

Outro

From the Social to the Material

This part — comprising three chapters — has two purposes. The first is to highlight the social dynamics of reassembling, and second, is to provide ethnographic accounts of how reassembling was carried out in different settings. Zaatari camp is a heterogeneous space, in contrast to the way in which it was initially planned and envisioned. Its vast area became permeated by different material-spatial realities, infrastructures, social structures, identities and suchlike. The three case studies were chosen to illustrate different times and locations in the camp. Although they do not seek to offer any representations or generalizations, they nevertheless underline the diversity of the socio-spatial conditions of the camp, and therefore, the diversity of the approaches to reassembling.

The role of these ethnographic accounts is their ability to allow the complexity and richness of the process to unfold. Reassembling practices are not linear or simple. They are conflictual, overlapping, contested and complex. They seek to bridge the gap between the shelter and the dwelling, and therefore are very creative, case-based, heterogeneous and sometimes unexpected. Refugees seek to reproduce social space in the camp — a space that suspends dwelling. In this context, reassembling is the approach to these goals, rather than the outcome. *Reassembling* is the way in which refugees seek to reproduce social space and to dwell in a camp. From that perspective, reassembling is the journey and not the destination. This journey is permeated by many events, structures and dynamics emerging in the social sphere and among the dwellers. Studies directed towards the dwelling and the domestic space per se have for long addressed these issues. Aspects such as privacy, semiotics of space, identity, culture and family relations are far from being new to the field. However, what is being addressed in this book is the process of *becoming*. To visualize this process, it helps to always remember how a crowded cluster, such as the one in which Sami lives, was originally just a group of empty, standardized containers. Or that Eyad's and Omar's dwellings were made from a series of shelter units that were constantly being replaced and changed. The focus here is therefore not the shelter or the material per se, but the larger process in which they are embedded.

In the context of Zaatari camp, this process of becoming — or to be more explicit, the transition from shelters to dwellings — was affected by three major dynamics. The first is visual privacy, the second is family relations and the third is knowledge. While these may be the main themes, much can be discussed under each, and linkages can be easily made between them. For instance, family relations are sustained by maintaining visual privacy, and this can be considered as a form of implicit knowledge, finding its roots in the region. Nevertheless, these three themes are definitely interlinked and can be felt in any context in regard to dwelling; yet they appear to be the most prominent in the camp because of how shelters are made and what their purpose is. By containing refugees in shelters during emergencies, social relations and space are suddenly no longer in perspective. To bring these elements into the picture, reassembling practices revolve around the spatialization of social relations, which requires re-establishing private areas, socio-spatial codes, differences and identities across the space of the camp and the shelter — a process in which a myriad of knowledge is utilized.

To clarify these points further, I revert to the impact of the 'material world' on the process of reassembling. How did the materiality of the shelter and the camp influence the ways in which dwellings were constructed in Zaatari camp? Moreover, what role did aspects such as temporariness and politics play in the process? The following part shows the extent to which the practices of dismantling and reassembling are deeply entrenched in the materiality of the camp itself.









