INTRODUCTION

There is little doubt that the Syrian civil war has catalyzed what experts and onlookers now consider the greatest humanitarian crisis in the 21st century. Per the UNHCR, the UN Refugee relief agency supporting refugee camps across the globe, roughly half of Syria’s 22 million pre-war population has been displaced, most which have fled to neighboring countries of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and beyond to seek refuge. 13.5 million of these people, whether unable to leave their homes or awaiting permission to do so, are in dire need of international support from non-for-profit relief agencies struggling to provide basic necessities of food, water, electricity and shelter (UNHCR.org). Unfortunately for these refugees, seeking shelter in foreign nations is rarely a positive experience. Refugee camps, with tents meant to house displaced peoples for a duration not to exceed two to three years, are overrun with hygienic crises, crime and suffering due to the relatively uncontrolled growth of refugee registrations and overburdening influx of peoples into camps already saturated with struggling families. In a period where developed nations have the greatest amount of access to media covering refugee issues, including photographs, videos and testimonials, even the most charitable nations in the world feel increasingly unable to provide contributions. Perhaps more tellingly, these nations are also growing increasingly ambivalent to the complex political scenarios involved in our leaders’ decisions and political savvy to truly make a difference.

These worries are not without logical grounds or merit; the situation has simply grown far too complex for a non-expert to form an educated opinion about the consequences of each nation’s complex political maneuvers. ThinkProgress, an American News agency stemming from the Center of American Progress, regarded progressive public policy research and advocacy organization, has mapped these complex relationships (below http://i.imgur.com/h8j3Fr.jpg) and categorized each entity’s relationship with respect to another as either in direct conflict, indirect conflict, monetary assistance, alleged monetary assistance, and supplying weapons and/or fighters. Aside from the sheer quantity of these complex connections, the web is simply too muddled to glean any understanding of the complex hierarchical connections between these actors; too many actors are involved in too many complex covert or overt fashions for the average Samaritan to synthesize all the information involved in this
unique predicament. With this issue in mind, the questions of this capstone begin to surface: Regardless of the average person’s relatively superficial understanding of the complexities of the political crisis facing modern Syria, what are the greatest threats to Syrian livelihood? More importantly, how can we evaluate and understand these needs in a way that gives the average person, whether American, western or otherwise concerned, a way to contribute? While this paper will examine the Syrian Civil War as a case study for this research, the implications of such an investigation may reach far beyond the extend of modern Syrians, and perhaps reach other existing and emerging crises such as Iraq, Sudan, Yemen and beyond. The opportunity that the media and the web has given us to reflect on our ability to make a difference in the world is new and unique, and ought not be taken for granted.

This paper will begin to dissect the nature of the various grievances of refugee facility management officials and testimonials by the refugees themselves. This thesis will argue that camps absorbing Syrian refugees internally and abroad, though well deserving in their praise for relieving the immediate needs of food, water and shelter for those in need, are a nightmare to maintain and inhabit because they are applying temporary solutions to increasingly permanent issues; if we begin to frame the refugee crisis as one that requires long-term relief and in need of a stable groundwork for permanent resettlement, refugees will be able to live more happy and productive lives without overburdening the United Nations or host countries who are asked to absorb these permanent settlements. After examining these existing conditions, we may then begin to examine proposed permanent solutions to the crisis. It is critical to evaluate these solutions in terms of their abilities to respond to official grievances and testimonials. The report will conclude with a brief statement regarding a vision for moving forward with respect to the various issues and solutions previously examined, hopefully sparking ideas for greater and more profound engagement.

PT 1: EXISTING CONDITIONS
OFFICIAL GREVIANCES
Zaatari, the globe’s most prominent refugee camp, was deployed on July 2012 in just nine short days in response to huge inflows at the time of Syrian refugees; Four years later, however, as the situation grows increasingly permanent, officials are beginning to reflect more profoundly on issues preventing the camp from growing safely and sustainably. Through researching the testimonials of refugee camp officials, as well as independent journalists and investigators, several central issues arise that reflect on the situation’s inability to deal with the oversaturation of refugees in increasingly permanent states of resettlement, including difficulty keeping track of refugees informally relocating
themselves and their homes within the camp to be closer to their loved ones, maintaining accommodations in hybrid housing situations, maintaining hygiene and safety in situations where sewage and electric systems have been informally reorganized, supporting an otherwise insular economy, and shipping potable water into and out of the camps that are otherwise unconnected to public infrastructure that supply these resources. In order to begin to address these issues, the UNHCR has been commissioning creative professionals, among them architects, designers and planners alike, to propose solutions that not only operate on a very short term basis, but address the crisis for what it truly is; the destruction of Aleppo’s urban fabric is truly devastating not only to landmark neighborhoods and sights, but also to critical infrastructures that prevent it from functioning is the efficient machine it once pride itself in. By looking at refugee settlement outside of the heart of Aleppo as a long term, or perhaps relatively permanent demand, refugee issues can be met with the serious answers they deserve.

