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From Exclusion to Inhabitation: Response to Gray, Benjamin. Citizenship as Barrier and Opportunity for Ancient Greek and Modern Refugees. *Humanities*, 2018, *7*, 72

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Abstract: Spaces of refuge represent the paradoxical encounters between a series of governmental forces, disciplinary knowledge, aesthetic regimes and spatial conditions that tend to arrest, fix in time and space forms of lives. Considering the fact that camps are meant to be the materialisation of a temporal status, spatial and political, the proposition posed by Benjamin Gray's *Citizenship as Barrier and Opportunity for Ancient Greek and Modern Refugees,* to look at "citizenship-in-exile" practices in ancient Greece and their forms of "improvised quasi-civic communities", is welcome as it is refreshing. This short response engages with Gray's text, addressing two different but interconnected points: in one respect, I hope to rescue Agamben's work from its linear reading by commenting on the depoliticization of the camp and the critique of its exceptionalism; and, in another, I wish to provoke reflection around the universalising claim of hospitality and full assimilation, by introducing the disruptive terminology of inhabitation. This critical insertion aims to redefine an ethical relationship with the space, as a space of and for life, that Agamben sees as the basis for a new ethics, reversing its status as a productive and active force where the camp, in its paradigmatic reading, and the form of life it generates, helps to think beside the exceptional and move to inhabit such indistinctions.

Keywords: Agamben; Camp; Inhabitation; form-of-life

Spaces of refuge, shelter practices or camps, however you wish to define them, semantically represent the paradoxical encounters between a series of governmental forces, disciplinary knowledge, aesthetic regimes and spatial conditions that tend to arrest, fix in time and space forms of lives. As a simple starting point, the camp remains a rare object of study that can exist, simultaneously, in the realm of theory, in the space of materialisation and in the form of multiple agency. It is an ideological thought and a formal dispositive, one that antagonises the spatial precepts of modernism through its heavily loaded political semantics. Considering the fact that camps are meant to be the materialisation of a temporal status, spatial and political—a bare architecture justified by humanitarian intent and technocratic design to contain and control populations and offer convenient humanitarian management (Weima and Hyndman 2019)—the reflection posed by Benjamin Gray's piece to look at "citizenship-in-exile" practices in ancient Greece and their forms of "improvised quasi-civic communities" is welcome as a refreshing and critical look into refugeeness as a "depoliticised identity as human beings in need" (Gray 2018, p. 8). We know well that, paradoxically, camps are transcending their exceptional temporality, creating "the condition for its transformation: from a pure humanitarian space to an active political space, the embodiment and the expression of the right of return" (Petti 2015). As noted again by Petti in one of the Catalyst pieces of this Special Issue, "the perpetuation of legal exceptionality in Dheisheh camp has created a unique urban condition. The camp is not ephemeral, but it is not a city either. Refugees forced to live in this suspended condition have developed distinctive systems of civic management outside of state and municipal institutions. The camp exists in a limbo

where fundamental juridical categories such as public and private do not and cannot exist [. . .] This has led to the development of an exceptional form of life in common: *al masha*" (Petti 2017, p. 3).

Therefore, the camp becomes a political fact in space and in time. In the short space available, I would like to stress two different but interconnected points: on one side, I hope to rescue Agamben's work from its linear reading by commenting on the depoliticization of the camp and the critique of its exceptionalism; and, on the other, I wish to provoke reflection around the universalising claim of hospitality and full assimilation, by introducing the disruptive terminology of inhabitation. These two points aim to support Gray's claim that a "a more complex and open-ended understanding of citizenship [. . .] in the ancient Greek case, open[s] a rich variety of opportunities for political interaction and agency on the part of both the displaced and their hosts" (Gray 2018, p. 16) and his emphasis on the need to think about new contemporary forms of 'poleis-in-exile', respectively.

