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Original
Urbanism of exception: camps and inhabitation / Boano, C.. - In: REVISTA JATOBÁ. - ISSN 2675-1119. - 3:21(2021), pp. 1-28. [10.54686/revjat.v3i.68984]

Availability:
This version is available at: 11583/2972712 since: 2022-10-31T11:57:18Z

Publisher:
Faculdade de Artes Visuais Universidade Federal de Goiás - UFG

Published
DOI:10.54686/revjat.v3i.68984

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14 September 2026

URBANISM OF EXCEPTION: CAMPS AND INHABITATION

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Abstract

This paper can be considered an attempt to think on what a camp does rather than on what it is. Camps seem to arrest, fix in time and space lives, stripping political agency away from bodies and render bare lives; materialise principle of exclusions, control and spatial precepts of modernism through its heavily loaded political semantics. Camps explicitly determines the other, the unknown and the uncontrolled, the monstrous and the needed. Following what Mezzadra and Neilson, called "the different assemblages of power and the different forces of capital" that shape territories and spaces to answer the question I wish to use somehow playfully the concept of 'dispossession' developed by Butler and Athanasiou and the one of inhabitation by Agamben to reflect on the camp as a site, inextricably intertwined with the promise of death, police and disappearance regularly and invariably fulfilled and the incomplete, unfinished possibility of inhabiting. The paper try to suggest that camps are sites where one asks what it means to inhabit in the abyssal ambivalence of resisting death––exhausting and holding onto life.

Keywords: camps. exception. inhabitation. dispossession. Agamben.

Who writes the camp and what is it that ought
to be written in a time where the plurality of lives
has traversed the place itself to become its own time.
How will the camp stare at itself in the coming time, look itself in the eye;
the eye of time, the coming that is continually pending,
but with a face — human or otherwise — that is defaced?
The camp is a time more than it is a place.
Upon and above its curves, time remembers its lapses
to the extent that it is its time — the one whose time is one —
that preys on a body that is yet to be born
(QASMIYEH, 2017)

Introduction

Writing camps is writing a paradigmatic figure that have expanded from being a temporary site for the management of emergencies to become a global geopolitical machine, from being the territory actions of solidarity organizations, international planning and refugee experts to become an unavoidable reference for the political grammar (Abourahme, 2020) and, even, to become an academic field of studies (Minca et. al, 2021; Minca, 2005; Kats et all 2018). Abourahme (2020:36) reminds us “the figure of the camp towers over our present […] our very conceptions of ‘the city’ and its once stable inside/outside demarcations, find its challenge insuperable. Not only do more people and more categories of people inhabit camps than ever before, from refugees and migrants to the homeless and detainees, but the camp form today proliferates at the heart of urban space and across the global North/global South divide”. It is a site, inextricably intertwined with the promise of death, police and disappearance regularly and invariably fulfilled and the incomplete, unfinished possibility of inhabiting.

Writing camps is - as Yussuf Qasmiyeh said– something that “lives and dies in our sight. It is destined to remain (not necessarily as itself) so long as time continues to be killed in its corners” (2016, np). Writing on camps is dangerous as they are never constrained to the architectural scale and form, we might firstly perceive them. If examined as singular objects, even in their multiple diverse morphological aspects

and their contested historiography, they seem incapable of mobilizing architectural and spatial reflection beside an aesthetic of precarity, the makeshift of resistance or the violent power of control, surveillance, exclusion, and death. But when imbricated with infrastructures, territories, materials, border regimes, migration policies, activism, and network of solidarity they become active part in a larger reality-making apparatus enhancing different temporal and spatial articulations without recomposition. Recalling Hailey's atlas, Abourahme said that "the proliferation of the camp form produces not just a diverse but an almost absurd, Borgesian inventory: homeless camps, recreational camps, university campuses, military camps, refugee camps, internment camps, summer camps, labor camps, fat camps, tech camps, protest camps, naturist camps, boot camps, and terrorist camps" (2020: 35) making the camp a truly global technology of population management (Hyndman, 2000; Agier, 2002a,b; Martin et all, 2019).

Camps are at the same time spaces of exception and unfinished projects in their fragmented, episodic nature, plural and uncertain, ubiquitous, and regionalized. They deploy a temporally unstable grammar - always in motion- in time and in space, despite its apparent fixity with a constant movement between past and present. A form that is itself unfinished, transitory, and caught in a perpetual present but always in the verge of collapse, destruction, disappearance.