As with many refugee camps installed by western nations abroad, housing modules are deployed on an urban grid devoid of cultural sensibility or understanding of the use types that will be inhabiting those modules. Although the majority of the urban grid in Zaatari is composed of tents, an increasingly large portion of these housing modules have been replaced by metal boxes, facilitating families of approximately five to six people. Although this sounds generous, especially to western nuclear families composed of 2-4 inhabitants per household, Syrians traditionally live in courtyard arrangements composed of living arrangements facilitating families of three generations. These urban ottoman courtyards, the most common building typology found all around Syria, are known for being welcoming environments, often described as a private paradise away from the harsh realities of the dense Syrian landscape. Understandably, these intergenerational households develop a strong connection to their homes and bring this nostalgia to them when attempting to deal with the modular “container” condition of Zaatari. The modular grid does offer a strategic logic for the UNCHR and affiliated agencies responsible for the camp’s conditions. Ledwith, MIT educated architect and expert in refugee camp design, explains, “The formal layout of the camp is a grid system with caravans placed in rows; the spacing of the caravans is designed to accommodate vehicles, guard against fire, and promote hygiene. Surveyors decide where to put the caravans and aid workers are required to place the caravans where the surveyors requested. Since the caravans were not donated at the start of the camp, the original planning fabric from the tent infrastructure is visible in the old camp. As caravans replace tents in the old town, the close spacing requires surveyors to place more caravans than advisable in a given area,” (Ledwith). Much like the grid layout of New York City, the grid plan is highly sensible both in terms
of keeping track of development and growth, as well as managing these existing conditions in emergency scenarios. However, much like the Manhattan grid, residents are finding ways to express their individual needs in an increasingly postmodern landscape. Ledwith further explains, “The informal layout of the camp arose after the residents received the caravans. The residents, rather than maintaining the row shapes, re-position their caravans in “little compounds” — typically with a U-shape or a courtyard shape — so that they may live together with their extended families. Other rearrangements of the camp allow refugees to move closer to people from their villages; these unsanctioned modifications result in a redrawn, “maze-like” map,” (Ledwith). These informal changes, though accommodating to the old Syrian way of inhabiting space and facilitating life among loved ones in difficult circumstances, pose issues to refugee camp issues. The dismantling of the caravans and tents to create elaborate, hybrid structures shows a level of self-sufficiency becoming increasingly evident, among them social and even economic hierarchies in an otherwise monolithic landscape. The metal panels composing caravans, though extremely sturdy and a positive step towards permanent human shelters, have become so valuable that residents have begun buying and selling these sheets on the black market. Controlling these illegal markets and residential developments is near impossible given the limited resources of refugee camps, and as a result create inherent inequities reflecting an increasing level of permanence in settlement. In fact, these elaborate structures and compound planning techniques stretch beyond the caravans and tents themselves. Kimmelman, reporting for the New York Times on the developments, social and economic, in the Zaatari refugee camp reports, “The oldest parts of Zaatari...now have streets, one or two paved, some lined with electric poles, the most elaborate houses cobbled together from shelters, tents, cinder blocks and shipping containers, with interior courtyards, private toilets and jerry-built sewers,” (Kimmelman). The development of temporary settlements into more permanent communities is not without precedence. Kimmelman further elaborates, “Clusters of satellite dishes and water tanks on the skyline can bring to mind favelas in Rio de Janeiro or slums in Cairo. Like favelas, the camp has grown according to its own ad hoc, populist urban logic, which includes a degree of social mobility,” (Kimmelman). While this creates an environment of livability in a dire situation, it is also not only increasingly difficult, but generally impossible for camp officials to maintain and structure these inevitable developments.

One of the most critical issues facing these highly-oversaturated communities of displaced Syrians is keeping track of where refugees are when they relocated themselves, and even at times their shelters, to be within a closer proximity to their loved ones and bring back some semblance of normal Syrian life. Bahou, a Master of Architecture candidate at the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture,
Landscape and Design at the University of Toronto currently writing his thesis entitled *Semipermanence: A case for strategized design of refugee camps*, writes extensively regarding logistics and specificities of these relocations. He describes, “The initial grid-like arrangement rapidly changed into U-shaped compounds that erased the North-South connection while maintaining the West-East connection. This can be attributed to the fact that permanent structures such as water tanks, communal kitchens and bathrooms are all arranged along the West-East axis with a number of main North-South routes connecting them,” (Bahou). Bahou’s research regarding this informal arrangement reflects the unique logic of the illegal restructuring of these infrastructures. Meanwhile, the arrangements of the individual units in these compound shapes is not without cultural precedence either. He explains, “Syrian refugees at the camp came predominately from Daraa, which is located south of Syria, where they follow tribal culture. This played a role to why Syrians decided to abandon the row-like structure of the camp and adopt a U-shaped-like compound structure. In Syria, they lived in courtyard compounds with extended families and they were accustomed to living communally and to sharing a courtyard with their relatives,” (Bahou). While Bahou argues that the courtyard structures have derived primarily from the multi-family living structures commonplace in South Syrian urban life, he also argues that other cultural forces cause the structured grid organization to migrate towards cluster planning. Research is increasingly pointing towards hierarchical social forces brought over from South Syria, causing refugees to migrate within plans to restructure these social centers that mimics what was left behind. “Moreover, the already mentioned, informal power structure of the camp replicates the tribal tradition of the refugees, which is also why they tend to settle in clusters of compounds that are under the jurisdiction of a certain street leader,” (Bahou). These fascinating, complex logics may seem ideal organizational tools for refugees, though this causes major logistical issues for camp facilities. Since the refugee camps lack the resources to constantly maintain and track these informal changes, several technologies are emerging and developing to quickly identify refugees and recover vital personal information on a single digital platform. To begin, the cornerstone of refugee identification technology deployed in Zaatari today is an iris-based program that uses imaging to note unique physical characteristics of a refugee to unlock aid dollars. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, the traditional distribution system would at time double register individuals or dwelling units and cause families to receive multiple aid stipends. To begin to control this instances as the refugee camp population continues to explode and shift dwelling units, this technology demands that individuals transport themselves to the distribution centers and withdraw their stipend. Reporting on this issue, Scientific American author Dina Fine Maron explains, “Instead of receiving food packages, money vouchers or bank cards from UNHCR, refugees in the iris-identification
system receive a monthly text message saying money has been placed in their accounts. Then, they walk up to an ATM owned by Cairo Amman Bank, and, rather than insert a card and punch in a pass code, they look into a specially designed iris camera. Once ID’d, a refugee would be able to withdraw his or her monthly allotment of cash. Right now 13,500 families are receiving funds, thanks to their iris prints, according to UNHCR,” (Maron). Maron further explains that the IrisGuard technology, developed by John Daugman, professor of computer vision and pattern recognition at the University of Cambridge, is quickly being seen as an important gateway for supporting refugee business ventures in the future. She describes, “Under current plans the UNHCR iris-ID system will not yet be linked to services deployed by the network of other aid organizations attending to this population. But, other transitions are taking place among other aid groups. For example, the U.N. World Food Programme is now shifting to distributing food vouchers at Za’atari, allowing refugees to buy the food of their choice from designated shops inside the camp, rather than rely solely on monthly rations of wheat, pasta, rice, lentils, sugar and salt,” (Maron). Vast and evolving capabilities of the IrisGuard technology has inspired other agencies and researchers to provide solutions for the lack of Zaatari staff’s capabilities to track the camp’s inhabitants. In response to a call for competition proposals by the international What Design Can Do, aiming to bring humanity back to the humanitarian crisis exhibited in Syria and beyond, an Italian/Swedish design team proposed The Welcome Card Project, aiming for product design to respond to the need of refugee staff to keep track of refugee records on a single platform. As product design specialists, this team proposes that each person who applies for asylum in an EU country is issued a Welcome Card. The team describes, “Radio-frequency identification technology (RFID) enables refugees to check their application status when the card is paired to a reader. It offers a way to display one’s asylum application status, while providing official information from relevant immigration agencies and related organizations. The temporary identification card also provides details about language courses, transport and relevant events. Moreover, it gives holders peace of mind and dignity as they plan their lives,” (whatdesigncando.com). The technology allows that refugee location and status is consolidated on a single digital platform, regardless of their informal dwelling status; but perhaps more importantly, the group states its mission of giving asylum applicants tools to help them to understand and navigate the societies of which they are now a part.

