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INTRODUCTION



## Introduction: citizenship as inhabitation? Migrant housing squats versus institutional accommodation

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### ABSTRACT

This special issue focuses on migrants' self-organised strategies in relation to housing in Europe, namely the collective squatting of vacant buildings and land. In particular, the contributions to this special issue differentiate between shelter provided in state-run or humanitarian camps and squatted homes. Migrants squats are an essential part of the 'corridors of solidarity' that are being created throughout Europe, where grassroots social movements engaged in anti-racist, anarchist and anti-authoritarian politics coalesce with migrants in devising non-institutional responses to the violence of border regimes. In these spaces contentious politics and everyday social reproduction uproot racist and xenophobic regimes. The struggles emerging in these spaces disrupt host-guest relations, which often perpetuate state-imposed hierarchies and humanitarian disciplining technologies. Moreover, the solidarities and collaborations between undocumented and documented activists challenge hitherto prevailing notions of citizenship and social movements, as well as current articulations of the common. These radical spaces enable possibilities for inhabitation beyond, against and within citizenship, which do not only reverse forms of exclusion and repression, but produce ungovernable resources, alliances and subjectivities that prefigure more livable spaces for all. Therefore, these struggles are interpreted here as forms of commoning, as they constitute autonomous socio-political infrastructures and networks of solidarity beyond and against the state and humanitarian provision

### KEYWORDS

Inhabitation; border struggles; squatting; commoning; citizenship; home-making

## Introduction

'I am not so concerned with how we dismantle the master's house, that is, which set of theories we use to critique colonialism; but I am very concerned with how we (re)build our own house, or own houses' (Simpson 2011, 32).

Borders are often defined as 'a tool of exclusion' which aim to 'demarcate a coherent inside from a chaotic outside' (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007), and Europe is often defined as a *fortress* (Geddes 2001; Carr 2015). Yet, concepts such as *exclusion* and *fortress* allude to a clear-cut between inside and outside, that runs the danger of missing the

complexity of border dynamics, and of obscuring the way borders work as tools not simply to exclude, but to control and govern the movement and lives of migrants and non-migrants alike (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). The often arbitrary distinctions between migrants and refugees, for instance, illustrates one of the manifold devices to regulate and oppress these social groups. Borders are not only geographical demarcations of the institutional police-run checkpoints between Nation-states. If we adopt a broader sociological and political view, we find borders in everyday racist and xenophobic encounters: they are performed in the lack of access to health, housing, education, safety, work (Anderson, Sharma, and Wright 2009). Furthermore, they discipline everyday social interactions and the possibilities for acting, thinking and feeling outside of multiples forms of social control. Therefore, the extension and proliferation of borders allows to conceive them as *border regimes* (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015). Accordingly, the increasing criminalization of migration and of borders crossing functions as an ordering principle, where borders operate not as walls but as filters (Vaughan-Williams 2009) and through modes of differential inclusion (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). Their porosity configures a technique to filter and regulate migration flows and to govern migrants' lives once the border is crossed. However, that porosity is also due to the various social struggles that rupture and create cracks in the ways borders regimes operate.

As much as borders are multiplying and extending to every aspect of migrants' lives, so are forms of resistance and everyday struggles. In the last years, across Europe, groups of migrants have been organizing themselves to resist the current migration regime and the politics of borders (Ataç, Rygiel, and Stierl 2016; Casas-Cortes et al. 2015; Stierl 2018). Anti-deportation campaigns, undocumented-workers protests, no-border camps and the constitutions of autonomous urban spaces led to the encounter and synergy between a variety of social movements contesting urban borderlands as well as the boundaries of citizenship. Beyond their claims of making citizenship-associated rights accessible to everyone regardless of their status, these grassroots movements feature forms of contentious politics that had been rarely acknowledged (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017).

