Living on the move, dwelling between temporality and permanence in Syria

Although the international displacement of people caused by the Syrian conflict has dominated the media for the past several years, an inside story that is less visible requires more attention: that of internal displacement. More than half of the population of Syria has been forced to flee their houses. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in December 2017 accounted for more than six and a half million, more than a third of the total of population of Syria in 2011 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2012. http://www.internal-displacement.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria/). Displaced Syrians have experienced constraints in getting adequate housing for the short- and mid-term inside and outside the country. However, internal displacement, in particular, adds a dimension to the complex notion of mass sheltering. Sheltering policies, or lack thereof, as well as the shelter itself as a design and construction product all express the power of those who govern more than the aspirations of those who inhabit. Affected groups find solutions by themselves, via national or international organisations, or a combination of both. However, such solutions function under the influence of authorities controlling the area in which IDPs are received. Among the alternatives available to displaced communities, this paper reviews two cases of internally displaced families in Syria: a collective centre in government-controlled Damascus (schools) and a planned camp in Afes village in a rebel-held area near Idlib.