Writing camps is writing on a paradox, a place that simultaneously makes individuals invisible, render generic their biographies from thick subjectivities to representation of non-existences, disappearing from earth and history, while projecting camp residents - as a collective - into the public imagination of an historical category of spatial and human crisis and to an otherwise of politics. Or better, as Petti, Hilal and Porcaro suggests they are "the dark side of modernisation" (Petti, Hilal, Porcaro, 2021). Writing on camps is writing on a paradigm (Abourahme, 2020:37): "not a historical anomaly [but] the hidden heart of our global order, the secret matrix of our politics […] as an architectural-historical form in its own right".

Mass migration and displacement and its coupled dispositive of incarceration and encampments have been at the forefront of policy and planning agendas for nation-

states, academia and international organizations alike. The challenge of addressing the basic needs of unhoused population as well as of the millions of people who flee violence, disaster and climate degradation every day has been put in sharp contrast with initiatives focused on controlling, taming, policing borders and migrations alike as well as more generally unhoused populations. Among the many pressures existing in the humanitarian apparatus, the role of shelter and refuge is still a central issue —about its social role, production and definition and ambivalence the camp, as a specific type of political technology, has been the subject of debate within and outside architecture (Hailey, 2009; Boano and Marten, 2013; Boano, 2019, Petti, 2007) as well as within and outside to humanitarian practice (Agier, 2019; Maqusi, 2017). More recently debates reflected on camps as complicit diapositives of an oppressive and racial border regime that “stop, make stranded populations in their attempt to cross borders but also as that keep “them on the move and forced to remain in motion across convoluted geographies” (De Genova, Tazzioli, at all, 2021). Such discussion was able to shift the debate around the ambivalence of camps as contexts of emergency, relief, protection and securitisation and “infrastructures of migration movement and to the spatial and legal strategies for channelling, containing, and selecting migration” (De Genova, Tazzioli, at all, 2021) expanding the nature and the geographies of camp and camp-like environments (Genova, Tazzioli, at all, 2021; Minca, et all. 2021; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Rgiel, 2011; De Genova, 2017; Tazzioli, 2019). Therefore, bringing camps to signify a multi-faceted process that is as much about political and spatial needs, as it is about the people’s capacity and possibility to “staying in a place” (Picozza, 2017; Aradau and Tazzioli, 2020). What Aradau calls “the destruction of conditions of collectivity” (2017: 7) through violent act of police that disperse migrant, reject, dismantling their spaces of life in “transit” camps such as Calais or Ventimiglia, or in urban centres such as Paris, Rome, and many others European cities (Genova, Tazzioli, at all, 2021). Tazzioli and Garelli (2020) and Mountz (2011) made evident that “migrants are deprived of spaces of livability and infrastructures of support and they are entrapped into forced hyper-mobility” (Aradau and Tazzioli 2020: 202) When repositioned in the productive tension with the territory, with the violence of border making practices, camps are fertile to problematise themselves as refuge as “safe space, where shelters are given to

people fleeing, migrating or in need to be accompanied with other forms of makeshift, improvised, or organized informally through solidarity campaigns or charitable initiatives spaces are provided by state and non-state authorities" (Tazzioli, 2015; 2019). While state created controlled camps become visible, "counter-camps" (Minca, 2015) built by migrants themselves emerged as a safer, supportive and less controlled spatial practice, alternative, activist and infused by solidarity. Maqusi had used the notion of "spaces of refuge" to "investigates modes of spatial practice and production by both the refugees inhabiting the camp and the host governments hosting the camps […] and the resulting established camp-assemblage emanating from a culture of making space inside a regulated and protracted space of refuge" (2017:16).

What is also extremely important is to acknowledge that the multiplicity of contemporary camp forms globally implemented have a colonial origin with a concentratory and exclusionary logic becoming a sort of "permanent and globally legalised institution fof concentration" (Bosco Odoloma, 2021). Leaving in the background the wider debate on camp as form of contemporary apartheid and concentrationary dispositive (Bosco Odoloma, 2021), in this short contribution I want to reflect on what I consider a central tension and ambivalence of the camp in political theory and architectural and urban thinking: the tension between the camp and the possibility (or impossibility) of inhabitation. This departs and somehow is reinforces the very central interrogation that Abourahme (2020) posited enquiry the camp as an urban concept as able to "(re)open the politics of inhabitation" (p.37).

This means opening a temporality between the permanence of the constructed (camp) and the temporariness of the political condition of refugee and its absence, in order to create a different political mode of dwelling "not with the camp as a paradigm or exemplum per se, but as a material force of an enduring colonial history" (Abourahme, 2020: 38). This implies thinking "a camp that wants to be nothing more than a means for its own overcoming in the redemptive politics of an otherwise, or what we might think of as the habitation of the temporary - here as a claim for a future elsewhere" But this case, camps become sites of a politics and therefore a contestation in which the everyday life is the very fact of inhabitation: it might be a refusal to stay in, a

rejection of it as a dwelling or it might be the continuation of habitual, bodily practices, such as prayer or play; it might be the marking of walls or connection to infrastructural networks" (Abourahme, 2020: 38).

