



Rethinking the camp: On spatial technologies of power and resistance

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Abstract

In light of the recent proliferation and co-presence of institutional and makeshift camps and encampments in Europe, this article explores the current multifaceted geographies of the camp and their formal and informal spatialities. By engaging with key work in ‘camp studies’ we analyse contemporary institutional and makeshift refugee camps in their complex relationship. While the review of the existing literature is a fundamental starting point for our analysis, in this article we propose to depart from a perspective exclusively focussed on institutional camps to incorporate a reflection on the informal encampments that have recently proliferated in Europe. In particular, we reflect on how these makeshift spatial formations are associated with the presence and workings of institutional camps, at times in a complementary, almost symbiotic relationship. We conclude by suggesting that camps should not be studied in isolation and that both institutional and informal camps should be examined as dynamic spaces that may be transformed and appropriated by their residents, becoming part of the current fragmented mobilities of irregular migrations across Europe and of the related political geographies of bordering, smuggling, and humanitarian care.

Keywords

borders, camps, makeshift spaces, migrants, mobility, refugees

1 Introduction

During a recent visit to a refugee camp in Serbia near the Hungarian border – as part of our broader investigation of refugee and migrant camps in several parts of Europe – one social worker revealed that the ‘migrants’ who were not registered but ‘roamed’ around the camp were occasionally allowed to enter to get some food, a shower and medical assistance when needed. A subsequent walk along the fence of the camp

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exposed two large holes allowing anyone to enter and exit the compound with virtually no limitation. In the nearby forest, there were random signs of encampment, with one abandoned makeshift shack close to the fence. While further exploring the surrounding area, a sort of makeshift settlement sparsely populated by young men was found adjacent to the camp. A brief conversation with a group of these men revealed that they were from Pakistan and that they were on their way 'to Europe', and that for this reason did not wish to be registered in the camp. The discovery of such makeshift settlements, however, did not come as a total surprise. The co-presence of institutional *and* makeshift refugee camps is in fact becoming a relatively common sight in many corners of Europe: it reflects the appearance of ever new forms of informal settlements related to the increased mobility of 'irregular migrants' across the continent, but also the frequent decision of the authorities to allow for these transient arrangements to emerge and, accordingly, abandon their inhabitants to their destiny, in the hope that they will move elsewhere, quickly and invisibly.

At a time when Europe is confronted with the emergence of a new archipelago of camps resulting from the growing presence of irregular migrants, this article intends to reflect on these spatial formations in relation to the mainstream literature on camps in human geography and in the social sciences in general. Despite camps having been studied for several decades, the last 20 years or so have witnessed the emergence and the consolidation of a field tentatively identified as 'camp studies', where the contribution of political geographers has been rich and relevant (for an overview, see Minca, 2015a, 2015b; also Katz et al., 2018a). This body of work has been marked by two main stages: the first, coincidental to the war on terror after 9/11 and the associated proliferation of secret detention camps across the globe, was crucially influenced by Giorgio Agamben's (1998) conceptualisations of the camp as 'the *nomos*' of our time; the second – mainly but not exclusively

preoccupied with the multifaceted workings of refugee camps – can be provocatively described as a stream of 'post-Agambenian camp studies', since this body of literature, while showing clear signs of continuity with earlier work on camps, is also characterised by an explicit critique of the Agambenian thanatopolitical reading of the (concentration) camp, often claiming that a different approach is needed to appreciate the complexity of present-day refugee camp spatialities. This paper argues, however, that while many rightly acknowledge the limitations of some of Agamben's concepts to study refugee and other camps today, at the same time, camp studies – even in the 'post-Agambenian' approaches that are very critical of his work – remain directly or indirectly influenced by the original impact of his political philosophy.

While the review of this literature is a fundamental starting point for our main argument, in the present article we propose to depart from a perspective exclusively focused on institutional camps, to incorporate not only a reflection on the informal encampments that have made their appearance in Europe in the past decade or so, but also an analysis of how these makeshift spatial formations are associated with the presence and the workings of institutional camps, at times in a complementary, almost symbiotic relationship, as the example mentioned in the opening of this article seems to suggest. The analysis of the relationship between institutional and makeshift camps presented here is thus largely dominated by the European perspective and research experience of the authors, although some of its considerations were inspired by work done on camp geographies outside of Europe. We are fully aware of the limited scope of a European perspective on such an important topic and of the fact that the majority of camps today is located outside of Europe. At the same time, we believe that the current proliferation of institutional and makeshift camps in this continent requires further conceptualisations, also in recognition of the colonial legacy of the camp as an institution

and of the ghostly presence of the archipelago of Nazi concentration camps that have indelibly marked the historical geographies of the continent. What is more, the large majority of the literature on camp studies is produced by European scholars or scholars based in European institutions. The authors of this article are also European scholars and much of their empirical work on camps is focused on European cases, from the study of the bio-geopolitics of Nazi concentration camps to the management of asylum seekers in Italy, to the makeshift refugee spatialities of Calais, Paris, Dunkirk and Berlin, to the informal refugee Balkan route in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. So, while we acknowledge the potential limitations of the perspectives offered here, at the same time we hope that they may nonetheless contribute to existing debates in camp studies reflecting on other contexts and, more specifically, to the conceptualisation of the relationship between institutional and makeshift refugee camps in Europe.

This article thus assumes that institutional camps are specific geographical formations, having emerged as a modern spatial political technology first in the European colonies (see, among others, Arendt, 1968; Diken and Laustsen, 2005; Hyslop, 2011; Smith and Stucki, 2011; Wolf, 2016; Zimmerer, 2016), and then on European soil to separate, segregate and manage specific populations or groups of individuals (Agier and Lécadet, 2014). These camps are often 'spaces of exception' where certain subjects are contained and temporarily 'fixed in place', but also where they are re-qualified, re-classified, and translated into a biopolitical mass. They are spaces where the 'guests' are temporarily admitted into a custodian regime via their numbering and the tight regulations of their mobility and social interactions. They are also spatio-temporal limbos governed by principles of disciplinary management of the guests'/inmates' bodies which are often exposed to the authorities' governance machinery and their sovereign arbitrary decisions and interventions. Camps, including hospitality

camps for refugees and asylum seekers, despite being conceived as temporary facilities aimed at responding to a specific emergency, often become a permanent presence in our everyday landscapes and therefore sites of political repression, separation, containment, abandonment and custody, but also, in some cases, of agency, resistance, solidarity, care, and new political identity.

Together with these quasi-military facilities, other types of camps are created or altered by their own dwellers such as ad hoc makeshift settlements or institutional camps that are gradually 'informalised' by the everyday practices of their residents (Rygiel, 2011, 2012; Ramadan, 2013; Sanyal, 2014; Sigona, 2015; Katz, 2017a). Makeshift camps are mostly created as, literally, 'make-shift' spaces (Vasudevan, 2015: 340), that is, temporary and ephemeral sites generated by people 'on the move' and reflecting the precarious character of their condition together with their need for temporary shelter. These camps are usually made of basic tents and flimsy shelters built out of simple materials available on site such as cardboard sheets, blankets and sleeping bags, and/or nylon and tarpaulin sheets stretched over a frame made of timber studs or branches collected locally. When these camps grow, and their existence prolongs – as evidenced in Idomeni, Greece, and Calais, France – local charities and international humanitarian agencies often step in to provide basic amenities such as water tanks and portable toilets, while minor and more isolated camps are often dependent on smugglers who create and run them (see, among others, McGee and Pelham, 2018; Sandri, 2018).