This special issue focuses on migrants' self-organised strategies in relation to housing in Europe, namely the collective squatting of vacant buildings and land, either public or privately owned. In particular, the papers of this special issue differentiate between shelter provided in state-run and humanitarian camps and squatted homes. While a growing body of literature discusses migrants struggles facing an increasing criminalization and illegalization, little attention is given to the challenges they pose to what Walters (2010) defined as *humanitarian borders*. Rather than providing an alternative to securitisation policies (implemented by both military and paramilitary forces), humanitarian borders are mostly organized along racialised, colonial and economic hierarchies (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013) which contribute to the management of migrants' bodies and lives. Therefore, this special issue argues that occupations by migrants, and the various forms of solidarity with local activists, challenge the violent regime of all borders, including the so-called *humanitarian* ones, as these entail various forms of domination, discipline and repression.

The contributions to this special issue also contend that the practice of squatting by illegalised and marginalised migrants engenders actions that question normative

discourses and practices of citizenship. A previous issue in *Citizenship Studies* (Maestri and Hughes 2017) placed the focus on ‘camps, borders and urban encounters’ as sites where the politics of citizenship are both contested and enacted. Along similar lines, when migrants squat new sites of contestation are created and new forms of political subjectivity are enacted by *making space* (Dikeç 2013; Tazzioli 2015; Ikizoglu Erensu 2016) vis-à-vis exclusionary spaces and growing restrictions to the freedom of movement and settlement. Following recent discussions on the dialectics between *the common* and *enclosures* in contested city-borderscapes (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008; Harvey 2012; Hodkinson 2012; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Stavrides 2016; Mudu and Chattopadhyay 2017), this special issue focuses on the specific socio-spatial struggles of migrants’ squats as practices of urban commoning and inhabitation, which situate themselves outside and against forms of control of the state and of humanitarian forms of assistance.

Housing is here interpreted as a terrain of struggle which opposes to emergency shelters and humanitarian camps. On the other hand, the creation of housing squats by people on the move can be addressed as forms of resistance to European bordering regimes and as acts of citizenship that produce antagonist political subjectivities. Indeed, squatting is primarily an *illegalised* practice for the re-appropriation of vacant spaces that results in the creation of dwelling and venues for the mobilisation of a variety of social and political struggles (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006; Cattaneo and Martínez 2014). This way squats give life to urban networks of political contestation and experimentation in the *here and now*, where grassroots forms of self-management, solidarity and autonomy are constituted (Dadusc 2019a; Raimondi 2019; Grazioli and Montagna 2019). In these spaces everyday lives and socio-spatial relations are re-arranged in sharp contrast with the regulations imposed by racist and xenophobic regimes. Therefore, these struggles are interpreted here as forms of commoning, as they constitute livable spaces, autonomous socio-political infrastructures and networks of solidarities beyond (and against) the state and humanitarian provision.

Moreover, the relations and collaborations between undocumented and documented activists challenge hitherto prevailing static notions of citizenship and social movements, as well as current articulations of the common. Indeed, through migrants’ squats different subjectivities, politics and positionalities enmesh. This heterogeneity changes the social composition of current struggles and questions otherwise unspoken hierarchies and privileges due to citizenship status. This mutual cooperation also entails a deep reformulation of local activists’ relation to the state and its institutions. While this is not a smooth process, it leads to the production of forms of commoning ‘within, against and beyond citizenship’ (De Angelis, 2019), and to the constitution of ‘hybrid political subjectivity between migrants and non-migrants’ (Raimondi, 2019).

In this special issue the contributors engage with the notion of inhabitation to divert from the notion of *rights* and *citizenship*. Lefebvre (2003) poses a distinction between inhabiting (*habiter*) and habitat (*habitat*). *Habitat*, on the one hand, is conceived as a fixed container and ‘springs from a strange kind of excess: a rage for measurement and calculation’ (161), where urban planners give priority to functional arrangements of life: eating, sleeping, working, consuming. *Habiter*, on the other, expresses a process of making urban and social spaces (Elden 2004), namely everyday practice and social relations that escape and exceed attempts to plan, capture and govern. *Habiter*, or

inhabitation, is that which will always overflow, and it is often translated as *living*. This resonates with Lefebvre's distinction between 'the city' and 'the urban', the latter characterised by encounters, density, creativity, unpredictable messiness. Drawing on Lefebvre's concept of inhabitation, we address migrants' struggles as a crucial manifestation of bottom-up production of the urban space, including housing.