The Camp as Hyper-Political Paradigm Rather Than a Depoliticised Exception

Although frequently repeated, and often contested in its depoliticization and exceptionality, Agamben's suggestion that the camp is the *nomos* of our times remains a powerful idea. Not only as it stands for the ubiquity of camps as a preferred matrix to signify the space of refuge existing in parallel relationships of state violence and migration containments (Weima and Hyndman 2019), but also as an original component of a wide-ranging disciplinary technology of governance (biopolitical or thanatopolitical) that controls and contains populations and life (Turner 2005; Weima and Hyndman 2019). Agamben's work on exception, while rightly criticised by Gray in its "uncompromising rejection of the whole tradition of Greek or Greek-inspired citizenship, [which] neglects the fact that Greek citizenship ideals and practices were double-edged [. . .] rather than straightforwardly oppressive, since (they) could (themselves) be a resource for outsiders" (Gray 2018, p. 15), might require further reflection, extending it to the notion of 'paradigm' and of 'whatever' – two fundamental concepts in the affirmative political ontology of the Italian philosopher. Gray's argument, claiming that "a more complex and open-ended understanding of citizenship can, as in the ancient Greek case, open a rich variety of opportunities for political interaction and agency on the part of both the displaced and their hosts" (ibid., p. 15), is visible in a variety of studies on 'the geographies of camps' (Minca 2005) and on 'encampments' (Agier 2002, 2011, 2019). It is also recognisable in the Catalytic entries of Petti (2017), Maqusi (2017) and Dalal (2017) in this volume, that expose some form of agency in how displaced populations "developed their own political and cultural institutions and activities, seizing the opportunities of citizenship in order to overcome some of the barriers" (Gray 2018, p. 3). What I want to suggest here, building on Gray's brilliant reflection on "improvised quasi-civic community" (Gray 2018, p. 18), is that, in order to re-politicise the exclusionary paradigm, there is the need to expand Agamben's political ontology with a more complex and longitudinal appreciation of his political work and thinking, as in the ancient Greek *poleis*, of camp as a form of exception not fixed and constructed solely by exclusion. Instead, we should consider how the camp bends and folds into the city in a variety of different ways. The point here is that, rather than think of the camp and the city as a simple duality, we should direct our attention to the multiple forms of 'encampment' as spatial tactics of control and the creation of docile subjectivities, but also as a form of indistinction, whereby the subject becomes a 'whatever' in Agamben's terminology. This will allow us to grasp in all the "overall configurations, 'landscapes' networks, and mechanisms at the regional and global levels extending their interpretative framework from spaces of exclusion and exception to a more complex in between, liminal, and transitory spaces" (Agier 2019), and "productive political spaces where vital subjectivities" (Weima and Hyndman 2019, p. 33) are emerging. The camp and the city are not fixed in their specific categories but are rather in a "topological relationship" (Sanyal 2012, p. 468; Boano and Martén 2013).

Several authors (Agier 2002, 2011, 2019; Ramadan 2013; Sanyal 2012, 2014) have made it evident that that camp is not a depoliticised space but actually an extra-political one. Gray himself seems to acknowledge only a partial view of Agamben's exceptionalism, not agreeing that in the context of the

camp, politics itself is concerned with the apparently unpolitical—'bare life'—and its abandonment by the political community, the implications of which reach beyond the singular abjection of the camps. Agamben posits very directly, that "if this is true, if the essence of the camp consists in the materialization of the state of exception and in the subsequent creation of a space in which bare life and juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction, then we must admit that we find ourselves virtually in the presence of a camp every time such a structure is created, independent of the kinds of crime that are committed there and whatever its denomination and specific topography" (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 174).

