the refugees gave important inside on their adaptation to a new surrounding and most important needs, including social and environmental issues. Equally important was the observation of everyday practices across the settlement, which

led to the understanding of the thin line between public and private space, as one of the crucial aspects that the landscape design of TS can encounter.

Following the existing experiences dealing towards improving the living conditions in TS, the team tried to develop short- and long-term solutions that suit the needs of refugees,³² with a goal to influence living conditions improvement, even in a small scale. Further, the group was concentrated on getting acquainted with the circumstances, assessing the real needs of the community, with an attempt to utilize the skills and abilities of the residents.

The overall strategy employed by the project team, which can be informally described as “back to basics” approach, encompassed the usage of simple, low-cost solutions, based on identified gaps in spatial utilization and finally, including at least a bit of the local flair to the space, using appropriate materials and plant design. The goal was to increase functionality, usually with solutions which inevitably allowed some overlapping within the time and sequence of functions, resulting in multi-functional spaces. Finally, the attempt to integrate the surrounding landscape have been also considered.



³⁰ Lepik, A. 2016: *Think global, build social! Contemporary architects are actively involved in society. Builders*, ed. Pozsár, P, Hello Wood Kft, Budapest: pp. 24.

³¹ Briggs, P.D. 1999: *Community Development with Indigenous Communities: Facilitating the Creation of Appropriate Environments. A Thesis Presented to The Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Guelph, National Library of Canada.*

³² Castillo, D., Chamma, N., Komlósi, B. 2016: *Improving Refugee Settlements: Collaboration between Refugees, Architects, and Volunteers, Insecurities Tracing Displacement and Shelter, Medium, Moma*, <https://medium.com/insecurities/improving-refugee-settlements-collaboration-between-refugees-architects-and-volunteers-cf8a08a7d80> (retrieved 15 April 2019).