In order to investigate the relationship between these two spatial formations as part of a broader understanding of the contemporary geographies of the camp in Europe, we start by proposing a brief genealogical account of the camp as a political technology and as a specific spatial formation. This account is then followed by a selected review of the literature on camps

in geography and other ‘camp studies’, and by a reflection on the recent shift in this field from work largely influenced by Agamben’s camp theory to ‘post-Agambenian’ debates on the refugee camp. This will help contextualise our main argument and move to the core analysis of the article where we discuss the new geographies of the camp in light of the abovementioned unruly mobilities in Europe, while considering some of their key manifestations and impact. Here, we interrogate in greater detail the relationship between the institutional refugee camps in Europe and other forms of refugee encampment. On the one hand, we discuss the spatialities of institutional refugee camps as modern institutions and biopolitical technologies. On the other, we analyse makeshift camps realised ‘on the spot’ by the refugees themselves and by others who support them, and how these different forms of camp are closely linked to each other. We also emphasise how the porosity of such informal spaces is often appropriated by ‘irregular migrants’ who generate entirely new informal geographies of mobility as a way to engage with the challenges of new restricted and violent border practices. As contemporary cities become new borderscapes where both makeshift and institutional camps are created, while many camp spaces tend to urbanise when their presence is protracted indefinitely, the paper also reflects on the meaningful and complex relations between the city and the camp. Based on these reflections, we conclude by submitting a few general considerations on such intersecting camp spatialities and on the importance of pursuing broader geographical understandings of the contemporary archipelagos of refugee camps in Europe, and possibly beyond.

II Camp genealogies

The origin of the camp as a modern institution is inherently connected to colonial history. The link between the early colonial camps and

European concentration camps has been widely acknowledged by scholars in camp studies, who also associate the emergence of the camp as a geographical formation to the continuities between the colonial spatial regimes and those established by totalitarian European states in the 20th century (see, among others, Arendt, 1968; Foucault, 2003). Born and experimented with in the colonies as a technology of power aimed at managing colonial populations, the camp has made its appearance in the geographies of Europe from the First World War onwards. Hannah Arendt, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1968), was among the first to notice how Germany’s colonial experience in South West Africa had been crucial in the establishment of the spatial regimes supported by the infamous archipelago of Nazi concentration camps later imposed by the Third Reich in Germany and a large part of Europe. Scholars of the Third Reich have recently further illustrated this historical continuity, recognising the colonies’ pivotal role in the experimentation of the carceral and biopolitical geographies that would later guide Hitler’s imperial plans (see Wolf, 2016; Zimmerer, 2016; for an exception to this argument see Gerwarth and Malinowski, 2009).

In his account of the utilisation of barbed wire since its invention in America in 1874 – with the colonisation of the Great Plains – to its adoption in the battlefields and in concentration camps, Raviel Netz (2004) takes the reader into a journey on the genealogy of this device and shows how barbed wire has played a key role in the ‘ecology of modernity’ that has produced the conditions of possibility for the camp to emerge as an institution and an instrumental political tool. Allowing for the establishment of a series of closed and open lines to mark specific spaces, Netz suggests, the proliferation of barbed wire has crucially contributed to create and shape specific understandings and forms of spatial management of ‘properties’, ‘prisons’ and ‘borders’ in order to prevent or even facilitate motion. He also highlights how, through

the simple ecological equation of ‘flesh’ and ‘iron’, barbed wire has played a crucial role in newly conceived processes of territorial expansion, colonisation, large-scale, control of populations, and the production of ‘total spaces’, of which the camp is possibly the most powerful manifestation. In other words, for Netz, while the use of barbed wire can be certainly read as one manifestation of modern capitalist logics applied to geopolitical space, it must also be recognised as a political technology aimed at segregating, ‘containing’, cleansing and educating increasing components of the population. The political and biopolitical use of barbed wire, in fact, has contributed to the constitution of networks of camps in the 20th century that became experimental laboratories for the shaping of a new kind of population by qualifying certain groups of (perceived as problematic) individuals via new social categories and containing and regulating their mobility by ‘fixing them in space’ (for a geographical reading of this, see Giaccaria and Minca, 2011a, 2011b, 2016a, 2016b). As Netz reminds us, if in terms of military and political history the use of barbed wire made its first appearance in South Africa during the Boer War, this instrument has been invaluable for the running of later concentration camps such as the Nazi and Soviet ones.

In line with Netz’s interpretation, Diken and Laustsen (2005) also suggest that the colonisation of the Great Plains in the second half of the 19th century has been key to the appearance of the camp as a political technology aimed at managing and controlling population. In particular, following on Razac’s (2000) insights on the political history of barbed wire, they claim that the use of this device in the establishment of reservations for Native Americans proved to be an invaluable instrument to conquer, control and impose a new set of social and spatial relations in the colonised territories of the American frontier. Barbed wire and enclosed spaces were in fact used as means to repress, fight and ‘domesticate’ native subjects who were not

treated as individual human beings but rather as objects to govern, manage, separate and enclose (Diken and Laustsen, 2005: 40–3). Other scholars have, however, identified the origin of the modern camp with the Cuban concentration camps that appeared during the Spanish-American War in 1895–8 and with the parallel establishment of concentration camps by the British during the Boer War in South Africa (1899–1902) as forerunners of totalitarian camps and all present-day camp-like structures (among others, Agamben, 1998; Gilroy, 2004; also Hyslop, 2011; Moshenska and Myers, 2011; Smith and Stucki, 2011). Although through different paths of analysis, all these authors see in these colonial camps the emergence of a combination of calculation rationalities and spatial concentration as strategies to govern populations – as individuals and as masses (Minca, 2015a).

Yet, if scholars tend to agree that the history of concentration camps is intimately linked to the experimentation with new forms of governance in the colonies, they also focus on the different functions of camps and on the different reasons that have justified their establishment. Camps have in fact been utilised for military purposes (Hyslop, 2011) and territorial expansion (Katz, 2015a, 2016a), but also oppression of political enemies (Mühlhahn, 2010), aspirations of racial purity (see, for example, Fritsche, 1998) ethnic cleansing (Madley, 2005), and labour exploitation and industrial production (Weiss, 2011). Often utilised to organise and divide the population according to race, the role of camps was crucial in wartime situations as they were part of the military effort and instruments to suppress rebellions and anti-colonial movements. In South-West Africa two different sets of camps were created by the German colonisers in 1904: camps operated with the purpose of annihilating the Herero local population; and labour camps that could eventually lead to death because of the terrible living conditions of the inmates (Madley, 2005: 446). In tracing the

continuities between these colonial practices and those of the Third Reich in Europe, Madley shows how both these typologies were then adopted and operated by the Nazis. According to Hyslop (2011), the metropolitan public in Germany became accustomed through the media to the atrocities and the violence that occurred in the colonies, but also to the related racist concepts and racial forms of segregation that were implemented through the camp. Such narratives were met with hardly any resistance, facilitating the establishment of the Nazi concentration camps to oppose political enemies and the groups of populations considered a biopolitical threat to the purity of the German nation (Giaccaria and Minca, 2016b), with some prominent Nazi ideologues having served in the colonies (Wolf, 2016).