Another grievance voiced by refugee camp officials, stemming again from a lack of cultural sensitivity of the infrastructure in the camp, is the difficulty of maintaining hygiene and safety standards with illegal sewage and electric systems developed by the refugees through informal means. One of the biggest issues that has arisen from this lack of cultural sensitivity is the increasing number of illegal
sewage systems that facilitate female-only and male-only usage. Bahou provides context for this issue, stating, “As Daraa’s traditions forbid shared bathrooms between males and females, refugees all opted to ‘move’ bathrooms and latrines to the vicinity of their tents or caravans. By doing so, they tried to orient the compounds parallel to shared kitchens and bathrooms,” (Bahou). Clearly, this poses an issue for inhabitants that are unable to use the public sewage infrastructure that is based on a block-wide latrine planning system versus a gender-specific system. Bahou further describes the extent of the issue and the ways that refugees have attempted to alter the public sewage system to make it culturally appropriate for their usage. He writes, “The camp lacks a sewer system and is designed for residents to rely on common blocks of latrines for their sanitation needs. However, by the end of 2013, roughly 60 to 70% of residents had built in-home pit latrines that could be individually pumped, or dug out, generating drainage and sanitation challenges with the rainwater runoff system. This led to poor sanitation around the camp, and the facilities lack to contain sewage resulted in standing gray and black water,” (Bahou). While this solution is arguably livable for short periods of time, as diseases in the camp have been relatively controlled and contained as of now, the sanitation problem grows as the refugee camp grows, becomes more populated and architecturally dense, and is labeled as an increasingly permanent settlement among camp officials struggling to keep up with rising maintenance costs. Another increasingly important infrastructural issue that surfaces as the camp grows informally and more permanently is the illegal usage of electric resources. A huge portion of Syrian refugees possess vocational training, including electrical licenses, and have been wiring their homes and shops illegally in order to take advantage of electrical resources during after-hours periods. This poses both safety and monetary issues for the camp, as the illegal drain on resources far surpasses the UNHCR budget. Bahou explains, “The United Nations funds, installs, and maintains the electricity used for streetlights and other key infrastructure in the camp. The locations of streetlights pose safety and economic concern, since as of November 2013 an estimate of 73% of the camp have illegally tapped the streetlight grid for private electrical connections. The illegal electricity hook-up to the camp’s residents is usually a point of dispute and has generated problems for camp organizers. In some cases the camp’s residents used trenches and concrete walls to hide the connections from the camp organizers,” (Bahou). While taking advantage of electrical resources has created a difficult situation for camp supervises, refugees see it as an increasingly essential resource to have personal access to, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, due to informal restructuring of dwelling units in new organizations, the informal economy, and above all, the increasing reality of permanence of their stay. Kimmelman elaborates on the various usages of this electricity for provisions other than the allotted 10 hours per day of light. He writes, “Refugees at Zaatari
steal the electricity that powers their shops and washing machines to the tune of $750,000 a month, an unsustainable burden for the United Nations. Mr. Kleinschmidt persuaded shop owners to install circuit breakers so the system would not collapse, and he is now working on a plan to institute monthly fees for shop owners and refugees with washing machines, eventually doing the same with sewage and water — in effect, slowly formalizing the camp’s economy, an approach both fair and politically savvy,” (Kimmelman). Formalizing the informal state seems to be the fairest solution for refugees and officials alike, in that the camp will be able to keep refugees accountable and safe when they request new electric lines to their homes and businesses.

At this point we must address the logistical issue of the illegal black market that has arisen from the state of relative permanence for refugees. Refugees may be assigned formal duties for an additional modest stipend, the majority of these jobs being allocated in unskilled sanitation jobs. While half of able-bodied refugees are children who undoubtedly possess few practical skills that the camp may capitalize on, the majority of males do possess vocational training, and “unskilled” men and women possess farming and cooking skills that have proven invaluable to maintaining the South Syrian cultural connection they have otherwise left behind. These skills and abilities have given birth to a huge illegal economy, where main avenues are lined with family-owned businesses and hybrid shops where the refugees can make an additional income for themselves and their households. Kimmelman has completed extensive research on the realities of the situation, citing the following data: “Mr. Kleinschmidt ticked off numbers: 14,000 households, 10,000 sewage pots and private toilets, 3,000 washing machines, 150 private gardens, 3,500 new businesses and shops. Not far from Mr. Bidawi’s barbershop, Zaatari has a pet store, a flower shop and a homemade ice cream business. Refugees tote rotisserie chickens from a takeout joint on the main street, called the Champs-Élysées,” (Kimmelman). This relatively elaborate economy has grown just out of the few years and undoubtedly possess the ability to flourish under the right circumstances. However, the logistical situation of the informal economy prevents shops and services to grow beyond their means. Kimmelman further explains, “This is all black market. Smugglers traffic in camp vouchers and goods, undermining legitimate Jordanian businesses, profiting criminal gangs in and out of the camp. An empty police station disappeared from near the camp entrance one night, its trailers repurposed as homes and shops two days later,” (Kimmelmann). While the camp still largely logistically operates as a temporary solution, the realities are increasingly permanent, and the rise of an informal economy is one of the responses to this permanent condition. If we begin to address the reality of this informal condition as a positive one, rather than an insular, negative spiral for camp officials, this economy can begin to operate within parameters that
allow refugees to develop their own markets and flourish based on the skills sets they already possess. This is the premise of another What Design Can Do proposal, titled *Eat & Meet*. The project, developed by a team of Canadian, French and Moroccan students, describes, “The project turns renovated city buses into food trucks where refugees can cook and sell food from their culinary tradition, with proceeds going to the workers as well as integration projects. A weekly recipe offered to customers is a pretext to evoke the culture, heritage and history of refugees. A ‘social space’ at the rear of the bus acts as meeting place, with the bus becoming a vehicle for branding, a landmark in the city that moves and connects people despite distances,” (whatdesigncando.com). While this proposal does not solve the underlying issue of the economy being both very limited and insular at the get-go, it does allow for a level of formalization that allows the UNHCR to plan, propose, and budget appropriately until the camp transitions away from the temporary camp typology and towards a permanent settlement.