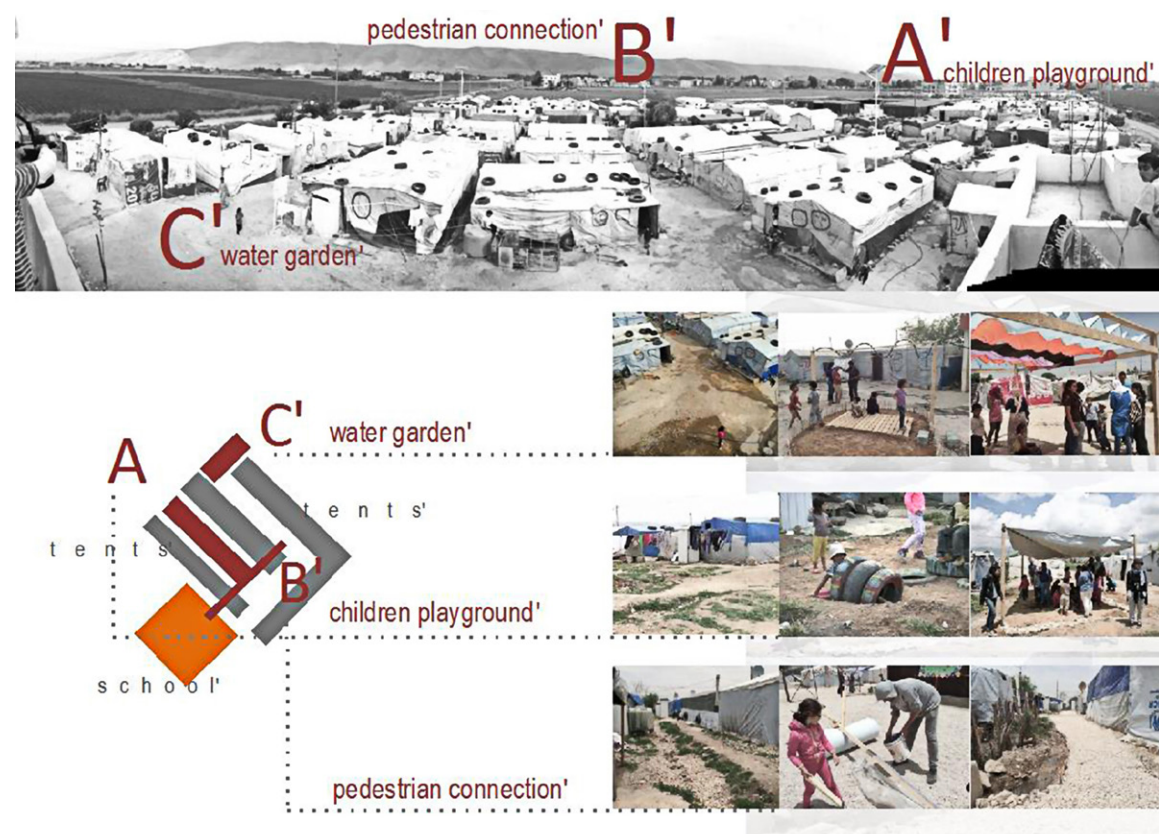


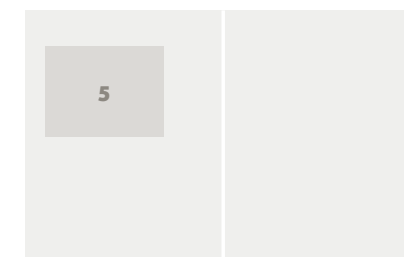
Fig. 5: Results of "e-Scape: Transitional settlement" Project: Interventions on three chosen open spaces

Preparatory work, partially based on the student's project proposals done within the scope of Studio work at AUB (Fig. 3), included the discussion concerning the choice of interventions to be implemented. The decision, based on the stated analyses and theoretical premises, led to the interventions on three small scale open spaces: the pedestrian connection, the children playground and the vegetable garden with water facilities, dividing workshop participants into three groups for particular focuses. All interventions primarily implemented landscape design approach focused on functional and socio-cultural aspects (addressing cultural realm of ecosystem services), having in mind utilitarian and, in the scope that circumstances allowed, ecological and aesthetic values, mainly through the use of colour through design and construction solutions.

The design and especially construction leaned on the utilisation of a more informal approach, using

plain solutions which don't require any complex equipment and usage of building and materials. Rather than that, inexpensive gravel and stones were used to improve one of the pedestrian connections, in addition to recyclable material partially found at the site, exploited to create the children playground and the water garden. Simple features, intended to emphasize certain points within the overall monotonous space, such as artificial tree (Fig. 4), was again made of easily procured material, found directly on the site. The final product included the redesign of pedestrian connection with improved drainage along the walkway, the children playground and a vegetable garden featuring additional place for children gathering, supplemented with shower game area.

It is important to emphasize the participation and voluntary involvement of the TS inhabitants, who were active during the whole process, from the starting phase by participation in the interviews and discussions, to direct



help in a participatory construction process. The joy of the children, who were always around trying to engage, was not only significant as an extraordinary day full of play, but also as a process of learning about the organization of the place, with a goal related to the improvement of the quality of life (Fig. 5).³³ Finally, monitoring of the site after the phase of implementation, although some of the facilities were destroyed, as expected from examples in experiences within other, similar TS projects, demonstrated that some of the inhabitants to certain extent utilized the experience and gained knowledge in repetition of small interventions, either similar to the one that was implemented, or others, primarily related to the productive utilisation of plants, that was part of some of the design proposals.

CONCLUSIONS

In the context of Syrian informal settlements in Lebanon, the "quality of life", needs to be shifted from the bitter look of the spaces where any aspect of the design is obsolete, to a paradigm that advocates small, straightforward interventions, engaging the communities of the TS settlements through the participatory process. Comprehensive and thoughtful analyses of the overall context directed towards understanding spatial and sociocultural context both externally as well as internally, within

the physical borders of the settlement is one of the crucial aspects of the overall design process. Identification of those places which can be improved with little input (such as, for example, easily constructed drainage canal), would be also of importance for advocating financially feasible proposals. Theoretical framework implies simple design approaches with the usage of low-cost materials, and more importantly, adherence to the postulate that the designers are servants of the community, for this occasion ready to deal with unstable and mutable situations. We may also conclude that utilisation of the constructivist research through designing method would be the most likely best way to push forward, as this approach includes not only site-specific context, but also takes into account the social circumstances.