While Hyslop (2011) traces the utilisation of the camp in military settings before the establishment of concentration camps in Cuba and South Africa and in the space of Europe during the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1), he suggests that the camp was also related to the advent of new cultures of military professionalism that led to the inclusion of civilians (as victims) in the management of war. Such strategies were widely utilised in the colonial space as well. As Smith and Stucki (2011) also illustrate, the creation of concentration camps in Cuba, South Africa, but also in the Philippines during the Filipino insurrection against the US annexation and occupation of the islands (1899), were part of military strategies to fight the guerrillas and separate them from the civilians who may have provided support. Although camps were allegedly established to provide humanitarian relief, the encampment of the civilian population was in fact the result of a military spatial strategy. For Hyslop (2011), this would explain why, for instance, in the Cuban camps the attention was not so much on the protection of the civilians (see also Smith and Stucki, 2011). The Spanish army lacked any knowledge on how to run such camps, leaving the population contained there

with no protection or support and exposed to a high rate of mortality.

Camps in the colonies were also aimed at labour exploitation, often alongside racial differentiation and protection of the political status quo and/or affirmation of a regime. Weiss (2011) suggests that the first camps in South Africa were not set as part of the Boer War but were rather labour camps established after the discovery of diamonds in the 1870s and of gold in the 1880s. In order to manage cheap labour, workers were incarcerated and segregated by suspending the existing juridical order, since they were considered a priori as potential thieves who needed to be controlled. The logic of the camp affected their labour and living environment, since the workers and their spaces were subjected to ‘security, custody and biopolitical administration’ (2011: 25). Similar characteristics would be found later in totalitarian Soviet and Nazi camps and Prisoner of War (POW) camps from which labour was extracted. In his analysis of the Gulag system and the internment of potential enemies, Netz (2004) argues that while Soviet camps were certainly an instrument for disciplining the subjected population and part of a project aimed at the colonisation and subjugation of the countryside, the camps also became self-sufficient spaces and an invaluable economic resource for the authorities. As the camps were also aimed at the modernisation of the country, this aim was achievable through prisoners’ forced labour used for the accumulation of capital. Kolosov (2015) reminds us that this was rendered possible because of the suspension of prisoners’ human rights as they were ‘transformed into a biopolitical substance’ (2015: 87).

The fact that colonial camps had served as experimental practices later utilised and refined in Europe with the emergence of concentration camps as part of the Nazi and the Soviet totalitarian regimes is now widely acknowledged in the relevant literature (see, among others, Gilroy, 2004; Madley, 2005; Netz, 2004; Wolf,

2016; Zimmerer, 2016). However, it is worth noting that alternative hypothesis for the emergence of the camp as technology of power have been advanced by other scholars who have looked further back in history and mainly focused on the camp as a technology of containment and spatial management of specific groups of people. In her genealogy of the refugee camp, McConnachie (2016: 399), for example, identifies different ‘camps of containment’, including POW camps, internment camps and forced migrant camps, as the temporary spaces which preceded the creation of the contemporary refugee camps, starting with Napoleon’s 1803 POW camps where British male civilians were interned. Smith and Stucki (2011), instead, locate the birth of the camp in the establishment of refugee camps for immigrants in Britain in the 18th century, POW camps in the late 18th century and in the appearance of workhouses. Focusing on the colonial history of the camp, they suggest that in the context of the Anglo-Boer War the British relied on the previous management of workhouses in Britain, the management of the Irish famine in the 1840s and of the Indian one in the 1870s and 1880s, showing in particular how their experience with the workhouses was helpful in running of camps in South Africa a few decades later.

What emerges from this brief review of genealogical accounts is that the camp, as a modern institution, has been used since its inception as a technology of population protection and care, but also as a military strategy and an instrument of population control and racial purification. These early experiences and experimentations have surely influenced and led to the creation of more sophisticated spaces of exclusion ‘to park’ what Italian anthropologist Federico Rahola (2003) describes as ‘humanity in excess’. However, as mentioned at the outset of this article, the camp is not only a space of exclusion that keeps the ‘undesired’ (Agier, 2011b) separate from the rest of the population. While principles of exclusion and containment

have certainly informed the creation of camps, at the same time, resistance and new forms of political identities have often become the unintended result of the concentration of people in specific enclosed spaces. What we are trying to say is that if the camp is a spatial formation based on the de-subjectivation of the individuals it segregates and on their requalification in line with the biopolitical categories imposed by the camp authorities, the unique forms of sociality that are generated by the mass of people who happen to be subjected to camp regimes – despite all the violence and the repression that may be exercised against them – may be the source of tactics of survival but also true political projects, as we discuss in the coming sections.

III Camp studies, camp geographies

I From Nazi camps to Guantanamo

The 20th century has been famously defined as ‘the century of camps’ (Bauman, 1989; Kotek and Rigoulot, 2000), having witnessed the appearance and the proliferation of various forms of camps in Europe and the rest of the world. Concentration camps, temporary detention centres, transit camps, labour camps and refugee camps, to name but a few, have been characterised by different combinations and levels of control, custody and care, and are often conceptualised as temporary yet enduring solutions to ‘contain’ populations that, for various reasons, state authorities decide to keep separate ‘from the rest of society, in the attempt to cleanse the body politic from their corrupting or compromising presence’ (Minca, 2015a: 79).

Although camps also intern prisoners, the difference between the camp and the conventional prison is an important one. Individuals are interned in prisons because they have committed a crime and are therefore subject to the penal system; however, in camps people are normally not interned as individuals but as

'masses' (see Kotek and Rigoulot, 2000), not because of what they did but because of who they are. Since their existence is often deemed to pose a threat to the state or to society as a whole, camps' inmates may often be exposed to arbitrary administrative detention that falls outside the given juridical order and modes of governance.

As noted above, the work of Italian political philosopher Giorgio Agamben has been extremely influential in recent attempts to theorise the modern camp and its spatialities (see, among others, Ek, 2006; Minca, 2006, 2007). The so-called 'Agamben effect' (Ross, 2008) in the social sciences and humanities has been so significant that one may be tempted to claim that the entire field of 'camp studies' has emerged with the appearance and popularisation of Agamben's *Homo Sacer* project (see 1998, 2002, 2005). The consolidation of camp studies in the late 2000s can also be seen as a broader (and often controversial) response to Agamben's grand statements about the importance of incorporating the 'nomos of the camp' in our understanding of sovereign power in the modern state. For Agamben (1998), the camp has become a technology of power that divides lives worth living and protection from the ones deserving abandonment and exclusion, a site where individuals may be translated into biopolitical bodies and where power is exercised via sovereign exceptions.