A final grievance frequently communicated among camp officials is the lack of efficiency involved in shipping potable water into the camp, and shipping out grey and black water to be sanitized outside the camp. This issue unfortunately has again arisen out of the lack of concrete steps to transitioning the camp from a temporary situation to a state of infrastructural, architectural, economic, and social permanence. The realities that arise from this highly inefficient system is again outlined through Bahou’s narrative. He describes, “Water must be trucked into the region to supplement water available from the local aquifer. The Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), in partnership with The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), is the main water provider. In November 2013 the water consumption was 15.1 million liters daily. The majority of the camp’s residents used to access water through communal water tanks and taps. Camp residents often take components from public toilets such as water tanks, to their private households,” (Bahou). This system, though saving the host country from creating infrastructural permanence in the camp, has proven to be both extraordinarily ineffective both in terms of human time and resources, as well as monetary resources. Kimmelmann writes, “Installing a permanent municipal water system there would cost what the United Nations now spends every year trucking water to the camp, and it would be an investment in long-term development,” (Kimmelmann). The various options for this long-term development are innumerable. Not only is Zaatari located within proximity to several bodies of fresh water that could sustain a self-sufficient camp structure, it also has the option of connecting to Jordanian water lines stemming from permanent cities. However, this requires the fundamental acceptance of the relocation of refugees as a semi-permanent or permanent one, rather than a short-term band aid.
These five major issues only scratch the surface of official grievances with respect to the refugee camp. Although many of them stem from the realities of refugee needs that evolve depending on the length of the crisis, it is important that like the various competition experts and scholars cited throughout the paper, these officials begin to reframe the situation as a semi-permanent or even permanent one in order to mitigate these problems. As we begin to accept the evolution of the refugee camp one as a condition that takes hold as a more permanent issue, we must begin to take more stock in not only the grievances of camp officials, but also the ideas and requests of the refugees themselves. One of the most profound and creative ways to become involved in mitigating this situation is reporting refugee stories and responding to them in specialized intellectual discourses that can allow those ideas to grow and succeed in practical circumstances. In this next section, we will begin to examine some of the refugee grievances that have been reported over the years, and instances where students, intellectuals and creative professionals have begun to engage these suggestions in very profound and meaningful ways on a public platform.

REFUGEE GRIEVANCES

Refugees spend days, sometimes weeks waiting to be transported to refugee camps, the wait in such dire conditions being described by some as nothing short of torturous; However, despite the opportunity to leave Aleppo, the conditions at Zaatari are so troubling that even refugees themselves cite issues making them want to return home as soon as possible. While many issues that have stemmed from refugee-specific complaints have begun to be addressed due to the need for logistical up-keep and maintenance of the camp, the increasing permanence of the camp has prompted refugees to call for changes and additional amenities that are not necessarily vital to keeping its inhabitants alive, but for keeping the camp’s economic and social vitality alive as the population ages and grows. Some of the issues in particular that are important to address on a larger scale is the lack of real estate for gardening and eventual self-sufficiency, the large portion of school-aged children unable to attend schools, and the lack of legal opportunity to generate income for families using skilled labor.

The majority of Syrians coming to refugee camps, notably Zaatari, are skilled in farming and cooking; therefore, the yearning of these refugees to deploy these skills in a way that would prove self-sufficient to for their families and the Zaatari settlement is both understandable and arguably desirable as a long-term solution for these displaced people. However, the current grid layout in Zaatari profoundly restricts the extent to which even small-scale gardens, let alone farms, can develop in any significant scale. However, what gardening is able to occur on a small scale at Zaatari has been met with
unexpected positive impacts on the communities that take advantage of these projects. Mohammad Abu Farah supervises one of these projects, teaching children at the youth center to garden. He explains, “When the children arrived at the camp, they had just come from a violent war. A lot of the children were introverted and struggled to make friends. They were violent with one another. But after we started implementing gardening classes, the children learned to work in a team, and started to build friendships,” (WFPUSA.org). Some older refugees are able to offer a more personal insight into why gardening is so crucial to their families. Mazen, father of seven children, was a car mechanic in Syria and owned a large house with a beautiful garden in his home city of Daraa. He quotes, “I’ve been gardening ever since I was little. My dad used to love gardening and I learned from him,” he says. “I used to come back from work tired and exhausted, and see the desert all around me. I wanted to create a space that made me one step closer to home. Even the smell of air is different when there are plants around,” (WFPUSA.org). Gardening in this case is not only used as an important resource for sustainable living, but also for healing a family suffering enormous traumas after being uprooted from their comfortable life in Syria. Adham, a younger gentleman, speaks more to the therapeutic nature of gardening in Zaatari. He explains, “I miss my old life a lot. I cannot forget it,” says Adham, 41, who fled to Jordan with his wife and four children after he was shot three times. “Every time we think about it a little bit, we cry. Plants are for the soul. When you’re sitting in the garden, you feel like there are beings around you, and when plants bloom from the ground where there are no plants you feel like you’ve done something. When we see the green colors, we remember Syria. Wherever you look, you see trees and rivers and general greenery in Syria,” (WFPUSA.org). Another narrative is offered by Abu Qasem, whose family fled from Syria after their farm was shelled and his daughters and son were injured. He explains, perhaps most profoundly of all, “When I’m gardening, I’m keeping myself occupied so that I don’t get to feel frustrated or angry. Your psychology changes when you work with plants,” he says. “This garden is an expression of love between one another. Green is good. The smell is wonderful. It’s also good because it captures the dust in this desert. It locks up the heat and makes this place a bit cooler and humid,” (WFPUSA.org). This story provides an interesting intermingling of objectives being realized by tending to even just the sliver of landscape that refugees are allotted in Zaatari. The benefits of providing a sustainable city with the capability of farming resources on the inhabitant’s own behalf is full of promise; however, the opportunity to farm or garden is also reminiscent of home, providing a psychological therapy for a group of displaced people in dire need of support, as well as an opportunity to create and nourish part of the ground as their own, effectively establishing a semblance of a home away from home. The desire to farm and garden is no longer simply a luxury: it is a necessity for the long
term survival and eminent permanence of the city, providing a space that effectively facilitates health, recovery, prosperity and a means for building community relationships.