However, inhabitation is a terrain beyond the emergency from which to think and act, even for a politics that seeks nothing more than to overcome the primacy of life. The camp is a continuous creative process through which inhabitants withdraw from death to escort it, constituting an industrious community capable of building, maintaining, and repairing its living space. A tenacious struggle to resist the violent subtractions of future, of space, of possibilities, creating space and forms of life. Such struggle, in the complete anonymity and opacity, it is continually inventing an inhabiting life and practice an exceedance of inhabitability and the politics of inhabitation.

Framing camps beyond exception

As earlier stated "spaces of refuge represent the paradoxical encounters between a series of governmental forces, disciplinary knowledge, aesthetic regimes, and spatial conditions" (Boano, 2019:1) that tend to (im)mobilise forms of lives either fixing in a permanent temporality, suspended present or, subtracting the possibility to reside, accelerate mobilities taking off the possibility for migrants to settle, to pause in their trajectories of migration, choices (Tazzioli and Garelli, 2020; Aradau and Tazzioli, 2020). The shape directly or indirectly, violently, or administratively inhabitation and therefore an important perspective and epistemic site, from which to interrogate politics of life (Abourahme, 2020; Boano and Astolfo, 2020).

In broad terms, camps are meant to provide spaces of security for displaced populations when they are in the most vulnerable state. We can complexify and put the camp at the centre of a complex tensions of power relations and space to control, orient migration and to organize hierarchically the space state and its borderscapes. If we use the notion of dispositif developed by Foucualt and subsequently by Agamben, two fundamental authors in the development of a more philosophical and critical reflection on camp as spatial product of a series of political enemy forces not just the place of aid,

neutral and benevolent but part of a wider spatial assemblages across sovereignty and borders. Michel Agier (2002), argues that camps can be spaces where people who are thought to be undesirable may be confined and segregated from the ‘clean, healthy, visible world,’ or spaces where people struggle and have no autonomy (Weima and Hyndman 2019).

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 as administrative abstraction (Boano, 2019; Abourahme, 2020) as well as an ideological thought and therefore political technology dispositive, one that antagonises the spatial precepts of modernism through its heavily loaded political semantics but also orient, distribute, morph territories, routes and regimes of migration. We know that, “paradoxically, camps are transcending their exceptional temporality” (Boano, 2019:1), 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” (Abourahme, 2020:36) as in the fundamental experience of Palestinian camps.

The work of Giorgio Agamben has been a fundamental in camp studies and in ensuing debates concerned with what a camp is in terms of law, administration and power (Boano, 2019). While reflecting on the spatial paradigm of the Nazi camps, Agamben argues that the camp is a “materialization of the state of exception” (Ek, 2006) where rights are excised under juridical power. Under this logic, camps can be instrumentalized by authorities to exploit the change in judicial order (Prem Kumar and Grundy-Warr, 2004; AlSayyad and Roy, 2006) and use various tools to spread violence and injustice under the idea of self-protection. Although Agamben’s understanding of camps as an institution central in the modern political discourse he made a significant contribution in camp studies, the increasing multidimensionality and complexity of camps in the contemporary world, exemplify that some of his conceptualization may not be fully pertinent (Martin, 2015). Owens argues that, Agambenian formulations of bare life and the state of exception does not show a possibility of re-articulation of politics or the right to mobility (Owens, 2009). Ramadan (2013, p. 68) writes ‘real-world

refugee camps cannot be reduced to a formulaic reading of spaces of exception filled with silenced and dis- empowered hominess sacri' and argues that '[i]f we accept a formulaic Agambenian reading of the camp as a space of exception in which political life is suspended, then [...] acts of resistance and struggle might be rendered outside politics, as silent expressions of bare life or illegitimate acts of terrorism'. Thus, Agamben's concepts have been used and replaced by new discourses around camp spatialities by approaches that accentuate 'complex social relations contained within the camp (Owens, 2009; McConnachie, 2013; Sigona 2015; Agier 2011; Rygiel 2012, Ramadan, 2013). Martin et. al.'s (2019) discourse moves beyond the Agambenian theorization towards a different perspective on the changing nature of camps and states that contemporary camps located in the global south, do not conform to such neat and bounded geographies or to such one-way relations of power.