Attempts to conceptualise the spatialities of institutional camps are not new. Sofsky (1997), for example, in *The Order of Terror*, has investigated in detail the spatial rationalities guiding the workings of Nazi camps, in this way offering an unprecedented set of insights into the ways in which spatial arrangements were key to the management of the inmates and their lives. The rich and vast historical literature on the Holocaust – that we have no space here to analyse in detail (see Giaccaria and Minca, 2016b) – often refers to the daily spatial practices in the concentration camps, but also to how

the camps were organised as worlds apart made of rules and material arrangements aimed at the exploitation and often the extermination of the inmates (on Auschwitz see the monumental work of Dwork and Van Pelt, 1996). In geography the spatial 'calculative rationalities' (Elden, 2006a) of the Nazi camps have been studied only sporadically; however, Auschwitz-Birkenau and other extermination camps have been analysed in detail by some relatively recent work. Knowles et al. in their edited volume *Geographies of the Holocaust* (2014), for example, have included chapters on the mapping of SS concentration camp spatialities (Knowles and Jaskot, 2014) and on the analysis of 'Building at Auschwitz as a Geographic Problem' (Jaskot et al., 2014). Charlesworth (1994) has instead discussed Auschwitz as a contested place of memory and has interrogated from a geographical perspective the landscape of Holocaust sites (see Charlesworth and Addis, 2002; Charlesworth, 2004a, 2004b; Charlesworth et al., 2006). Through a series of interventions, Carter-White (2009, 2011, 2013) has investigated the spatialities of the Nazi concentration camps and their representation in literature, films and the social media. Minca (2006, 2007) has applied an Agambenian perspective on the nomos of the concentration camp in two interventions in which he reflects on the 'spatial' in Agamben's work and, in particular, on his theory of the camp in relation to the foundations of the modern state and its biopolitical geographies. Also inspired by Agamben, and in particular his concept of *soglia*/threshold, a few years later Giaccaria and Minca (2011a, 2011b) explored the topologies of Auschwitz in relation to the topographical calculative rationalities that guided the management of concentration camps.

Notwithstanding the importance of this literature on Nazi concentration camps, the most recent proliferation of interventions on the 'spatialities of the camp' within geography and other disciplines is, however, largely related to

the ‘war on terror’ initiated by the Bush administration in the aftermath of 9/11, a war made of a set of global ‘geographies of exception’, including the infamous rendition programme flying thousands of inmates across the planet to connect a network of secret detention camps (see Paglen and Thompson, 2006; also Gregory, 2006, 2007; O’Neill, 2012). The alleged ‘return of the camp’ (Minca, 2005) in western society was in fact somewhat normalised by the geopolitical agenda of the American administration of those years (Gregory, 2004, 2006; Butler, 2006; Martin and Michelson, 2009; Mountz, 2011; Mountz et al., 2013), with the increased presence of camps where exceptional forms of sovereign power were implemented (for example, at borders or in international airports, to keep ‘in custody’ individuals whose identities are questioned) and the growing use of biometrics to regulate people’s mobility and qualify increasing quotas of population (see Amoore, 2006). This new interest in camp studies was also associated with the operations of the infamous Camp Delta situated in Guantanamo Bay, and the implementation of preventive actions potentially in each and every corner of the world where American intervention was seen as necessary. The publication in English of *Homo Sacer* thus seemed the response that many scholars were looking for to make theoretical sense of the new conditions imposed by the war on terror, something that possibly explains the perhaps exaggerated enthusiasm with which some of its fundamental concepts, like ‘sovereign exception’, ‘bare life’, and ‘the nomos of the camp’, were incorporated in a plethora of contributions concerned with situations of biopolitical intervention (Campbell and Sitze, 2013; Minca, 2015b). Overall, the combination of the new global geopolitical interventions related to the war on terror and of Agamben’s path-breaking and provocative work have somehow brought back in to western academic debates the spectre of the Holocaust, and generated interest in the new proliferation of camps

where extreme and exceptional measures are applied. More specifically, an important debate in geography largely inspired by Agamben’s work (see, for example, the special issue of *Geografiska Annaler B*, 88(4), 2006) has been preoccupied with the pervasive geographies of exception produced by the Bush administration after 9/11 across the globe (see also Raulff, 2004; Reid-Henry, 2007). While Agamben’s philosophical speculations on the camp as a paradigmatic space for the manifestation of arbitrary sovereign power were largely based on Auschwitz-Birkenau and the related Nazi biopolitical experimentations, some of his conceptualisations have been directly linked to the re-emergence of contemporary concentration camps in the first decade of the new century related to the war on terror, in this way building implicit potential analogies between these two biopolitical regimes of exception.

2 Agamben and the refugee camp

As mentioned in the introduction, the momentum in camp studies provoked by these events has affected the ways in which other camps began to be analysed, including the spaces of humanitarian intervention aimed at managing refugees and irregular migrants (see, among others, Edkins, 2000; Perera, 2002; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2004; also Elden, 2006b; Garelli and Tazzioli, 2018). It was perhaps Agamben’s focus on the figure of the refugee as a manifestation of bare life that has opened up ‘camp studies’ to a reflection on the displacement and management of refugees on the part of national and international authorities. The refugee, for Agamben, is the most exposed figure of our time since its very presence reveals the untenable link between birth and territory on which the principle of territorial citizenship at the origin of the present global political order is based, an order incapable of imagining any other form of belonging and legitimate ‘right to a place’. As illustrated by a series of examples related to the

current ‘refugee crises’, the sovereign’s custody and care of the population is often manifested in the declared aim expressed by many governments to preserve and ‘protect’ the socio-biopolitical body of the nation (see, among others, BBC, 2018; Iyengar, 2016). The ‘encampment’ of those who are considered strangers to such a socio-political body (irregular migrants, refugees, asylum seekers) is in fact often justified today on the grounds of biopolitical assumptions and distinctions. For this reason, refugees are perceived and treated as ‘undesirables’ (Agier, 2011b) whose life is captured and managed through the political technology of the camp. It was Jennifer Edkins (2000), in particular, who initially illustrated how the Agambenian concepts of ‘exception’, ‘the camp’ and ‘bare life’ were useful analytical tools to study the current spatial management of displaced populations and for the understanding of the condition of refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants (see also Jenkins, 2004; Darling, 2009). While careful in not uncritically assimilating Nazi concentration camps to refugee and famine relief camps in Africa and Kosovo, Edkins found, however, commonalities by highlighting how ‘in all these locations we find people who are produced as bare life, a form of life that can be killed but not sacrificed’ (2000: 11).

Perceived as aliens and a priori criminalised by discourses on illegal immigration, these categories of ‘strangers’ are often contained in camps, at times far away from the mainland (Afeef, 2006; Mountz, 2011; Mountz et al., 2013), and their bodies and lives literally managed by the camp authorities (Salter, 2006; Bigo, 2007; Hyndman and Mountz, 2007; Dikeç, 2009; Gill, 2009a; Vaughan-Williams, 2009a, 2009b; Janmyr, 2016; on the ‘hotspots’ camp system see Tazzioli, 2017; Tazzioli and Garelli, 2018). Deprived of any political and juridical value because of the loss of state protection (see Arendt, 1968: 267–302), these populations on the move have been described as *homines sacri* whose bare lives are rendered

explicit and potentially exposed to any form of violence (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2004). Some of the key Agambenian concepts have thus been applied to a plethora of situations of displacement, encampments or forms of abandonment: from refugee camps (Edkins, 2000), to detention centres (Perera, 2002; Bigo, 2007), from offshore centres for asylum seekers (Mountz, 2010, 2011; Mountz et al., 2013) to the management of Romani populations in the European context (Sigona, 2005, 2015; Marinaro, 2009; Armillei and Lobo, 2017; Maestri, 2017a, 2017b).