Approximately six out of every ten inhabitants in Zaatari are school-aged children, and while a temporary gap in education seems like a reasonable solution for families temporarily relocated to avoid bloody conflict, the 30% of children who are not able to attend school (the majority of which being female refugees) are becoming an increasingly critical issue to address in the context of semi-permanence. Bill Van Esveld, senior researcher in the Children’s Rights Division at Human Rights Watch, has written an in-depth report on the issue of education in Zaatari, as well as the various barriers preventing higher enrollment numbers. Despite increased efforts, both financial and volunteer-based, Jordan has been unable to enroll more Syrian children in schools and keep them in the educational system. One of the issues that Van Esveld cites is a problematic registration policy, requiring that school-aged children obtain identification, or “service cards” in order to enroll in public schools. He describes, “Such cards are virtually unobtainable for tens of thousands of Syrians who left refugee camps without first being “bailed out” of the camps by a guarantor—a Jordanian citizen, a first-degree relative, and older than 35—after July 2014, when a new policy was introduced. Since February 2015, Jordan has also required that all Syrians obtain new service cards, although schools have allowed children to enroll with older cards. As of April 2016, about 200,000 Syrians outside refugee camps still did not have the new cards, and humanitarian agencies estimate tens of thousands of them may be ineligible to apply,” (Van Esveld). While the rule of law in this case is unusually restricting and in itself needs to be revised to support the inclusivity for refugees without the logistical means of obtaining these cards for their children, it might again be worth exploring how to management of this type of data might be integrated into new and emerging technologies, including IrisGuard, in order to streamline record keeping and data processing on behalf of Syrians unable to obtain or ineligible to apply. Other issues the author cites are the certification and documentary requirements creating additional barriers for enrollment for older children, who already suffer from a steep drop-off in enrollment rates relative to their younger peers. Van Esveld describes, “Requirements of some school directors that children show official Syrian school certificates proving they completed the previous grade are impossible for many families that fled fighting in Syria without bringing originals. Up to 40 percent of Syrian refugee children in Jordan lack birth certificates, which are required to obtain service cards. Lack of birth certificates will pose a barrier to enrollment to increasing numbers of children as they reach school age,” (Van Esveld). In this case, again, the need for a birth certificate to register for classes in a situation where the majority of Syrian refugees would not have access to this type of documentation is inherently problematic; however, this is
another case of where camp officials would be able to use a consolidated platform of integrated technology (such as the Welcome Card proposal) in order to access data regarding age and nationality for classroom placement. Another threatening obstacle is the ability to afford the cost of attending public school education. Van Esveld describes that while Jordan has made public school free to Syrian refugees, many Syrian parents cannot afford school related costs, such as transportation (there are no public school buses in Jordan). The author writes, “A 2015 UN assessment found that 97 percent of school-aged Syrian children are at risk of non-attendance because of their families’ financial hardship. Nearly 90 percent of Syrian refugees live below the Jordanian poverty line of $95 per person per month; none of the families that Human Rights Watch interviewed earned that much.[1] Most Syrians are in debt to their landlords, and rents have increased threefold or more in some communities, according to NGOs; Jordanians have also been affected and some have been evicted by landlords seeking higher rents,” (Van Esveld). While the cost of education in Jordanian schools have been covered for refugees, the fundamental ability to take advantage of this amenity has not been supplied, and would be easily mediated through busing programs run by the refugees themselves, as an opportunity to create income for their families and simultaneously send their children to school tuition-free. However, in many cases, the need for an additional income is fundamentally vital to supporting large families with limited ability to earn living wages. In many cases, the burden of the differential between debts and income falls on school-aged refugee children. Human Rights Watch reports, “Increasingly in debt, lacking adequate humanitarian support, and at risk of arrest for working, around 60 percent of Syrian families in host communities rely on money earned by children, who consequently drop out of school to work. Very few re-enroll. Several families interviewed for this report said that income earned by their children went towards school transportation for siblings, or medical treatment for sick relatives,” (Van Esveld). Of course, the root of this issue is an economic one- there are simply not enough donations coming into Zaatari to support the cost of extended families with a large number of children or elderly relatives. However, understanding the roots of these economic straights again cycles back to the paradoxical nature of treating a semi-permanent, arguably increasingly permanent issue as a temporary one; rather than providing temporary assistance which relies almost exclusively on external donations, we can begin to test the various methods through which Zaatari can begin to function as a hierarchical, developing economy. Rather than poorly attempting to constrain the economy by only legally allowing income to come from low wage maintenance jobs, the economy can begin to diversify and allow large families to capitalize on their skills by employing chefs, electricians, mechanics and professional educators in camp facilities. These higher wage jobs would allow children of large families to focus on studies, rather than
covering the costs of extended family living arrangements. On this subject, Van Esveld further elaborates on how Zaatari might be able to capitalize on professional educators. He argues that qualified Syrian teachers who fled to Jordan represent an untapped resource: they could lower student-teacher ratios and help Syrian students cope with shared traumatic experiences. The author reports, “Jordan has allowed around 200 Syrian refugees to act as “assistants” in overcrowded classes in schools in the refugee camps, but not host communities; non-citizens are banned from teaching in public schools and from registering with the Teachers’ Association. Turkey, by contrast, permits thousands of Syrian teachers to work at fully-accredited education centers that teach a modified version of the Syrian curriculum, in addition to allowing Syrian children to enroll in regular Turkish public schools,” (Van Esveld). This narrative speaking to the value of professional educators again reveals an interesting dilemma: While teachers provide support for students academically as their first priority, many of them have the opportunity to also become equipped to communicate with students to teach Syrian children who show clear signs of trauma - a difficult, but important issue in helping students not only heal, but grow during their time in refugee schools where many students face many of the similar difficult circumstances as their peers. The author describes, “A growing number of Syrian children receive psychosocial support, but others who need help drop out of school. One boy’s mother said his personality changed during the conflict after his cousin was killed in an attack and the boy retrieved his head, and he no longer wanted to go to school in Jordan. Refugee families as well as Jordanian teachers complained of unmotivated teachers and overcrowded classrooms with up to 50 children, particularly in Zaatari camp,” (Van Esveld). By integrating these two pathways, Syrian refugees trained as educators or psychologists can begin to merge their expertise in a uniquely meaningful discourse. In this case, again, the issues and solution present themselves as remarkably linear and clear; however, we must begin treating the issues as both permanent and consequential in order for these types of intellectual initiatives to take hold. The values of restoring and bettering the state of Syrian refugee education are both significant and universal: an quality education reduces the risks of early marriage and military recruitment of children, stabilizing economic futures by increasing earning potential, and ensuring that today’s young Syrians will be better equipped to confront their uncertain futures. However, the answer to these issues are relatively straightforward. The key to accessing these answers is by framing the issues as permanent conditions, rather than temporary ones, and tapping into intellectual discourses of permanent solutions rather than short term financial fixes.