The response that Agamben gave to such indistinction—that Gray sees in the "double edged Greek citizenship" (Gray 2018, p. 16), both its oppressive and emancipatory capacity—is a search for a new politics. The response he suggests, the counter-figure to this 'bare life', is not *zoē* or *bios*[1] but the two brought together in intimate, indistinguishable proximity, which he calls "form of-life [*forma-di-vita*] in which it is never possible to isolate something like bare life" (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 183). The concept of form-of-life is probably the central manifesto of Agamben's work (Kishik 2012; Boano 2017). In the essay that opens *Means Without Ends* (Agamben 2000), he foregrounds that "by the term form-of-life [. . .] I mean a life that can never be separated from its form, a life in which it is never possible to isolate something such as naked life" (pp. 3,4). This is a life, as Salzani reminds us, without a "biological vocation, not determined by whatever necessities" (Salzani 2013, p. 135), but a life "in which the single ways, acts and processes of living are never simply facts but always and above all possibilities of life, always and above all power" (Agamben 2000, pp. 3, 4). Conceived as pure potency, such a life is "for whom happiness is always at stake in their living, the only beings whose life is irremediably and painfully assigned to happiness" (Agamben 2000, pp. 3, 4), and thus eminently a political life. What seems to me very important to stress is that Gray discovers that in ancient Greece some "more flexible, mobile, and open to reinvention" (Gray 2018, p. 15) forms of citizenship, were—in Agamben's terminology—forms of life. Rather than tighten up citizenship into a positive aspect of the city and contrasting its exceptionality with the camp, Agamben had, in one sense, already suggested what Gray advocates, although not exactly in his words of "open-ended understanding of citizenship" (Gray 2018, p. 15). Agamben's extra political form-of-life cannot be given any attributes or qualities, existing in opposition to the biopolitical control of life. To give it attributes would be to isolate forms, splitting life from itself as one attempts to capture it.

Another important concept in Agamben's thought that ought to be considered is the notion of paradigm. Let's return for a moment to Agamben's epigrammatic statement made in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, "today it is not the city, but rather the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West" (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 181). Certainly, he does not mean returning to the specific historical moment that gave birth to the concentration camps. Rather, he thinks of a specific mode of production of territory, space and identity. The camp is for Agamben a paradigm at once embedded in a given historical situation and a tool for better understanding 'the present situation'. Agamben's goal "is to render intelligible a series of phenomena whose relationship to one another has escaped, or might escape, the historian's gaze" (ibid.). Therefore, a central gesture is to rescue such a political project and to understand the camp as an example, qua paradigm, thus making it "suspended" (Agamben 2010, p. 260) from its being "one instance of a class and, conversely, the class's supervening control of that example is deactivated" (Agamben [2005] 2009, p. 18).[2]

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[1] The incipit of *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* is worthy of pages of reflection. Agamben argues: "Greeks had no single term to express what we mean by the word 'life'. They used two terms that, although traceable to a common etymological root, are semantically and morphologically distinct: zoē, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods) and bios, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 1)

[2] For a discussion on the use of the paradigm in Agamben's ontology and its possible applications, see: (Boano 2016, 2017).

For Agamben, the camp is "the most absolute biopolitical space that has ever been realized"—a space in which "power has before it pure biological life [*la pura vita*]" (Agamben 2000, p. 41); however, for these reasons, it is the "paradigm of political space" in which we live, "the hidden matrix," and "the new biopolitical nomos of the planet" (ibid., pp. 41, 45). Therefore, when conceived as such, the camp and its excess of politics, both historically and spatially become a fundamental paradigm to interpret the present. Paraphrasing Agamben, a camp environment is the phantasm of camp legacies, the ungraspable materialisation of layered politics, economies and networks, operating in topologies that are claimed and reclaimed through the violence of the dispositive of the ban[3]. This is the camp nature, an image that is not fixed but still implacable and exceptional: "not the thing," as Agamben says, "but the thing's knowability (its nudity)" (Agamben 2010, p. 251).