As camps are becoming multidimensional political spaces within its territory and in relation to the surrounding, understanding how they change within shows spatiality is essential. Sanyal (2014) and Martin et. al.'s (2019) discuss that, in protracted situations, camps exceed their emergency nature as heterogeneity and complexities are emerging as new urban or (quasi-urban) geographies. With refugees increasingly living in cities, they often adopt the same strategies of resilience used by the urban poor to survive, thus, the urban has become an important analytical framework to interrogate the refugee camp and its spatialities. Sanyal (2014) argues that, although camps and its relation to cities have been discussed in the scholarly discourse, 'discussing the urbanity of the camps' can be used to understand the 'urban question of the camp' (Sanyal, 2014, p.560) and, as we anticipated Abourahme (2020) who traced the " stubborn shadow the camp casts on modern urban life" (p. 35).

Outside their exceptionality therefore, with post Agamben scholars, Agamben's theory as a research paradigm started to fade and the formulation extended concepts that were not satisfactory especially in the particularity of protracted Palestinian camps. Scholars (Ramadan and Fregonese, 2017; Tuastad, 2017; Dias, 2019). The depoliticized concept of the camp and the reductionist perception of refugees as bare lives were insufficient. In their criticism, Agier's camp city like model had a major shortcoming in

considering camps as only transformed by processes relating the surrounding urban landscape. Katz (2015, 2017) looked into the aftermath of Agamben's theory in the context of Israel/Palestine conflict and argued that although camps were in a stat of exception in the 19th and 20th century, they became so 'common' as a prevalent space in the 21st century; common in the sense that they are widespread and have become central to the way modern state organizes management of people and space in the region and where human agency of struggle and contestation where new subjectivities and various power relations emerge.

As I elaborated elsewhere (Boano, 2019), the various attempt to make a form of life in camps, materialsied in the variety of forms of aggregate space, economic activities, modifications, roofing, expansions, solidification, that some of the literature framed as the one present in informal urbanizations (Ribeiro et al. 2017) not only suggesting a positive agency of marginalised communities but the very possibility to "alter the spectrum of what is possible within the bounds of the law" (Perego and Scopacasa, 2018: 2), reworking the negative aspects 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 operative gesture some scholar see "spatial violations" (Maqusi, 2017) 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 and "concrete slab" (Nobre and Nakano 2017) as dispositive of "what's yet to come" (p. 2) in the unfinished, indicting, generic and undomesticated conditions that emerge while others see "the political significance of the mundane" Abourahme, 2020: 40 as "index the limits of liberationist politics and the points of excess in the world of domestic objects" (Abourahme, 2020: 40) and shows how dispossession "[…] is the removal of life from its grounding in domestic objects and vital infrastructures, but also because in the camp the political consequentiality of things, and especially things that existed around building/the built, suddenly expands and becomes sharper—" (Abourahme, 2020: 40).

Camps therefore are at the same time spaces of exception and unfinished projects: fragmented, episodic nature, plural and uncertain, makeshift unstable - always in motion- despite its apparent fixity with a constant movement between past and present. A form that is itself unfinished, transitory and caught in a perpetual present but always in the verge of collapse, destruction, disappearance: “to live in the camp is to dwell that which cannot become “home” but which, nonetheless, must be livable […] for a politics that seeks nothing more than to overcome the primacy of life” (Abourahme, 2020: 40).

It is important to notice that camp thinking and camp practices emerged in colonial period. For Weheliye (2014) “concentration camps shared an intimate history with different forms of colonialism and genocide before being transformed into the death camps of Nazi Germany. […] Modern concentration camps were initially constructed in the 1830s in the southeastern United States as part of the campaign for “Indian removal” to detain 22,000 Cherokee (Gunter’s Landing, Ross’s Landing, and Fort Cass), and later during the Dakota War of 1862 a camp was constructed on Pike Island near Fort Snelling, Minnesota, in which 1,700 Dakota were interned. So-called contraband camps, which existed during and immediately after the Civil War, were designed as temporary domiciles for “freed” slaves throughout the U.S. South. The conditions in these precarious holding zones at the crossroads of enslavement and freedom were defined by starvation and the outbreak of diseases, which lead to the death of thousands of black subjects.5 In 1895 imperial Spain utilized concentration camps in Cuba to stop local uprisings, and the British first used the English-language term in 1900 to name similar efforts during the Boer War in South Africa. During the Philippine-American War (1901), the United States constructed an encampment in Batangas province” (p.35). Such long quote make explicit the origin of camp in settler colonialism that required violence in order to achieve its goal of controlling space, time resources and life. The political technology of camp in such archetypal form fulfilled several punitive measures such as forced labour, the devastation of farmlands, starvation and genocidal killing. Situating the German variant of the concentration camp as a product of colonial provenance (Weheliye (2014) is not dismissing the