Finally, while there are non-skilled jobs in maintenance and sanitation available to able-bodied refugees for those who wish to earn an additional stipend for their families, the majority of adult
inhabitants are in fact highly skilled and have no legal means of capitalizing on those skills. While the
informality of the black market economy allows refugees ultimate flexibility for running their illegal
businesses, without having to conform to frameworks established by camp officials. However, this also
provides avenues for negative and potentially dangerous activities to take place to the detriment of
hardworking residents attempting to make a living. BBC contributor Johnson explains, “Since the camp
opened last year, there has been black market activity, with rival gangs attempting to control the illicit
sale of aid goods and the siphoning off of camp electricity supplies,” (Johnson). While most refugees
attempt to take advantage of what little resources they have, including very limited access to electricity,
by wiring illegal connections to public connections, this also provides gangs a means of control and
establishing social hierarchies that can operate negatively on Zaatari without frameworks to prevent this
type of exploitation. Johnson explains that the permanence of the political situation in Syria calls for a
more serious, long-term solution to the black market operations in Zaatari’s insular economic state. She
writes, “...Mr Kleinschmidt explains that as the war drags on in Syria, a sense of permanence is taking
hold in the camp. "The sad sense of reality has come in, that residents are here to stay," said Mr
Kleinschmidt. "Homes are being built with cement floors and water; toilets, showers and kitchens are
being added,” (Johnson). Kleinschmidt, the established “mayor” of the informal Zaatari city, is not at a
loss for negotiating tactics with refugees in dire straits and transitioning the camp into a state of more
permanent settlement. In order to explain this, he presents several case studies, one of which again
elaborating on the need for illegal businesses to hook up to the public electric infrastructure during the
day as well as after-hours, taking advantage of crucial resources, causing the camp to run up additional
utility costs it has not compensated for. His solution is logical, “So how does he intend to tackle the
camp's burgeoning black market? "We are saying, brothers, maybe now is the time you pay for
electricity because I checked with a few of my friends who are grilling and roasting chickens. One of
them told me he's selling a hundred chickens a day. So roughly he makes a $2 profit on one chicken. So
easily he makes $200 profit a day. So am I going to cut him off? No. But I'm going to tell him I will supply
him with the electricity but he will pay,” (Johnson). However, the informal blackmarket that has grown
out of Zaatari is not limited to unskilled labor; its residents have begun capitalizing on goods and skills of
ture value to the diasporic community, providing both a taste of home and positive permanence that
the camp is headed towards. Ott, reporter for Al Jazeera, reports, “Refugees sell vegetables, kebabs,
homemade ice cream, mobile phones, bridal gowns and perfumes in small shacks. "This spirit of
entrepreneurialism shows their resilience as they are facing an uncertain future," said Touaibia of the
flourishing markets. Zaatari is home to about 2,500 unauthorised shops, and according to the UNHCR,
the camp’s economy generates about 10 million Jordanian dinars ($14.2m) a month,” (Ott). It is abundantly clear that under the right frameworks, Zaatari’s economy is truly in a position to not only grow, but flourish; however, its residents must be acknowledged as what they are: permanent pilgrims, rather than temporary visitors. Solutions here again lie in an intellectual discourse for transitioning to permanent economic growth for a prosperous future.

These major issues, again, only begin to speak to the depths of the issues refugees are facing in Zaatari. These lacking amenities, though arguably not categorized as bare essentials for life in a situation facing refugees not to exceed during one, two or a maximum of three years in their displacement, have become integral as narratives become increasingly rooted in Zaatari’s state of permanence. In many of these situations, the solutions begin to emerge once we begin to reframe the condition from a temporary one to a permanent one. By doing so, discourses offering solutions become more interdisciplinary, profound and imperative; the solution is no longer a band-aid, but a device that will continue to function for years after the Syrian Civil War comes to a close.

PT 2: OFFERING SOLUTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE SETTLEMENTS
INTRODUCTION TO THE ISIS-FREE ZONE PROPOSAL

The creation of an ISIS Free Zone in Northern Aleppo, though sparsely covered in western media, creates a unique opportunity for residents returning to Aleppo and neighboring Syrian cities to take shelter in their native land during their transition towards post-war rehabilitation. Though public political discourse regarding the proposed move to push the Islamic State out of northern Aleppo have quieted since its burst of coverage in November 2015, when the military objective was first announced, the idea clearly remains in prominent politician’s minds. Though President Trump has not discussed at-length, nor yet proposed any concrete initiatives to bring a close to the carnage we are witnessing in Aleppo today, Vice President Pence has made clear that a humanitarian initiative to clear safe zones near the Turkish border must be a priority for American foreign policy with respect to Syria. In covering the Vice Presidential debate of late 2017, Vice President Pence notably took a notably compassionate twist in contrast to his hardline approach to Russian involvement. The Washington Post reports, “Asked how a Trump-Pence administration would stop the civil war carnage in Aleppo, Pence said that he, at least, ‘truly believes that what America ought to do right now is immediately establish safe zones, so that families and children can work out of those areas,’ and ‘work with our partners...[to] make that happen/ Provocations by Russia need to be met with American strength,” (DeYoung). While President Trump’s position on the issue is unclear as he has not responded directly to the remarks regarding these
safe zones, the Turkish government has already begun taking an active role in supporting such an endeavor through political, militaristic and humanitarian means. There is no doubt that Turkey’s increased involvement in the region will add to an increasingly complicated puzzle of actors, and even set up potential conflicts with US-backed Krudish forces. However, United States officials have ensured greater security and stability in the Turkish border region, and Turkish warplanes have already begun strategically striking militant targets of Syria. Turkey has also called a meeting of its NATO allies to discuss threats of security and airstrikes. Haaretz reports, “In a series of cross border strikes since Friday, Turkey has not only targeted the ISIS but also Kurdish fighters affiliated with forces battling the extremists in Syria and Iraq. The Syrian Kurds are among the most effective ground forces battling the ISIS and been aided by US-led airstrikes, but Turkey fears they could revive an insurgency against Ankara in pursuit of an independent state,” (Associated Press). While the political realities of setting up an ISIS-free zone in northern Aleppo are both complex and multifaceted, the realization of a small community of women, children and disabled peoples is latent with potential for beginning the rehabilitation process before war is over.