Following other studies (Boano 2017; Salzani 2015), it is less important to focus on the camp per se, but rather on the diagram of the camp in the Foucaultian sense. In the fields of tension between camps and non-camps, a topological imagination can emerge that can envisage the inside and outside—norm *and* exception, terror *and* hope—in ways that are more complex and less binary while preserving the urgency of the critique of the camp. The truly political message of Agamben, not fully emergent in Gray's approach, is anticipated in *The Coming Community* (1998) where Agamben prompts us to imagine a "completely new politics—that is, a politics no longer founded on the exception of *bare life*" (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 11). Bare life is characterized by the spatial dimension of the threshold and indeterminacy, emerging in the translation of Walter Benjamin's *das bloße Leben* (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 65). *'Nuda'* means thus *'Bloß'*, which in German can mean 'naked,' but—and this is Benjamin's use—in the sense of 'no better than,' 'nothing but,' 'mere,' and as such 'bare'" (Salzani 2015, pp. 80–81). Pure Being and naked life are 'empty' and 'indeterminate' concepts and thus made perfect "the enigma of ontology and politics" (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 47). This is the ultimate trajectory that the *Homo Sacer*[4] seeks to follow: a search for means, ways, forms, and lives through which 'a new politics' can be arrived at, and it is this call that is heard, through one voice or another, on every page of his book. The search for this 'new politics' is, for Agamben, an unquestionably urgent one. For Agamben, such a transformation of our political life stripped bare is what the state of exception, that is rapidly becoming our rule, effects and what Agamben believes our every effort should strive to counteract. The counter-figure of such bare life is a "form of life [*forma-di-vita*] in which it is never possible to isolate something like bare life" (ibid., p. 183). In Agamben's terminology, such forms of life are new uses of bodies that frame an existence that is generic and imperfect. A possibility of life is also evident in other Catalyst papers in this issue. Ribeiro et al. (2017) describe the condition of informal urbanization in Brazil that suggests a positive agency of marginalised communities. The possibility, as Perego and

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[3] The thesis in Agamben's masterpiece is that "the original political relation is the ban: the state of exception as zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion" (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 181). In order to illustrate this indistinction, in the second part of the book, Agamben starts providing an example: the werewolf. Here, the analysis goes to Hobbes and the different French and German visions of the literary and non-literary half-man, half-beast. The werewolf is the "monstrous hybrid of human and animal, divided between the forest and the city: the werewolf is, therefore, in its origin the figure of the man who has been banned from the city" (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 105).

[4] With the publication of *The Use of Bodies* (Agamben [2014] 2016), Giorgio Agamben almost abandoned his Homo Sacer project after more then 20 years of research. The Homo Sacer project, now completed, is organized around the following schema where I have provided the double date of publication in both Italian and in English: Volume I: *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Agamben [1995] 1998); Volume II, 1: *State of Exception* (Agamben [2003] 2005), Volume II, 2: *Stasis: La guerra civile come paradigma politico* (Agamben 2015), translated into English by Nicholas Heron), Volume II, 3: *The Sacrament of Language: An Archaeology of the Oath* (Agamben [2008] 2011), Volume II, 4: *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government* (Agamben [2007] 2011), Volume II, 5: *Opus Dei: An Archaeology of Duty* (Agamben [2012] 2013); Volume III: *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (Agamben [1998] 2002); Volume IV: 1: *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life* (Agamben [2011] 2013), Volume IV: 2: *The Use of Bodies* (Agamben [2014] 2016). In reviewing (Agamben [2014] 2016), de la Durantaye (2016) said "In the forty-five years since the publication of Agamben's first book, two things have been utterly uncontroversial: he is an unusually erudite philosopher and he is an unusually graceful writer, something that translation, of necessity, struggles to reflect … the story for Agamben is thus not about how far we have fallen, how lost we are, how remote the once bright fire of sacred speech, pure thought and incandescent experience. His is a story where there is no task that must be accomplished, no work that must be completed, no single spot, no sacred words, no special fire".

