

# Refugee Camp: from temporary settlement to enduring form of human habitat

## Summary

Refugee camps have often been related to encampments, being regarded as temporary settlements with basic infrastructure; however, the protracted situation of refugees, as evidenced in the past decades, is turning those settlements into enduring human habitats with attributes of urban realms. Furthermore, the lack of alternative settlement for refugees is contributing to their irreversible consolidation.

The referred situation has called the attention of scholars, such as Agamben (1998) and Agier (2014) who emphasized the importance of refugee camps and their role as an integral part of human society, and the frontrunner for human habitat development. Other authors have proposed new definitions to camps, such as transition settlements (Corsellis and Vittalle 2005), political agencies (Herz 2013), places of opportunity (Turner 2015), and humanitarian urbanism (Jansen 2016), arguing that they are 'like cities'.

Despite of the noted interest and proposed definitions, refugee camps are still misconstrued as temporary settlements. This assertion is substantiated by the transient connotation in which their planning and management are still based.

This study focuses on the progression of the physical parameters and morphological features of refugee camps. Its goal is to provide relevant information to the humanitarian community through the holistic conceptualization of this type of settlement, distinguishing it from other forms of human habitat.

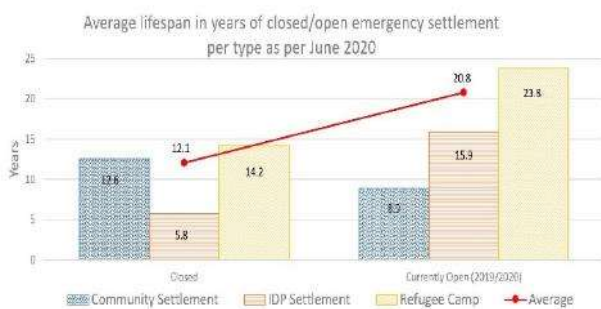
The information revealed can contribute to the development and implementation of policies and strategies used in the establishment and management of those settlements, based on their unique features, rather than general attributes. The study also offers a framework to identify which settlements should be supported as enduring habitats whilst they exist, and which should be considered unsustainable in the long run.

Ultimately, the research aims to demonstrate the value of refugee camps as a feasible, though partial, alternative to the problem of mass migration.

This thesis is divided in four main parts. The first part outlines the research proposal. The second part provides the basis for the study through the exploration of the state-of-the-art. The third part covers empirical and analytical investigations on the object of study. The fourth and final part summarizes and discusses the results of the research.

## Keywords

Refugee camp, human habitat, emergency settlement, Informal settlement, spatial morphology, spatial transformation, urbanisation process, population growth and habitat.



Average lifespan of emergency settlements, 2021.



Aerial view of Kakuma camp, 2020.



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