One of the sites within the ISIS Free Zone that holds the greatest potential for thriving is the small city of Jarabulus, whose pre-war population was estimated at 40,000 people, amounting in just short of half the number of residents currently overwhelming Zaatari. The landscape is brimming with opportunity to absorb this new architectural typology. Jarabulus is located in the most fertile area of Syria, directly adjacent to where the Euphrates river enters the country over the Turkish border. Just south of this, in the greater Jarabulus District, we also find access to Lake Assad and several fresh water bodies that are conducive to the Syrian tradition of self-sustainable farming practices on an extended family or tribal basis. With the majority of Syria characterized as an infertile, arid desert, it is rather remarkable not only how well the cities along the Euphrates have been preserved since their conception under early Ottoman rule, but perhaps even more so that the area has not undergone very significant urban development since this time. For the answer to this puzzle, we may look at Warwick Ball’s typology of the “Dead Cities of the North,” a term used to describe the typology of rural developments abandoned shortly after their preliminary conceptions. The wealth of Ball’s rich historical narratives give non-experts some idea of the architectural imagery one encounters when visiting the dead cities. He writes, “They are mostly Byzantine in date, but are often as representative of Roman countryside architecture as they are of Byzantine since the basic architectural forms did not change much, Indeed, few other areas in the Roman world evoke the life of the Roman provinces as well as the Dead Cities do,” (Ball, 142). Although this description begins to paint a rather bleak picture of an abandoned gem,
the author describes that the sites, still brimming with heritage, are still often sites of interest to Syrians and historians alike. “The area just to the west and northwest of Aleppo is the most visited of the Dead Cities, partly because it is the group nearest to Aleppo, but mainly because it includes the great monastery-church of St Simeon Stylites (Qal’at Sema’an) and its associated pilgrimate town of Deir Sema’an, which together make up the most spectacular of all the dead cities,” (Ball, 144). As the narratives of the cities grow further north towards the Turkish boarder, we begin to comprehend the cultural nature of these dead city cites, still entrenched in their rural farming heritage. “The next concentration of dead cities comprises another hilly massif, the Jebel Zawiyeh or Jebel Riha, bordering the eastern side of Ghab to the southwest of Aleppo. Historically, it comprises the line of agriculture based settlements between Antioch and Apamea. It is as rich in remains as the other areas, and is generally slightly earlier in date,” (Ball, 152). Arguably the most informative-and moving- narratives is the description of Serjilla, where one can truly step into the historical neighborhoods, industries, farmlands, and cultural centers while beginning to hint at an advanced hierarchical social structure that was reciprocated heavily in its city planning. The author brilliantly articulates, “At Serjilla one can see virtually the full layout of a modest but prosperous country town of the Late Roman and Early Byzantine period in its entirety: here are the farmhouses with the labourers’ cottages, stables and farm buildings nearby; there is the parish church and the village shops; in the central square is the town pub-looking remarkably like an Australian outback pub with its two-storyed verandah- and behind it the public baths; up the hill is the manor house with its olive presses. It all seems so remarkably peaceful and rural, so ordinary and everyday-as indeed it must have been (Ball, 154-155). This imagery gives us a glimpse into the character Jarabulus may have once embodied, and the cultural stamina it may continue to embody after its temporary seizure by the Islamic State. In addition to rendering the beauty of what we haveto imagine must characterize many of the “dead” farming villages of Northern Aleppo, the author notably points out the uniquely fortified nature of the Syrian-Turkish boarder where the Euphrates crosses. Ball describes, “The upper reaches of the Euphrates, between the Turkish border and the great bend where it turns eastward at Meskine, are dominated by an immense fortress, Qal’at an-Najm, a few miles to the south of the main road between Aleppo and Qamishle. Qal’at an-Najm Is one of the most impressive fortresses in Syria, dramatically situated on top of the escarpment overlooking the right bank of the river. It originally guarded a bridge, now gone, built in the Umayyad period that crossed the Euphrates at this point. Most of the castle, however, dates from the 12th and 13th centuries, and it is still marvelously intact today,” (Ball, 160). Though these narratives are largely expository in nature, they begin to frame an understanding of the cultural, economic and social impact that the survival of Jarabulus has had on
the potential for reviving “Dead Cities” or generating new settlements in Northern Aleppo to absorb incoming refugees that have been displaced from destroyed homes and cities in central Aleppo.

Despite the death of many of these remarkable cities along the Euphrates, largely due to technological and financial limitations at the time of their establishment, Jarabulus has taken advantage of its geographical condition just south of Turkey in times of crisis, and sustained as one of the most successful case studies to be developed as a possible satellite city for refugees fleeing destruction in Aleppo. The existing economy and infrastructure is worth examining in this regard, as the site owes a great deal of its success to the abundant available resources and help from their northern neighbors. Suraj Sharma, writer for the Middle East Eye, reports on the recent initiative lead by Karkamalis to get Jarabulus back to functioning after being held for the Islamic State for an extended period. One of the greatest causes of suffering for the people of Jarabulus has been the Islamic State’s destruction of electric infrastructure. Sharma, writer for the Middle East Eye, reports, “Turkey has begun laying an underground power cable to supply the Syrian town of Jarabulus with electricity before the commencement of the Muslim Eid al-Adha holiday. Turkey’s energy ministry confirmed that work was under way on a 3km cable running from Karakamis in Turkey’s Gaziantep province to Jarabulus. It said a 2km stretch of the cable would be on Syrian territory and the rest in Turkey,” (Sharma). The power cable, though in and of itself an enormous gesture critical to the survival of Jarabulus, is part of a larger scheme of Turkish aid proposals with respect to the city of Jarabulus. Sharma further elaborates on what is perhaps the even more costly endeavor of providing potable water. “The electricity will be provided free of charge as part of the Turkish government’s humanitarian relief efforts, according to an official, who requested his name be withheld for procedural reasons. The plan also involved the provision of portable water to Jarabulus, supplied by the Gaziantep municipality. Turkey used to provide sections of northern Syria with electricity until October 2012 under a deal with Bashar al-Assad's government in Damascus,” (Sharma). While lauding these initiatives for the short-term survival of Jarabulus during its reconstruction after seizure by the Islamic State, we must also consider that the city operated for several thousands of years without potable water or electricity; after all, just a few miles away the Tishrin hydroelectric dam has supplied both water and electricity to this agricultural hub, and several of its satellite communities. Despite its promise, Tishrin-like the majority of dams across Syria- is incredibly archaic, succumbing to the heaviness of the natural sediment in the Euphrates. Likewise, what water-sediment mixture is directed towards farms is largely too heavy to be carried by aging canals and pipes. The resulting effect is that the water-sediment mixture, though incredibly useful to farmers, is largely inaccessible due to lacking appropriate infrastructures for transporting this mixture and effectively
irrigating the land. Turkey is supplying Jarabulus with potable water and electricity to Syrians in need; however, in equal significance, it is buying Syria and the international community time to develop a permanent solution that either updates or replaces the failed existing infrastructures.