Agambenian exceptionalism but move the biopolitical origin of modernity back in history expanding its dramatic relevance and "emphasizing their constitutive relationality in the modern world as well as the resultant displacement of racial slavery, colonialism, and indigenous genocide as nomoi of modern politics" (p. 36). Drawing on a number of important literatures we do not have space to delve in much, Weheliye suggest that "the concentration camp, the colonial outpost, and slave plantation suggest three of many relay points in the weave of modern politics, which are neither exceptional nor comparable, but simply relational" (p.36) and "we could just as well assert that racial slavery represents the biopolitical nomos of modernity, particularly given its historically antecedent status vis-à- vis the Holocaust and the many different ways it highlights the continuous and nonexceptional modes of physiological and psychic violence exerted upon black subjects since the dawn of modernity, or in the phrasing of Edouard Glissant, "The plantation is one of the bellies of the world, not the only one, one among many others, but it has the advantage of being able to be studied with the utmost precision […] The place was closed, but the word derived from it remains open. This is one part, a limited part, of the lesson of the world" (Glissant in Weheliye, 2014: 38).

Dispossession and inhabitation

Even if contested and problematized "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; Turner 2005), but also as an original component of a wide-ranging disciplinary technology of governance (biopolitical or thanatopolitical) that controls and contains populations and life" (Boano 2019:2). 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 (Boano, 2020). This allowed to grasp 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). 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; Abourahme, 2020).

The camp clearly is a form of dispossession as it "works as an authoritative and often paternalistic apparatus of controlling and appropriating the spatiality, mobility, affectivity, potentiality, and relationality" (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013: 24) it becomes a "language to express experiences of uprootedness, occupation, destruction of homes and social bonds, incitation to "authentic" self-identities, humanitarian victimization, unlivability, and struggles for self-determination" but as also as a relational dispossession from the word, from themselves and from alterity in general that open for "not only of subjugation but also of resilience, courage, and struggle. So yes, there is a dialectic of presence/absence that goes on in this differentially distributed political condition" (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013: 26), referring to the checkpoint as a dispositive, Butler and Athanasiou "the checkpoints work to foreclose the possibility of co-habitation, or, to put it differently, to make the relational form of dispossession impossible" (p.26). It is this relational dimension of dispossession can help to describe the relationship between the body and space in the dimension of power. And this helps us to move (sideways, but perhaps also forward) the traditional way of dealing with the problem of inhabitation or better the camp as the possibility (or impossibility) of inhabitation.

While the camp brings back strongly the question of bodies and their figure in the project of space, their belonging, the reflection on dispossession, as performative occasion opens a reading on the agency, on the doing of camp as "embodied situatedness and extension yet enabling mode of "concerted action" in conditions of dispossession (of property, land, rights, livelihood, or relationality)" in the forms "alliance and solidarity, otherwise, narratives, adaptations" as well as desired, emotions and practices "for a different way to cohabit the political" (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013:196.)

This means opening a temporality between the permanence of the constructed (camp) and the temporariness of the political condition of refugee and its absence, in order to create a different political mode of dwelling “not with the camp as a paradigm or exemplum per se, but as a material force of an enduring colonial history” (Abourahme, 2020: 38). This implies negotiating the paradox of constructed presence in a camp that wants to be nothing more than a means for its own overcoming in the redemptive politics of an otherwise, or what we might think of as the habitation of the temporary - here as a claim in a future elsewhere. But this case, refugee camps become sites of a politics and therefore a contestation in which the everyday life is the very fact of inhabitation: it might be a refusal to stay in a camp and a rejection of it as a dwelling; or it might be a ‘last attempt’, a refusal to move on or go back and an insistence on returning home; it might be the continuation of habitual, bodily practices, such as prayer or play; it might be the marking of walls or connection to infrastructural networks.

Dispossession then, even if briefly and if not articulated much, point towards an operative understanding of camps as a tenacious struggle to resist the violent subtractions of future, of space, of possibilities, creating space and forms of life. Such struggle, in the complete anonymity and opacity, it is continually inventing an inhabiting life and practice an exceedance of inhabitability. Dispossession therefore points to the other term i want to suggest. The one of inhabitation.

Agamben’s epigrammatic statement that open 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), is an important point to get back to. Clearely, this “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’” (Boano, 2019:3). 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, thusmaking 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)” (Boano, 2019:3). The camp is for him “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, 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 bare. 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; Abourahme, 2020), it is less important to focus on the camp per se, but rather on the diagram of the camp in the Foucaultian sense. As matter of allusive synthesis, we can see camps emerging as space in the evlution of a Foucauldian biopolitics, that put life and its preservation at the centre of politics, Agambeninan thanatopolitics, that inverted the letting live making die of the sovereign to the Mbembian necropolitics embedded in a colonial duress that letting die and making live, all substantially manipulating the tensions between space, power and bodies.