Today refugee camps, established as temporary sites for the containment, care and control of the displaced (McConnachie, 2016), are in fact often turned into permanent spaces of exception and extra-territorial sites governed by exceptional juridical and administrative orders. Set up as humanitarian responses to population displacement due to disasters or war-related events, refugee camps often become tools of control and containment of a mass of individuals that governments believe cannot be treated otherwise. As biopolitical spaces, they are often managed by humanitarian organisations which capture and further expose the very bare lives of subjects incorporated in relief programs aimed at making them survive. Revealing their intimate link with sovereign power, these organisations may contribute to the denudation of the very life they are supposed to protect and become what Agier (2002, 2011b) has labelled the ‘left hand of the Empire’: while the right hand of the Empire strikes and produces bare life, the humanitarian left hand heals, cures and ‘makes live’ (see also Pandolfi, 2000, 2003).

For Agier (2011b: 4), ‘[t]here is no care without control’ and the (undeclared) biopolitical role of these camps is also that of keeping the refugee bodies at a distance from the rest of society. While designed as spaces where refugees can receive assistance and relief, they often turn into spaces of control, surveillance and even violence (see, among others, Hyndman,

2000; Diken and Laustsen, 2005; Ramadan, 2009b). As millions of forcibly displaced people knock on the doors of western societies, the fear and the anxiety provoked by the increased presence of ‘alien bodies’ within national borders tend to guide the response of state authorities. In reaction to what is considered a humanitarian (but also political, securitarian and moral) emergency, gestures of governmental solidarity and hospitality – such as Angela Merkel’s ‘open door’ refugee policy in late 2015–early 2016 – are alternated and intersected by various forms of encampment. The politics of exclusion adopted by some European governments, for example, has often translated into the erection of barbed wire fences and walls to stop the flow and journeys of irregular migrants (see Brown, 2010; Loyd et al., 2012; also Minca and Rijke, 2017), while the parallel establishment of refugee camps, identification facilities and detention centres has aimed at evaluating asylum seekers’ requests but also, often, at preventing their integration in the hosting societies (see, among others, Campesi, 2015; Pinelli, 2018).

Such institutional formations, while clearly having a different purpose compared to the archipelago of detention camps established by the war on terror, at the same time may be recognised as political technologies sharing some of the same practices of exclusion, control and surveillance. This mode of governance and the related body of work are also connected to what has more recently been defined as ‘carceral geographies’, a field of studies that includes investigations of carceral regimes in the management of refugees and other recent manifestations of detention, concentration and imprisonment camps (see, among others, Moran, 2015; Gill et al., 2017; Moran et al., 2017; Turner and Peters, 2017). Camps, Agier and Lecadet (2014) argue, are not only instruments of power and confinement that enclose and manage such humanity in excess, but they reveal the permanent crisis of the nation-state. Laboratories of precarious presence where life

at the margin is experimented upon, refugee camps are also forms of ‘geopolitical humanitarianism’ (Agier and Lecadet, 2014), which tend to reproduce and reinvigorate the principles of national citizenship (Lui, 2002; also, Hyndman, 2000).

3 Post-Agambenian camp studies

While Agamben’s contribution in understanding the concentration camp and in placing the camp as an institution at the core of political discourse is still considered invaluable, at the same time, some of his most extreme conceptualisations were recently found not so easily applicable to the multifaceted realities of the contemporary geographies of refugee and other camps. This is not to say that concentration camps have disappeared, or that sovereign power is not exercised even in the most benign forms of hospitality camps. However, what could be identified as a ‘post-Agambenian’ wave of camp studies, in geography and elsewhere, despite the continuities with the previous one, has partially moved away from the Agambenian conceptual framework to explore different theorisations of the camp, and in particular of the refugee camp. More specifically, Agamben’s theory of the camp has recently been complemented or replaced in the study of refugee camp spatialities by approaches capable of emphasising the ‘complex social relations contained within’ the camp (Redclift, 2013: 309; also Owens, 2009; McConnachie, 2018). No longer and not solely considered as spaces of exception where violence is perpetrated and bare life produced, refugee camps, migrant camps, Roma camps and even detention camps are increasingly recognised also as fields of possibility for political action and as spaces where the exceptionality of the conditions and the specific social fabric may be used by inmates and residents to reconstitute and reshape their identities and possibly claim their rights (Mallicki, 1995; Peteet, 2005; Ramadan, 2009a, 2013;

Sanyal, 2011; Rygiel, 2012; Woroniecka-Krzyzanowska, 2013, 2017; Feldman, 2015; Katz, 2015b; Sigona, 2015; Abreek-Zubiedat and Nitzan-Shiftan, 2018; Perera, 2018). Camps are thus studied as highly politicised spaces, since rich empirical work has shown many cases in which they have turned into sites of resistance, commemoration and new political struggle (see Farah, 2009; Dorai, 2010; Pasquetti, 2015; Turner, 2015; Woroniecka-Krzyzanowska, 2017; on resistance in detention centres see Isin and Rygiel, 2007; Puggioni, 2014a, 2014b; Tazzioli, 2017). The extensive literature on Palestinian camps is particularly useful here, since these camps have come to represent crucially symbolic spaces whose very existence and presence remind the international community of the ‘right of return’ and a form of resistance to the state of Israel that would rather hope for their dismantlement and the related disappearance of the memory of the 1948 *Nakba* (see Woroniecka-Krzyzanowska, 2013, 2017; Feldman, 2015). Remaining in the camp is thus perceived by many refugees as a commitment to the Palestinian cause. Despite the fact that many of their inhabitants are ‘non-citizens’ and have few rights, camps are spaces where political subjectivities and collective interpretations of injustice and rights are performed in important ways.

Overall, vast and rich empirical evidence shows that particular attention should also be given to the specific modes of governance and the related power relations in refugee camps, Roma camps, and others, as spaces marked by ‘ambiguous’, ‘contentious’, ‘hybrid’, ‘patched’ and ‘contested’ forms of sovereignty (Ramadan, 2013; Janmyr and Knudsen, 2016; Katz, 2017a; Maestri, 2017a, 2017b; Oesch, 2017; Ramadan and Fregonese, 2017; Katz et al., 2018a). These studies have been particularly relevant in reference to camps located in or near urban areas, where international agencies, national authorities, municipal governments, local civil society organisations, the private sector and sometimes

the military work together or in parallel to govern their operations. Such entanglements of governance emerge precisely because the camp is established as a space of exception outside the normal juridical order and is managed in constantly-changing modes and arrangements following unstable, temporary and often arbitrary and contradictory sovereign decisions. These camps are also part of a broader geography made of buffer zones, material and immaterial borders, urban and rural frontiers, and informal refugee dwellings (see Altin and Minca, 2017; Gueguen-Teil and Katz, 2018). This is why it is key to read the spatialities of the institutional camps by considering their gradual ‘informalisation’ and the related existence of ‘makeshift camps’ or ‘jungles’, since these are part of the ambivalent interplay of visibility/invisibility and intervention/abandonment that characterises the broader geographies of refugee im/mobilities. Informal camps are therefore also sites where new forms of politics and political subjectivities are being created and where spatial resistance to political action increasingly takes place.