In the further research, it would be beneficial to open discussion not only about the on the significance that open "public" spaces may have even in places like TS are, as the majority of the settlement doesn't respect even the minimum standards established by UNHCR Guidelines for Camp planning standards.³⁴ On the other hand, mentioned guidelines are far from including any recommendations related to the inclusion of open spaces, that could support provision of elementary ecosystem services, although spatial analyses of TS show that the locations for those functions

³³ Trovato, M. G. 2017: *Landscape and Displacement: a practical intervention on a Syrian Informal Settlement in Lebanon*, Scenario Journal 06: Migration, <https://scenariojournal.com/article/landscape-and-displacement/> (retrieved 16 April 2019).

³⁴ UNHCR Camp Planning Standards (Planned Settlements), within camp settlement size recommends minimum surface area is 45 square meter per person, including kitchen/vegetable gardening space (UNHCR Emergency Handbook, 2019).

could be found in many cases. This gap should be emphasizing, as those places are especially important, being able to provide opportunities for children to grow and develop in at least a bit user-friendly environment. If we add that majority of established TS are not of a short-term nature, but places where people are forced to live for years,³⁵ reasons for including considerations related to the embodiment of open spaces may sound more grounded.

Equally important would be to think about the role and responsibility the landscape architects have within present-day society, as there is much more to offer, even with the mentioned broadening of the scope of work. This can be particularly evident within the marginal societies and lower-class social groups, where rational planning and simple design solution, grounded in ecological approaches that ensure sustainable development of the built environment through the appropriate integration of biological, land, water and atmospheric systems³⁶ can be quite valuable. Exactly those knowledges are an integral part of the landscape architectural profession. Those solutions can easily match the framework of ecological services, especially those within the regulating and cultural categories, the most overlooked ones within the transitional settlements. Indicated categories are to a significant extent achievable with the lowest input, but capable to make a difference and at least in some portion increase quality of life of TS dwellers. Although there are still very few examples linked to the research on the quality of life of TS, and there is an existing gap within the assessment of the actual, on-sight

contributions within the projects of this kind. However, further research would be needed to determine the actual, methodologically grounded benefits of landscape architecture projects within the TS, such as, for example, Relative Valuation of Multiple Ecosystem Services method (RESVI)³⁷ (Jordan et al., as cited in Dawson et al., 2015).

Despite the fact that every transitional settlement has his own characteristic, presenting a “story of his own”, lessons learned from the example of e-Scape Project, albeit limited due to the time and funding constrains, provided an insight to the landscape design potential in setting out new approaches and applicable methodologies, which can be beneficial to those facing similar challenges. Although sometimes only temporarily, approaches of this kind can promote the awareness, knowledge, innovation and management to the inhabitants and bring some improvements to the quality of life of the displaced communities and, consequently provision of the at least elementary ecosystem services. ©

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35 *As of end-2015, the median duration of exile stands at 4 years, i.e. half of the refugees worldwide have spent 4 years or less in exile (Devictor, Quy-Toan, 2016) <https://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/how-many-years-do-refugees-stay-exile>.*

36 *IFLA/UNESCO Charter for Landscape Architectural Education, 2012: <http://ifla-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/IFLA-Charter-for-Landscape-Architectural-Education-Revised-2012.pdf>*

37 Dawson, N., & Martin, A. 2015: *Assessing the contribution of ecosystem services to human wellbeing: A disaggregated study in western Rwanda. Ecological Economics* 117: 62–72. doi: 10.1016/j.ecolecon.2015.06.018

TÁJÉPÍTÉSZELET ÉS ÉLETMINŐSÉG – ÉLETMINŐSÉGI KÉRDÉSEK AZ ÁTMENETI TELEPÜLÉSEKEN

A különböző társadalmi és politikai körülmények között élő csoportok különbözőképpen határozzák meg az életminőséget és jólétet, melyben az ökoszisztéma által nyújtott szolgáltatások is jelentős szerepet kapnak.

A tájépítészet a kezdetektől fogva az emberi jólétet és életminőséget helyezi a tevékenysége középpontjába, s az idők során ennek megfelelően alakultak a szakmai feladatok és megközelítési módok. Azonos célok mellett az elmúlt évtizedek során jelentősen megváltoztak a szakmai feladatok, egyre bonyolultabbak, összetettebbek lettek; a hagyományos hozzáállás, a szakmai feladatokat átszövő paradigma változatlan maradt: a tájépítészet mindenkor hivatása, hogy javítsa az életkörülményeket és az életminőséget. A legtöbb projekt a városi területekkel, a városi lakosság életminőségének javításával foglalkozik, s ezek inkább a felső és középosztályok számára jelentenek minőségi javulást.