Inhabitation refers to Heiddeger (1954) when he reminds us, that human exists insofar as they inhabit, as they can never avoid existing and thus transforming space into a place, even when this space is tragically uninhabitable. Human inhabits, transforming, imperfectly an abstract space in some way, imprecise and precarious, in a place that generates the possibility of intimacy understood as the possibility of welcoming and being welcomed. If we consider simply that we started from the assumption that camps are calculating and rational management of life, the camp is a perfect project where the absence\presence of bodies is made (im)mobile opening inhabitation to its impossibility in a double sense: inhabitation as the impossibility of

becoming home, to host futures, to dwell relations, to inhabit political projects as well as well as, as documented in the recent work on extractions, destruction of camps and hypermobilization of migrants confronting violent border regimes, as the impossibility of inhabitation trough a “politics of touch” (Boano, 2021) that occurs not only through constriction and inclusion but also through the subtraction of support, of the lifelines of aid and solidarity, spectacularized and illegalized, reducing any minimal form of stabilization and therefore trapping bodies in forced hypermobility. A series of removal strategies (Aradau and Tazzioli, 2020) that do not only aim to stop with control or identification or detention of the migrant body but to make it invisible and make the material possibility of staying in a place impossible.

Inhabiting is the way in which that particular living being that is man modifies existence by living as man, that is to say according to his own specific way of being. However the term Bauen, which translates as building in the sense of dwelling, but also of preserving and cultivating, which does not mean producing but protecting. And this is the interesting meaning of dwelling, which implies preserving and cultivating, shifting the focus not only on simply being, staying and existing, but also on a more complex “ecology”.

Inhabitation is becoming not ‘home’ but which, nonetheless, must be livable. It must be livable, as a terrain beyond the emergency from which to think and act, even for a politics that seeks nothing more than to overcome the primacy of life. The camp is a continuous creative process through which inhabitants withdraw from death in order to escort it, constituting an industrious community capable of building, maintaining and repairing its living space. An important element as underlined by .... is not to think of living as separate from cultivation and care. Living always has to do with otherness, with the surplus of an otherness that is not constructed but preserved.

Thinking on inhabitation, camps in their presence and in their absence expand to become sites of a politics of everyday life that takes shape around habitation: it might be a refusal to stay in a camp and a rejection of it as a dwelling; or it might be a ‘last attempt’, a refusal to move on or go back and an insistence on returning home; it might

be the continuation of habitual, bodily practices, such as prayer or play; it might be the marking of walls or connection to infrastructural networks or a continuous struggle to cultivate and protect a minimum space of survival. Abourahme (2020) suggest that camps are in their being continuously materialised by simple acts of construction, inhabitation and care, become politics of inhabitation" and a "political political-historical thresholds" (Abourahme, 2020: 40). This "impossibility of building and dwelling is the essence of the camp" (Boano, 2019:6). With no inhabitation, only building is possible and the camp, as matrix of exception will persist.

Thinking the camp as inhabitation: back to Agamben, beyond exception

As I elaborate above, I did try to suggest that to live in the camp is to inhabit. To inhabit that which cannot "become 'home' but which, nonetheless, must be liveable" (Abourahme, 2020: 40). It means opening up a temporality between the permanence of the constructed (camp) and the temporariness of (a) political condition (refugee): in other words, creating a different political mode of dwelling. Here, this implies negotiating the paradox of constructed presence in a camp that wants to be nothing more than a means for its own overcoming in the redemptive politics of return, or what we might think of as the habitation of the temporary - here as a claim in a future elsewhere. But in all cases, refugee camps become sites of a politics of everyday life that takes shape around habitation: it might be a refusal to stay in a camp and a rejection of it as a dwelling; or it might be a 'last attempt', a refusal to move on or go back and an insistence on returning home; it might be the continuation of habitual, bodily practices, such as prayer or play; it might be the marking of walls or connection to infrastructural networks.

The encamped body seem deprived of the city and signified by the ecologies a perpetual present, by the here and the now, borrowing Mannig words "the histories that orient it to the present and impede the future and disassociate it from the reasons for its participation in the world" (2020:218). The camp, as an orientation machine is

pragmatic and operational. Bodies are regularly erased precisely at the point the form of camp becomes recognisable. There is no doubt that a continuous control denies bodies “the potential of their transitions, of their becoming, solidifying them from the outside in an identity that cannot be assimilated, negotiated and made fluid” (Manning, 2020:218) The camp captures and threatens the process that Manning call “the bodying”. What is terrifying is the very potential at the heart of bodying, the potential for a body to become, to change, to alter the conditions of life and its space, in the register of the more than life. To ask what kind of body camp’s needs, paraphrasing Foucault, means to take seriously the operations of power and to investigate, each time again, how camps and body continually signify each other, making the tension between presence and absence indistinct even in the nakedness of bodies and spaces shaping inhabitation. The field is the perfect politics. A politics of touch Manning would say.