IV Rethinking the geographies of the refugee camp

Institutional camps, whether in the form of refugee camps, hospitality camps, detention camps, transit camps, reception centres or other planned spaces of control, custody and care, are normally created ‘top down’ by international humanitarian agencies such as the UNHCR, by national governments and by municipal authorities. Such spaces, normally conceived to control and take care of a large number of people with a minimal budget, are often built from repetitive pre-fabricated units – tents, huts or shipping containers – organised in a grid or similar rational layout to make them more easily built, organised, supervised and controlled. These camps are usually standardised and anonymous spaces of architectural uniformity which

often leave no options to be differently accommodated and utilised, creating an order which resists any stamp of individuality and any form of personalisation. Institutional refugee camps are, arguably, the successors of other disciplinary institutions, like the military camp and the concentration camp (see Katz, 2017a: 2). It is no coincidence that many former Nazi concentration camps in Europe were transformed into refugee ‘assembly centres’ after the end of the Second World War and used again recently to host refugees during the recent ‘migration crisis’ in Europe (on refugees in Dachau see Hardach, 2015; in Buchenwald see Huggler, 2015). Many former military barracks or prisons are also converted today into refugee camps. These disciplinary institutions and the refugee camp have in fact similar *modus operandi*. They represent, as noted above, spatial biopolitical techniques according to which every aspect of the biological lives of the population they keep in ‘custody’ – such as food, water, shelter, hygiene, health and security – should be ‘taken care of’ and centrally governed. These refugee spaces also share with the concentration camps the tendency to strip their residents of their identities while coding them according to presumed biological similarities or ethnic groupings (often based on skin colour and appearance).

While the systematic rationality of these camps is convenient in the eyes of camps’ planners and administrators, its totalising order is often experienced by their residents as alienating and intimidating (see Gueguen-Teil and Katz, 2018). However, as Malkki (1995), Sanyal (2012) and McConnachie (2016) have suggested, there is no quintessential refugee space or experience. Refugee camps today can in fact be institutional but also informal spaces, closed or open enclaves, controlled or self-administered, temporary or semi-permanent spatialisations of care and control. Some camps, as Agier (2002, 2011b, 2018) has argued, have been in existence for decades. Their workings have largely exceeded the emergency phase

and, because of their complexities and heterogeneity, some camps could be seen as a new form of urban (or quasi-urban) spatiality.

The camp and the city have long been analysed in relation to one another and ‘the urban question of camps’, as Sanyal (2014: 560) suggests, could be approached by ‘discussing the urbanity of the camps and discussing urban camps’, with the former approach considering camps *as potential cities* and the second *as part of cities* and encroaching on the city geographies (see also Katz et al., 2018b). If one examines the ‘urbanity of the camps’ in particular, it may be argued that some refugee camps have reached such a significant size, density and complexity that they could be compared to cities or towns on their own. They increasingly host diverse social compositions due to the presence of different cultural groups (made of both refugees and often non-refugees), with the emergence of complex forms of urban livelihoods and lifestyles often linked to informal employment and informal economies (Agier, 2002; see also Doraï, 2010). They are also considered urbanised because of the presence of infrastructures and services such as schools, hospitals, places of worship and various businesses such as shops and restaurants. Thus, many refugee camps have become very complex social formations and sites of social, cultural and political ferment (see, among others, Herz, 2013). Their vibrant life can become attractive for other outcasts, who may even try to join the refugee population when camps, as new configurations of poverty and cosmopolitanism, turn into new urban centres of ‘life at the margin’ (Agier, 2011b; also Martin, 2015; Jansen, 2018).

The urban has therefore become an important analytical framework to interrogate the refugee camp and its spatialities. This is not only because refugees increasingly live in cities, but also because they often adopt the same strategies of resilience used by the urban poor to survive. As urban informalities become the ‘new

way of life' and urbanism (AlSayyad, 2004; see also Roy and AlSayyad, 2004), refugee camps often resemble urban slums (Sanyal, 2012, 2014; see also Martin, 2015; Knudsen, 2016). While Malkki (2002, 355) resists the assimilation of refugee camps with cities since 'the city entails expectations of citizenship', Grbac (2013) instead argues that the camp is a space where inmates and inhabitants exercise new forms of citizenship and claim a 'right to the city' by demanding the recognition of rights normally denied to them. The refugee camp may indeed foster a particular kind of citizenship when it is re-appropriated by its residents and political identities and forms of resistance may emerge and take powerful manifestations (Agier, 2011a, 2011b; also, Sigona, 2015). According to Agier, the camp remains in any case an incomplete city and a 'city-to-be made' because all too often '[t]he shift from the management of camps in the name of emergency towards the political recognition of their enduring reality [as part of the city fabric] does not take place' (2002, 337). While these camps may indeed represent precarious and fragile urbanities, they nonetheless offer sketches of normality for their long-term residents (see Mould, 2017).

Overall, this body of work on urban camps has been instrumental to recognise the political agency of the refugees or irregular migrants inhabiting the camps and the social and political life that originates in that context (Pasquetti, 2015; Picker and Pasquetti, 2015). However, while these forms of resilience may resemble those of the urban poor, refugee camps are still reminders of unresolved conflicts and maintain an intimate relation with the original gesture that has produced them – the exception and the suspension of the normal juridical order applied to some specific populations – and therefore remain fundamentally excluded from the qualified life of the polis (Martin, 2015; also, Tawil-Souri, 2016). Their exceptional status is thus juridically maintained and, like all informal

urban settlements, they can always and suddenly be razed to the ground by the authorities (Sanyal, 2011, 2014; Stel, 2016).

While it is important to study refugee camps as distinct political and social spaces, it is also crucial to refrain from treating them as isolated spatial formations and instead be attentive to the ways in which they exceed and overflow their own boundaries (Martin, 2015). Looking at urban camps now as part of cities, again Sanyal (2014, 560) contends that refugee camps, especially the ones in the Global South, 'do not conform to [...] neat and bounded geographies' typical of a space of exception with clear-cut boundaries. Echoing Yiftachel's (2009) notion of 'gray spaces', she suggests that 'the transgression between the space of the camp and the space of the host territory is messy, creating political "gray spaces"' (Sanyal, 2014: 560) and blurring lines of biopolitical and spatial categorisations. In addition, refugee camps are often connected to one another and to other spaces of urban marginality; they may also be part of wider urban processes, including through their connections to the local labour market or the ways in which they are incorporated into broader processes of urban planning and the related governance (Peteet, 2005; Dorai, 2010; Sanyal, 2014; Knudsen, 2016). They may in fact have positive effects on the local and regional economy and be at the origin of important 'host economies', especially when they become a permanent presence in specific territories (Jansen, 2016).

Refugee camps may play a key geopolitical role related to specific border functions, as has clearly been highlighted in recent work on the camps in northern France and along the Balkan route (Katz, 2017a; Mandić, 2018; Minca et al., 2018; Umek et al., 2018). Camps have in fact long been part of the 'border spectacle' (De Genova, 2013), created as temporary waiting areas within the intensifying practices of border and immigration policing and control (see Mountz et al., 2013). These buffer zones for

documentless people-in-waiting allow the authorities to selectively ignore the migrants' presence or, alternatively, admit them into hospitality centres where their suspended spatio-temporariness would continue in different settings (see, among others, Bacchetta and Martin, 2018; Tazzioli and Garelli, 2018). Within these territorial and extra-territorial border zones, the camp may perform strategically ambivalent quasi-carceral functions of exclusion and containment, care and abandonment, that 'work not only to contain mobility, but also to reconfigure and relocate national borders' (Mountz, 2010: 530).