A fenti megfontolásokkal szemben azonban ott vannak azok a társadalmi csoportok, amelyek válságok, természeti katasztrófák vagy politikai zavargások és háborúk idején kénytelenek elhagyni otthonukat, s menedéket keresnek. A menekültek számos országban nagy számban jelennek meg, részükre menekülttáborokat vagy átmeneti településeket hoznak létre. Ezeket a táborokat, településeket általában rossz életkörülmények és helyhiány jellemzik, és működésük közben számos környezeti problémát okoznak. Az alapvető életfeltételek biztosítása mellett az ökoszisztéma-szolgáltatások (szabályozó, kulturális funkció) egyértelműen háttérbe szorulnak.

Ez a cikk az „e-scape. Átmeneti település” projektről szól, amelyet a Bejrúti Amerikai Egyetem Tájrendezési és Ökoszisztéma-Menedzsment Tanácsa szervezett a Tájépítészek Nemzetközi Szövetségével – IFLA – együttműködésben. A projekt célja az volt, hogy hozzájáruljon az átmeneti településeken az életkörülmények javításához, beleértve az elemi ökoszisztéma-szolgáltatásokat is, továbbá, hogy kialakítsa a konfliktusok és a természeti katasztrófák miatt létesített átmeneti településeken alkalmazható tájépítészeti beavatkozások módszertanát és az ahhoz kapcsolódó útmutatásokat.

A kutatási terület a Libanon keleti részén, Beqaa kormányzóságban található Al Tyliani TS volt. A menekülttábor 9000 m² területű, 63 sátorral, 350 férőhellyel. A tábor az UNHCR alapelveinek figyelembevételével alakították ki. A települést főként a földtulajdonosok vagy vallási szervezetek ellenőrzik és kezelik. A nagy számú lakosság miatt azonban a minimális területi előírások sem tudnak érvényesülni, és számos higiéniai és környezetvédelmi problémával kell szembe nézniük. A környezeti, építészeti problémák igen komolyak, kezdve az átjárhatatlan útvonalaktól, a csatornák hiányától és a rossz vízvezető rendszertől egészen az alapvető társadalmi igények kielégítésére kialakított közterületek szinte teljes hiányáig. A település tervezésekor nem vették figyelembe a környezeti adottságokat, nem foglalkoztak környezetvédelmi kérdésekkel, s főként nem az ökoszisztéma fenntarthatóságával. A nagy számú menekült hamar kimerítette az összes rendelkezésre álló erőforrást, a vízhiány és a kezeletlen szennyvíz elpusztította a telep növény- és állatvilágát. A túlszűfolttság és az egyre nagyobb helyhiány miatt a táborban nagyon kevés zöldfelület és szabadterület maradt.

A projekt során több workshopot tartottak a helyszínen. Az első alkalommal a körülmények megismerésén, felmérésén volt a hangsúly. A projekt ideje alatt több találkozót tartottak az érintettekkel: humanitárius szervezetekkel, helyi hatóságokkal, a táborok tulajdonosaival és a TS bérletiivel. Ezt követően megbeszéléseket folytattak a második műhely módszertanának meghatározásáról, amely a tervezési javaslatok tényleges megvalósítását foglalta magában. A menekültekkel készített interjúk jelentették az egyik alapot az igények megismeréséhez, ideértve a társadalmi és környezetvédelmi kérdéseket is. A projekt résztvevői maguk is végeztek megfigyeléses vizsgálatot a település mindennapi életének, a közterek és magánterek használatának megismerésére, s a két használati forma közötti keskeny határmezsgye értelmezésére. Ezek a szempontok kulcsfontosságúnak bizonyultak a TS tájképe esetében.

A Libanonban lévő, átmeneti szíriai településekkel összefüggésben az „életminőséget” el kell választani a terek „megjelenésétől”. A tér- és formatervezés bármely aspektusa elavult, s ezért támogatni kell a kicsi, egyértelmű beavatkozásokat, melyek magában foglalják a közösségeket is a részvételi folyamat révén. A teljes környezet átfogó és átgondolt elemzése a térbeli és szocio-kulturális kontextus megértésével, a komplex tervezési folyamat egyik kritikus lépése. ©