Abourahme (2021) suggest that camps are “the indispensable side of authority: to build a house, in particular became a very highly charged and contested domain of life […] it became the primary side of politics, the primary locust for agonism as camps today are the inhabitation of impermanence but as enduring structures becomes both the site of a regime of domesticating managerial authority but also a spatial counter politics. Things like building of a solid house or it’s vertical expansion, things like roofing, like personal latrines , ike connections to sewage, to electricity, to water all of the infrastructural encroachment or spillover, but also things like interior ornamentation all these become politics of inhabitation” and a “political political-historical thresholds” (Abourahme, 2020: 40).

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. 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". 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 and the camp, as matrix of exception will persist.

Inhabitation refer to Heiddeger when he reminds us, that human exists insofar as they inhabit, as they can never avoid existing and thus transforming space into a place, even when this space is tragically uninhabitable. Human inhabits, transforming, imperfectly and abstract space in some way, imprecise and precarious, in a place that generates the possibility of intimacy understood as the possibility of welcoming and being welcomed. Inhabiting is the way in which that particular living being that is human modifies existence by living as human, that is to say according to his own specific way of being. However the term Bauen, which translates as building in the sense of dwelling, but also of preserving and cultivating, which does not mean producing but protecting. And this is the interesting meaning of dwelling, which implies preserving and cultivating, shifting the focus not only on simply being, staying and existing, but open a more complex "ecology". The point is thinking the creative process through which inhabitants withdraw from death in order to escort it, constituting an industrious community capable of building, maintaining and repairing its living space. An important element as underlined by .... is not to think of living as separate from cultivation and care. Living always has to do with otherness, with the surplus of an otherness that is not constructed but preserved. As reflected in Boano and Astolfo (2020) "with and beyond Heidegger's dwelling, with a focus on life and living (collectively) – central to any serious discussion on housing and urbanism – need to be extended beyond anthropocentrism

to embrace a more vitalist materialism – to avoid the relativist idea of the existence of a multiplicity of forms-of-life – inhabitation thus becomes the territory where practices of care, repair and imagination forge renewed politics and an ontology of the living" (p.11). Forms-of-life that presuppose inhabitation, "become the central idea to help us think how we practically live together and how the norms and the tactics of such life get formed in and through space. Inhabitation means re-centring the affirmative dimension of enduring relations and develops an idea of collective life that tenaciously responds, non-negatively, to aspects of life and to modes of living, extractive practices and constructs different horizons of hope" (p.16). This has been a specific learning from camps and camps urbanism. With inhabitation, camps in their presence and in their absence expand from exception to become sites of a politics that takes shape around habitation: it might be a refusal to stay, a rejection of it as a dwelling; it might be the continuation of habitual, bodily practices, such as prayer or play; it might be the marking of walls or connection to infrastructural networks or a continuous struggle to cultivate and protect a minimum space of survival. This impossibility of building and dwelling is the essence of the camp: an "always and already" of eshaustion and inhabitation 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 and the camp, as matrix of exception will persist. "What does it means to inhabiting (abitare)" ask Agamben in the preface of Giovanni Attili's Civita (2021). "So we still know what it means to inhabit a village, a city, a territory? and what is a village, a city, a territory if we think of it from the point of view of inhabiting? Civita, is a medieval village in Central Italy, built on a gully, a geomorphological zone that is always in the process of sinking into the void in the Lazio hinterland. For Agamben, questioning inhabitation from such spaces means revealing "the very possibility of living and inhabiting is indissolubly intertwined with

death”. When it is clear that the impossibility of inhabiting is a common condition, the question of what it means to inhabit understood as its possibility is urgent and topical. Attili “reconstructs the desire and the practice of the people of Civita di Bagnoregio over the centuries to inhabit their land, the marvellous stubbornness with which they continue to cling to ‘their tuff hillock’ suspended in the void and to keep intact, and if possible, improve, the form of life that has been handed down through the generations. The people of Civita have turned their land into a habitable place built on precipices and ravines. In this temple they have created and continued to forge something without which they seem to have a certain unease: their own presence”. For Agamben “it is a creative process through which they withdraw from death in order to escort it [...] And yet if human communities are not destined, as so many today seem to suggest, for simple disintegration, if human life is an inhabitable life, men will necessarily have to try to rediscover and reinvent a way of inhabiting their city, their land” (Agamben, 2021:11-12). Thererfore what seems to count is an inhabiting life. Reflecting on the story of Holderling, his solitary life isolated from the world in the tower of Tübingen, Agamben says that “to inhabit means to be in what one holds dearest, one’s own and at the same time common. that is, to be and to enjoy, that is, to enjoy, one’s own nature. It is certainly a way of resisting, of staying, of preventing oneself from being dragged elsewhere, but also, Agamben continues, “a way we have of sheltering (protection) life from the devastating fury”.