Border camps, however, are not only created in national border 'zones' or 'lines' or along routes leading to them, but also in cities where internal state 'local border control' (Lebuhn, 2013: 38; also Katz et al., 2018a) is often being practised. In the first case, local enforcement of state border control interrupts the journeys of the migrants. In the second, the migrants use the city as a jumping-off point to other destinations. The current 'pixilation of the border' (Ribas-Mateos, 2015: 25), from contour lines to points that control networks, is primarily evident in cities which function as junctions of migration flows. Consequently, both institutional and makeshift camps are often created in urban areas. Informal refugee camps have thus appeared in recent years in European cities such as Paris (Chrisafis, 2018), Rome (Busby and Dotto, 2018), Budapest (Hartocollis, 2015), Belgrade (Keefe, 2017), Brussels (Depraetere and Oosterlynck, 2017; Schreuer, 2018) and Athens (Human Rights Watch, 2016), often in or near train stations that have become central nodes of national and transnational informal mobility. Makeshift camps have also emerged in port cities where migrants were suspended en route, such as Calais, Dunkirk and Patras (Katz, 2016b, 2017), or in border regions along established routes, as in northern Serbia and northern Bosnia-Herzegovina (Minca et al., 2018, 2019), or northern Italy (Altin and Minca, 2017). Here,

the barbed wire plays again a significant role in camp geographies, this time not in separating and controlling people within camp spaces but in fortifying national borders against irregular movements of people and creating bottleneck spaces where makeshift camps appear.

Makeshift camps, whether in border zones or elsewhere, are often related to the presence of institutional camps, giving origin to hybrid complexes of camp functions: the combination of rationally ordered and instrumental spaces, and self-built, seemingly-chaotic precarious spaces, is in fact often the result of ad hoc interventions on the part of institutional authorities (international organisations, national governments, municipal authorities, etc.), or the initiatives of the refugees or irregular migrants themselves and of those who support them (like NGOs or other humanitarian organisations). While makeshift camps are often read as spaces assembled and scattered across rural or urban landscapes with no apparent form, recent research (Keiser and Lainé, 2017; Gueguen-Teil and Katz, 2018) has shown that their seemingly 'chaotic' spatiality is sometimes organised according to specific cultural and social orders and needs, but also constrained by limitations imposed by the authorities (see Katz, 2017a: 5–9). The creation and the development of these camps are often violently restricted by the state authorities, who tend to enforce the camp's temporary status by literally 'abandoning' their populations with the provision of minimal or no services and infrastructural support, or by evicting them. Since most of these makeshift camps are created by migrants according to changing numbers, needs, resources, abilities and restrictions, they tend to be highly dynamic spatial formations (Katz, 2016b: 19). In addition, a close examination of refugee and migrant camps that have been functioning for a long time show that the formal/informal camp dichotomy is much less rigid and stable than one would imagine. While in some cases these typologies are indeed

kept completely separate, in other cases they work together closely and complement each other in supporting (or abandoning) the refugees (Minca, 2015c; Sanyal, 2017).

Some authors see informal refugee camps as the materialisation of the fundamental inequality that stands at the core of liberal citizenship. Mobility, in fact, is a right for some, but it is negated and obstructed for the ‘unspoken Others’ (Cresswell, 2006: 161), who find means to carry on with their journeys through different, often ‘irregular’, methods. The institutional forms of prevention of these ‘irregular’ mobilities, coupled with brutal ‘violent inaction’ (Davies et al., 2017), foster the creation of makeshift camps. These spontaneous and precarious spatial formations may be tolerated for a limited time by residents and authorities, while attracting alternative forms of humanitarian support and a related socially, professionally and materially diverse space embedded in wider networks. These flexible and responsive networks and associated archipelagos of camps are ‘the infrastructure’ which supports the ‘other side’ of legal and authorised mobilities (see Katz, 2017b), sustaining the fractured journeys of the ones who move invisibly across borders, cities and fields to reach their desired destinations (Minca et al., 2018). These makeshift spatialities and their related practices have become a sort of *rite de passage* for many informal migrants, a route made of a sequence of stages where they are subjected to the translation of their bodies and individual identities into the language of their new status (see Gill, 2009a, 2009b).

These informal spaces, as noted at the outset of this article, are often appropriated by these people ‘on the move’ who generate entirely new ‘irregular’ geographies of mobility that use existing social and humanitarian networks and infrastructures to incorporate the ambivalences of these border-zones as a strategy, as a way to engage with the violent practices of the border authorities and the erection of numerous walls

to limit and deflect their irregular journeys (Tinti and Reitano, 2016). Both institutional and makeshift camps are spaces of suspended temporariness where unwanted populations are contained outside the normal order of the state. Both formations are in fact included in the UNHCR definition of a refugee camp as ‘any purpose-built, planned and managed location or spontaneous settlement where refugees are accommodated and receive assistance and services from government and humanitarian agencies’ (2014: 12). While such a definition implies that informal refugee spatial formations are also considered as ‘camps’, according to the UNHCR ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ camps also share ‘some degree of limitation on the rights and freedoms of refugees, such as their ability to move freely [...] or access protection and services’ (2014: 12).

When we look, again, at border camps, both institutional and makeshift formations can be recognised in very different configurations. For example, in the migrant camps established in northern France between 2015 and 2017 in and around Calais and Dunkirk, these typologies intersected in their different stages and forms of existence (Katz, 2017a: 10–12; also Keiser and Lainé, 2017). The ‘new’ jungle in Calais, a highly symbolic space of the so-called ‘migration crisis’, was created as part of Calais’ long history of formal and informal camps set up by different actors as a result of the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994 and the consequential attempts of migrants to enter the UK (Reinisch, 2015; Agier, 2018). The layout of the Calais jungle was the result of the heterogeneity of its dwellers and of their cultural and social practices, of the actions of the volunteers who supported them, as well as of the restrictions imposed by their precarious conditions. Yet, the camp itself was created in its specific location by the municipality of Calais itself in January 2015, evicting all makeshift migrant camps that existed in and around the city and limiting the erection of new ones to a chosen derelict site

next to the then newly-opened Jules Ferry migrant centre in the outskirts of Calais.

The jungle was also constantly reshaped by the violent actions of demolition and construction conducted by the authorities. In January 2016, ten months before the jungle's final demolition, an institutional camp was opened in a bulldozed area at the heart of the makeshift camp, creating a space made of 125 white shipping containers equipped with heating and bunk beds for 12 people each and placed in a rigid grid surrounded by a fence. Only migrants who registered with the prefecture and had their hands biometrically scanned could enter the container camp. Recognition of their biometric data (the hand scan) opened the camp's gates, turning the body of the migrants into a key, while restricting their ability to seek asylum in the United Kingdom following the Dublin regulations (Katz, 2017a: 3–4). This facility stripped the lives of the migrants of their particular identity and reduced them to nothing more than biological bodies stored in a rigid, minimal, sterile and alienating space. However, the relations between the jungle and the container camp developed in unpredictable directions; because of their geographical proximity and the limited space of the container camp, its dwellers spent long hours in the adjacent jungle, using the communal kitchens, public institutions and main street for their everyday needs and social gatherings (see, again, Katz 2017a:10; Keiser and Lainé, 2017; Agier, 2018; Gueguen-Teil and Katz, 2018).