Scopacasa (2018) describe it to "alter the spectrum of what is possible within the bounds of the law" (p. 2), reworking the negative effects and "find their way to endure to repair and heal [...] themselves from the known and establish new relations, negotiating detours and make use of their very reality to craft new forms of lives and project themselves into the future" (Biehl and Locke 2017, p. 4). In such plastic indistinction, forms of life are emerging as "spatial violations"—in the language of Samar Maqusi (2017)—and thus demonstrating the multiple systems that are made by people, things and forces in which the displaced are acting with different degrees of agentive capacities in shaping the material condition of their space. This can also signify—as in the case of the "concrete slab" narrated by Nobre and Nakano (2017)—a dispositive of "what's yet to come" (p. 2) in the unfinished, indicting, generic and undomesticated conditions that emerge. Rescuing the camp as a form-of-life allows for a more complete and somehow affirmative reflection of Agamben's powerful political project (Boano 2017) and its dark exceptionality by stressing it as space and as terrain constituted "by the actual and the possible" (p. 25) and referring both to the histories that have shaped its urban trajectories, economy and the identities, habits and practices (subdivisions, informal exceptionality, popular construction, land subdivisions, migrant workers).

Thinking with the Disruptive Terminology of Inhabitation

If displacement is the defining characteristic of the era in which we live, hospitality does seem to be its diagram in space. Hospitality has become a tactic to differentiate people as 'other'. This is particularly evident in situations within territories that reveal the multiplicity of forced migration regimes operating historically and contemporaneously. Gray's exposure of non-static, non-monolithic forms of citizenship in ancient Greece, not tied to territorial possession, is very important. He brings to the present "ways to act and interact as 'citizens-in-exile' even when they were hosted on the territory, or sometimes in the urban centre, of a pre-existing polis" (Gray 2018, p. 8) through "improvised, flexible versions of civic institutions and activities, [..] which they could sustain even while participating in their host community [. . .]" and thus even open up a possibility of recognition and agency through "a political voice with which to claim powerful settled states' recognition and protection from below, rather than relying solely on benevolence from above" (ibid.). This affords us the possibility to spatialise such a form of recognition, which the Catalyst papers also seem to have acknowledged (Maqusi 2017; Petti 2017; Perego and Scopacasa 2018) and that I have here named inhabitation.

In this light, Martin Heidegger's question "what does it mean to dwell?" (Heidegger 1954) is still valid and pertinent. Dwelling is a microcosm in which such worldly affairs are condensed, transformed and enacted within the limits of daily life, occupation and use. While drawing the focus to the quotidian, this foregrounding of the materiality of the space of inhabitation is not a petition for the specific or the everyday. It is rather a call to open up the dwelling as a site that mediates between the particular and the systemic, a meeting ground in which intensive practices, materials and meanings tangle with extensive, financial, environmental and political worlds as recognised in the work of Nobre and Nakano (2017) and Ribeiro et al. (2017). Recognizing inhabitation connects well with Gray's excavation of poleis-in-exile and Plutarch's reference to "a mixed community of refugees from war and unrest in the Greek mainland and islands who found refuge in third-century Alexandria in Egypt, where they benefited from funds passed on to them from the Ptolemaic government by the exiled Spartan king Cleomenes" (Gray 2018, p. 14). This aligns well with the philosophical reflections of Donatella Di Cesare who posits that "the inhabitants of the world are necessarily eccentric [. . .] exile, ecstasy, exposure, existence, all that is distinguished by the outside, destined to the beyond, risks of being saturated by immanence" (Di Cesare 2018, p. 15).

For Di Cesare, it is crucial to bring in the ancient biblical model of the "resident alien" to illustrate the centrality of inhabitation in the discussion of hospitality. The term *ger*, from the Hebrew root gar, meaning "to sojourn", "to inhabit" refers to an alien, a stranger, or an immigrant relating the very meaning of stranger with the one of inhabitation, without owning: "the *ger* is the inhabiting stranger the one that dwells? in the furrow of the separation of the earth recognised as inappropriable without