Despite its direct geographic access to the most fertile river in the world, Syria has suffered crippling droughts and water shortages, with its citizens demanding more resources than existing water infrastructures can supply. The immensely complex situation of calls for agricultural self-reliance, despite being an epicenter for damaging water politics to its northern and southern boarders, has prompted the creation of the Ministry of Irrigation. This committee is responsible for the planning, design and management of dams and public irrigation systems that cover approximately 400,000 ha. Despite the conception of this branch, its limited size may be biting off more than it can chew. Consuelo Varela-Ortega and Juan A. Sagardoy, authors of “Irrigation Water Policies in Syria: Current Developments and Future Options” study the scale of the problem in enormous analytical depth. The authors describe, “There are also numerous small- and medium-size irrigation networks which operate with waters coming from rivers or springs and which are managed by cooperatives. In these irrigation systems, land holdings tend to be very small and the cooperative is responsible for providing a large number of services to their associates, such as the maintenance of the irrigation system, the distribution of water, the provision of inputs and the sale of produce,” (Valera-Ortega). Despite the varying scales of organizational irrigation networks, they all generally stem from controlled points in the same canal, managed by persons or associations to perform a variety of tasks to keep the system fair and functional. The authors further describe, “Water distribution is normally organized by groups of farmers who receive water from the same canal. The water in the main canal and pumping station is managed by a hired person or sometimes by the leaders of the cooperative. Water in the lateral canals is generally distributed on an established rotation,” (Varela-Ortega). In addition to a rich cultural history of self-sufficient farming, in recent years Assad has called for the development of a number of irrigation systems to further reduce dependence on imported goods as the country’s stability seems to unravel exponentially. Today, the total amount of land irrigated by wells has grown to 715,509 ha, of which 44% are in Al Hassakeh (Khabour basin). Khabour basin, located in Northeastern Syria, is placed at the mouth of the Euphrates as it disseminates into several tributaries leading across the Turkish border in the greater Jarabulus area. The wells not only provide irrigating resources, but also act as energy sources for the surrounding villages. “About three-quarters of the wells use fuel as primary energy and only the remaining quarter use electricity. Well depth and discharge rates are quite variable. In groundwater areas most of the wells are private and water is used on the farm of the owner of the well, and
sometimes it includes those plots of farmers located nearby. According to field survey's data, farmers who have excess water capacity in their wells sell some of the extra water to neighbours,” (Valera-Ortega). Despite the natural fertility of the area, aging infrastructures and water politics of the region have caused farmers to run for years on a water deficit. Groundwater is especially vulnerable, with the development of unsanctioned wells in these areas stripping the land of more than it can naturally sustain. The most intriguing critique offered by Varela-Ortega and Juan A. Sagardoy is the interest in testing various solutions for water management in Syria based on empirical data. The two authors speak to the enormous gravity of the problem in their study when stating, “Considering the severe water scarcity in Syria, the adoption of modern irrigation techniques is crucial for the country’s development of irrigated agriculture. In fact, the related authorities such as the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Irrigation are actively encouraging irrigation modernization policies,” (Varela-Ortega). However, they also test the adoption of modern technologies in their statistical models. “According to the statistics available average water use in irrigation is 12 434 m3/ha and the adoption of modern technologies should reduce it to 8 000 m3/ha. The area equipped with modern irrigation techniques in year 2000 was 126 719 ha, of which 88 percent was under sprinkler irrigation and 12 percent under drip irrigation. Most of these techniques (95 percent) were installed in areas irrigated by wells. The rate of adoption of modern irrigation techniques from 1999 to 2000 was 37 686 ha as compared to 19 641 ha for the period 1998-1999. However, interviews with manufacturers of irrigation equipment indicated that they are operating below installed capacity. Quality control does not take place systematically and prices of irrigation equipment at present are comparable to international prices, and their imports are liberalized,” (Varela-Ortega). Of course, the deployment of these new technologies must act in tandem with water policy reform in Syria in order to control water expenditure during this transition. The authors speak a bit to this matter as well. “In the last years, the Government of Syria has enacted a considerable amount of legal regulations and decrees that relate to irrigation water. This active legislation development evidences the importance that water resources have for the Syrian economy. From 1999 to 2001, the legal framework that affects irrigation water has been thoroughly modified and strict measures have been taken into action,” (Valera-Ortega). The co-authors offer a number of hybrid technical-political solutions, though in order to take advantages of these alternatives, the problem must be faced as permanent one, and one that can continue to service communities even after refugees have permanently resettled after the war.
CONCLUSION: WHAT IS MISSING TO FACILITATE LONG-TERM STABILITY?

Keeping these various issues and proposed solutions in mind, Jarabulus as a site for long-term refugee rehabilitation is brimming with potential. The key to providing viable solutions to an increasingly grim reality for refugee communities is to begin engaging in an intellectual discourse that not only services refugees as short-term displaced peoples today, but the permanently relocated individuals who do not have the option of going back to inner-city Aleppo after such brutal assaults on its urban fabric. Donations to refugee camps, though absolutely commendable, to many westerners feels like throwing pennies in at a vacuum. The problem feels too large and too dire at which to throw small donations- and in a sense, this rings true, because the problem has evolved to a state at which our solutions no longer work for long-term relief. At its surface, this reality is incredibly, painfully, disheartening. However, if we reframe our efforts and feed our intellectual curiosity to mediate this issue for what it is – a permanent state of large-scale diaspora- the global community can begin to contribute to the solution in far more profound and rewarding ways. Students, intellectuals, professionals and creative minds alike have begun engaging this idea of permanence through independent projects, competitions, product designs and planning as a way to contribute resources to refugees that are arguably bigger than any monetary donation or volunteered time can offer: the intellectual curiosity and motivation to begin to plan serious, humane solutions to the unbearable conditions Syrian refugees suffer today.

The purpose of this paper is to show if we begin to capitalize on data and ideas already overflowing the internet, social media and our own minds, we can develop hybrid solutions that not only fix a single issue from a single perspective, but effectively create a unilateral, multifaceted proposal for long term stability. What is missing is the willingness to call this issue what it is.

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