These intersecting and ambivalent relations between institutional and makeshift camps and between relations of control and hospitality have emerged similarly in other camps around Europe. For example, the residents of the semi-carceral Gradisca asylum seekers camp in northern Italy have established makeshift camps just outside of its walls to provide themselves with space for social activities (Altin and Minca, 2017). In Paris, while two institutional refugee camps were created by the authorities to

address the multiple makeshift camps formed in the French capital, informal encampments were created near one of these camps that was filled to capacity (Katz et al., 2018a). Another example is that of the makeshift camp that emerged in the centre of the Serbian capital Belgrade in 2016–17, where up to 2000 young men dwelt for several months in abandoned warehouses near the main station, while relying on the networks of humanitarian support provided by local organisations, but also by the archipelago of camps activated by the government along the Balkan route. The warehouses' makeshift camp could not have emerged without the operation of a system of institutional 'reception centres', both in Belgrade and outside of the capital, where the formal and informal relationship between these reception centres and the informal mobilities of the migrants were openly admitted by the social workers in the camps and even by the authorities (see Minca et al., 2018, 2019).

V Conclusion

This article has discussed the camp as a specific spatial formation that has emerged as a key (bio)political tool in managing and containing selected individuals 'in custody' and separate from the rest of society, not for what they have done, but for who they are and what they represent as a 'population'. The camp is, in other words, a form of government of 'exceeding' populations, often paradoxically interned in the name of their 'protection'. Camps have, however, taken multiple forms and functions, while maintaining some common characteristics reproduced again and again in most of them. The academic interest in the recent proliferation of camps, we have suggested, has given life to the field of camp studies, a field marked by two main stages: the first crucially influenced by the work of Giorgio Agamben on the biopolitics of the camp and the emergence of the war on terror in the aftermath of 9/11; the second, 'post-

Agambenian', largely focused on refugee camps and their broader geographies which, while still indebted to the philosopher's path-breaking work, tends to propose new understandings that do not reduce the camp to a space of the exception where bare life is produced. We have argued that, while the first stage has importantly emphasised the biopolitics of concentration camps and secret detention camps during the war on terror as manifestations of sovereign exceptions, the second stage has shown how camps' spatialities, especially when concerning the management of displaced populations, are also crucially transformed by the agency of their residents, often generating new forms of political and social identity. This is the first important point that we have tried to make across the paper: while in many cases the refugee camp remains a biopolitical tool for population management, at the same time, it is sometimes appropriated by those who inhabit it as a space of identity from which to claim visibility and specific rights, as a site of potential resilience and political resistance.

Our second point is that camps should not be studied in isolation. This has been particularly important in our discussion of the urbanisation of refugee camps and their transformation into urban spatialities on their own, but also in work illustrating how they emerge as urbanities at the margin able to attract other (non-refugee) outcasts. The archipelagos of refugee camps today generate new political and economic geographies in the surrounding regions, including cities and border areas, by creating formal and informal networks of exchange and service provision, but also local job opportunities. Many long-term established refugee camps are integrated into the urban fabric to the point that in some cases they entirely blend into the city and establish new formal and, more often, informal relationships with other social components of 'the urban'. Some of them also tend to look like slums, becoming somewhat similar to other

forms of makeshift urban dwellings. And this takes us to our third point.

Research on makeshift camps around Europe and across the globe has shown how these informal encampments are strongly linked and at times even complementary to existing institutional camps. Makeshift camps and institutional camps may indeed form socio-spatial complexes integrated into the humanitarian aid machinery. Some makeshift camps appear because there is no space for more guests in the nearby institutional camp; others because the migrants do not want to enter the identification processes of the camp systems, but at the same time they 'hang around' the institutional camps to receive some essential support. Other times, institutional camps 'follow' the route of informal refugee mobility and are even created to support or replace existing makeshift camps, such as in the case of Calais (Katz, 2017a; Keiser and Lainé, 2017; Gueguen-Teil and Katz, 2018) or Krnjača and Obrenovac in Serbia (Minca et al., 2018, 2019). For all these reasons, we contend, makeshift camps should be studied with reference to the existing provision of formal refugee camps, but also in relation to transportation hubs, borders and the invisible smuggling economies related to these mobilities.

Contemporary institutional and makeshift camps are also tightly connected to the presence of borders, but especially to the changing degrees of porosity of these borders. This is the fourth point we would like to make. The more difficult it is to pass the border, the more likely it is to see the emergence of an informal economy of smugglers offering unconventional routes to cross it. Irregular migrants who wish to use networks of smugglers or to cross closed borders in other ways often aggregate in makeshift camps near the border, waiting for the opportunity to go through. The mini 'jungles' that appeared in 2018 near the Croatian border in northern Bosnia are an illustrative example of this. At the same time, transit camps are often established by the authorities in those same areas precisely

to provide some support for and control of these populations on the move. Borders and bordering practices are therefore related to the appearance and the functioning of many contemporary camps, both formal and informal.

Two key elements should therefore be included in any reading of the broader spatialities of the refugee and migrant camps in Europe: the abovementioned invisible geographies of migrants' smuggling and the global machinery of humanitarian support. Both of these 'industries' thrive on the growing demands generated from the increase in populations that form this global geography of informal mobility, and in many, albeit different, ways contribute to their reproduction. The smugglers are typically seen in popular literature and the media as merely criminal organisations (see, for example, Tondo, 2018), while other research has recognised them also as a form of support to the irregular migrants (Tinti and Reitano, 2016). Camps in many cases are sites where their clientele can be found and where the related journeys may be arranged. This is true for both makeshift camps (often populated by smugglers as well) and, in some cases, institutional camps (although this is rarely admitted by the authorities running them). By the same token, while some literature recognises the fundamental and indispensable role played by humanitarian organisations in supporting the lives of refugees and in providing for their essential needs (Pallister-Wilkins, 2018), other research highlights how the humanitarian industry, often involved in the management of the camps, tends to reproduce with its operations the 'logic of the camp', by treating their residents as part of a mass (Agier, 2011b). The geographies of the refugee camps discussed above are therefore linked to these two 'industries' in complicated and somewhat troubling modalities.

We would like to conclude by restating that the camp has long been and remains today a key spatial political technology adopted by many

contemporary democracies: from Guantanamo Bay to the Romani camps in Europe, from the urban(ised) refugee camps in the Middle East to the makeshift camps popping up in several European cities, from the offshore detention centres established by the Australian government to the archipelago of hospitality camps activated by the Serbian government to informally support the people walking the Balkan route. Each of these camps is part of the new political and social geographies confronting all of us in our everyday practices and mobilities. Camps, in other words, still appear as the main response that state authorities are able to give to the increasing number of displaced people, in the name of a temporariness and a sense of emergency that all too often translate into forms of precarious dwellings and of the exceptional management of what they consider, for various reasons, as a humanity in excess.


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Claudio Minca is a Human Geographer with strong interest in cultural and political theory. His main research projects have focused on the geographies of tourism and travel and on the spatial theories of modernity, including conceptualizations of landscape, place and power. He has also written extensively on the relationship between space and biopolitics, with a particular focus on the work of philosopher Giorgio Agamben and legal theorist Carl Schmitt. Recently he has been working on camp and carceral geographies, with a particular focus on the archipelago of refugee camps in the Balkan region.

Irit Katz is an Architect and an Urbanist who engages with cultural and political theories to study built environments created and reshaped in radical conditions such as forced displacement, conflicts, and extreme inequalities. She studies these environments in a range of historical and contemporary contexts as ever-changing constellations by which political negotiations, social changes, and cultural transformations are staged and reworked.