Conclusions

Camps are never constrained to the architectural scale and form as we might firstly perceive them. If examined as singular objects, even in their multiple and diverse morphological aspects, they seem incapable of mobilizing architectural and spatial reflections beside an aesthetic of precarity, a makeshift of resistance, or the violent power of control, surveillance and seclusion. But when imbricated with infrastructures, territories, materials, border regimes, migration policies, activism and networks of solidarity, they become active parts in a larger reality-making apparatus enhancing

other realities of political identities—compositions operating at different temporal and spatial articulations.

The camps are at the same time ‘spaces of exception’ and unfinished projects in their fragmented, episodic, plural, and uncertain nature; a temporally unstable grammar always in motion despite its apparent fixity, characterized by a constant movement between past and present. A form that is itself unfinished, transitory, and caught in a perpetual present.

The ambiguous nature of camp is an apparent paradox of a place that simultaneously makes individuals invisible and yet projects camp residents as a collective into the public imagination (Boano, 2019; 2020). This is one version of the story and while such a story can be true in some cases, in many others anonymity, as in genericity, is simply a sign of non-existence, or disappearance from Earth and history.

The paradox of anonymity as a sort of genericity or opacity, somehow without adjectives or any other specification, transforms the camp into a form that is always incomplete, and unfinished. Certainly exceptional, because the very possibility of living and inhabiting camps has always been inextricably intertwined with a promise of death, destruction, and disappearance, regularly and invariably fulfilled.

To live in the camp is to inhabit. However, such form of inhabitation cannot become ‘home’ but it must, nonetheless, be livable. It must be livable, as a terrain beyond the emergency from which to think and act, even for a politics that seeks nothing more than to overcome the primacy of life. The camp is a continuous creative process through which inhabitants withdraw from death in order to escort it, constituting an industrious community capable of building, maintaining and repairing its living space. A tenacious struggle to resist the violent subtractions of future, space, and possibilities, while crafting space and generating forms of life.

Such struggle, that is lived in complete anonymity and opacity, is continually inventing an inhabiting life and practicing an excess of inhabitability and politics of

inhabitation. It means opening up a temporality between the permanence of the constructed (meaning the camp) and the temporariness of a political condition of being a refugee. In other words, creating a different political mode of dwelling. Here, this implies negotiating the paradox of constructed presence in a camp that wants to be nothing more than a means for its own overcoming in the redemptive politics of return, or what we might think of as the inhabitation of the temporary - meaning to claim a future elsewhere. But in all cases, refugee camps become sites of a politics of everyday life that takes shape around inhabitation in an anonymous manner: it might be a refusal to stay in the camp and the rejection of it as a dwelling space; or it might be a 'last attempt', a refusal to move on or to go back and an insistence to returning home; it might be the continuation of habitual, bodily practices, such as prayer or play; or it might be the marking of walls or connection to infrastructural networks.

The intelligence of the camp, when seen beyond the absolute centrality of its violence, has the ability to express politics, culture, and self-organisation—identifying these spaces as places of possibility; a plural becoming that marks the triumph of the contemporary urban world. The place of the Deleuzian triumph of difference understood as irreducibility. A power that should certainly not be romanticised as it is always constituted by a form of exclusion -- as a generative matrix.

Camps are spaces that are being produced yet remain incalculable; they are objects that transcend their historicity of inhabitation but that cannot be framed under any calculation, norm, or formal quality of valuation. Camps are the sites where one asks what it means to inhabit in the abyssal ambivalence of resisting death—exhausting and holding onto life. Fragile and precarious spaces not because of a determination but by approximation with proximity, and indetermination without capture.

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NOTE

This paper is an amended version of a text published as Boano, C. (2019) From Exclusion to Inhabitation: Response to Gray Benjamin. Citizenship as Barrier and Opportunity for Ancient Greek and Modern Refugees. Humanities 8(125): 1-8 integrated with material presented in two talks: What camp does? Dispossession and inhabitation, paper written with Hanadi Samhan and presented at "Camps across the world: global and local perspectives" REFUGOV Online conference 26-28 April 2021 and Urbanism of exception: camps and inhabitation at the Project, Cities and Processes Permanent Forum, Federal University of Goias, Brazil on 18.11.2020 and an experimental video and audio piece that can be found at https://projektado.com/do-refugee-camps-have-authors/.

Publisher

Federal University of Goiás. Faculty of Visual Arts. Project and City Graduate Program. Publication on the UFG Journal Portal.

The ideas expressed in this article are the responsibility of their authors and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the editors or the university.

RECEIVED: 15/05/2021

APPROVED: 19/05/2021

PUBLISHED: 30/06/2021