being owned" (Di Cesare 2018, p. 218). A territorial perspective, a spatial outlook on integration casts cities, neighbourhoods and communities, not only as sites of refuge, but as spaces where rights can be produced—spaces where the 'struggle' for integration takes place. Spatializing integration means therefore speaking of cohabitation and city-making, so well depicted in Petti's analysis of Dheisheh (Petti 2017) and in Maqusi's reflection (Maqusi 2017) on the inherent spatial violations of such making. In the opening speech of the Academic Year in Rome, recently, Giorgio Agamben asked: "What could have been the historical *a priori*, the *arche'*, of today's modern architecture?" (Agamben 2019). In answering, he posits that "architecture exists because man is a dwelling entity, a dweller and an inhabitant" and therefore the connection between building and dwelling is the possible historical *a priori* of architecture and the condition of its possibility. Following his usual archaeological linguistic method, Agamben suggests with Benveniste that Indo-European culture has overlapped two definitions that are and should remain completely separated: on the one side, the "*casa abitazione*", the house as dwelling, which is intended as social entity (the Latin *domus*), the place of the family and the *gens*; and on the other the "*casa edificio*", the house as building (the Latin *aedes*). Even if the two notions can coincide in the space, they express two distinct realities. In Benveniste's words, "the usages of *domus* in Latin exclude all allusion to construction" (Benveniste 1973, p. 631) as *domi* means being at home but in the sense that characterizes *domus* as a family, a social and moral notion, and therefore more attuned to a form of building relations and belonging.

Agamben brings into the picture again Heidegger's *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* 1951 conference text, which somehow argues the opposite of Benveniste—that the real meaning of the German verb *bauen* (building) is to dwell and therefore building and dwelling cannot be separated. Building as dwelling, that is, as being on the earth, however, remains for man's everyday experience that which is from the outset "habitual"—we inhabit it. Why is this important for our reflection here? Agamben suggests that the historical *a priori* is the "impossibility or the incapacity" of dwelling for the contemporary human, and, consequently, for architects, it is impossible to break down the relationship between "the art of building and the art of dwelling" creating the conditions for the emergence of what Ivan Illich called "disabling professions" (Illich 1977, p. 12)—the act of monopolising an activity, expropriating an individual from their capacity, in this case of building inhabitations. This impossibility of building and dwelling is the essence of the camp. Recalling that Auschwitz was built by Karl Bischoff, an architect, who, in October 1941, drew up the first master plan for a facility designed to hold 97,000 inmates, with Fritz Ertl—a graduate of the Bauhaus—Agamben asks: "how could it be possible that an architect [. . .] built a structure in which under no circumstances was it possible to dwell, in the original sense of being at home [. . .] building the perfect place of the impossibility of inhabitation" (Agamben 2019). With this example, he portrays how "architecture at present is facing the historical condition of building the inhabitable" (ibid.). With no inhabitation, only building is possible.

Gray's critique of the camp as pure oppression and exclusion is pertinent in the light of the impossibility of inhabitation, but, at the same time, the improvised poleis-in-exile forms and the 'cohabitation' experiences in Petti's work suggest that the inhabitant then is being situated in a world in which multiple experiences of abandonment, refusal, but also emancipation, invention and experimentation play out. All gestures of concretization indicate that whatever does exist in 'urban' life points to something else. The necessity, then, with the disruptive introduction of the term inhabitation, is to redefine an ethical relationship with space, as a space of and for life. As I have argued elsewhere (Boano 2017), Agamben sees life as the basis for a new ethics, reversing its status as a productive and active force. Life is experienced as a threshold: between speech and noise, political life and nude life, human and animal. Gray's historical excavation and that of some Catalysts in the volume, rather than destroying or deconstructing oppositions between inclusion and exclusion, oppression and emancipation, citizenship and non-citizenship, formal and informal, and camp and non-camp, suggest a new ethics of the camp. This is found not by including forms of excluded life, but instead by "occupying—in law and language—the zone of indistinction where life is neither silent and passive, nor fully captured in language and actions" (Colebrook and Maxwell 2016, p. 95). The camp, in its

paradigmatic reading, and the form of life it generates, helps us to think beside the exceptional and moves to inhabit such indistinctions.

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