Refugee heritage

Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti | DAAR

Refugee camps are established with the intention of being demolished. As a paradigmatic representation of political failure, they are meant to have no history and no future; they are meant to be forgotten. The history of refugee camps are constantly erased, dismissed by states, humanitarian organizations, international organizations and even self-imposed by refugee communities in fear that any acknowledgement of the present undermines a future right of return. The only history that is recognized within refugee communities is one of violence and humiliation. Yet the camp is also a place rich with stories narrated through its urban fabric. In tracing, documenting, revealing and representing refugee history beyond the narrative of suffering and displacement, Refugee Heritage is an attempt to imagine and practice refugeeness beyond humanitarianism.

DAAR (Decolonizing Architecture Art Research) is an architectural collective that combines conceptual speculations and pragmatic spatial interventions, discourse and collective learning. The artistic research of Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti are situated between politics, architecture, art and pedagogy. In their practice art exhibitions are both sites of display and sites of action that spill over into other contexts: built architectural structures, the shaping of critical learning environments, interventions that challenge dominant collective narratives, the production of new political imaginations, the formation of civic spaces and the re-definition of concepts.