According to Lefebvre, the *right to the city* is not a right to habitat, but a broader practice, that embraces forms of inhabiting. Although Lefebvre's *right to the city* framework has often been understood as merely focused on the liberal agendas of claiming equal rights, it illuminated the everyday practices of all the residents and users of space, regardless of their citizenship status (Attou 2011; De Souza 2010; Purcell 2014; Rolnik 2014), oriented towards needs and aspirations rather than formal rights. The right to the city is the possibility to refuse to *stay put* within fixed and calculated spaces, and instead to fully exist by creating alternative socio-spatial relations and new ways of living together. The forms of inhabitation enacted through migrants' protests and through occupation of land and vacant buildings, do not only reverse the exclusion they experience, but produce ungovernable resources, alliances and subjectivities that refigure more livable spaces for everyone.

In accordance with the above remarks, our theoretical framework contributes to ongoing debates within critical citizenship and border studies, in particular those related to the *acts of citizenship* and the *autonomy of migration*. Both approaches have provided a fertile ground and fresh conceptual tools for radical rethinking and theorising contemporary migrant struggles. The following sections will introduce these conceptual tenets in order to provide the readers with more tools for navigating the articles that we assemble here: acts of citizenship; autonomy of migration; inhabitation and home-making through mobile and housing commons; and the links between squatting and migrants' struggles. The concluding section briefly summarises the main contributions to this special issue.

## Resistance to securitarian and humanitarian enclosures

As the so-called "Arab Spring" burst in the 2010s, migration became interrelated with the financial crisis unfolding since 2008. In an uncanny parallelism, human mobility was framed as a matter of economic crisis, flows to be curbed, controlled, and rescaled. As years 2015–2016 registered a peak in the deadly shipwrecks in the Mediterranean Sea, the approaches to the global political situation that has been defined as 'refugee crisis' have been twofold, ranging between criminalization and humanitarian approaches. On the one hand, the European Union and European national governments exploited the fears generated by both the "crisis" framework and the attacks by Daesh associates, by further criminalizing migrants, framing them as a threat and implementing emergency security measures (Bosworth and Guild 2008; Aas 2011; Bowling 2013). On the other, the constitution of *humanitarian borders* (Walters 2010) has framed the condition of migrants as a humanitarian emergency, thereby legitimising their forced immobility (Ticktin 2011; Pallister-Wilkins 2017; Garelli and Tazzioli 2018). Besides, it sets up a new bordering regime while curtailing the moves of most migrants across European territories. In this context, autonomous forms of solidarity that reject the humanitarian and

institutionalised management of migration are criminalised as facilitators of illegal immigration (Dadusc and Mudu 2019 – [forthcoming](#)).

Whereas borders fuel discontent, rage and potential resistance among displaced and immobilised populations, humanitarianism has the role of taming, channeling and subtly repress this discontent (*ibid.*). Despite being framed as neutral and a-political, humanitarianism participates in the articulation of multiple relations of power that reinforce, rather than challenge the operation of borders (Ticktin 2011; Pallister-Wilkins 2018). Interventions based on charity and humanitarian assistance establish forms of dependency and perform soft modes of disciplining and control of migrants' bodies, voices and struggles. These intervene on the migrants bodies, organizing their food provision, their circulation, their mental health as well as channeling their discourses and possibilities for action (Fassin 2011; Ramadan 2013). Therefore, both securitisation and humanitarian approaches frame migration as an emergency problem to be fixed and keep refugees and illegalized migrants in a *state of exception*.

Contemporary migrant struggles resist both the politics of securitarian borders and the bio-politics of humanitarian assistance that operate within camps and emergency shelters. Migrants' occupations and self-constructed settlements emerge where there is a lack of state and humanitarian interventions (Stojić Mitrović and Vilenica, 2019) as well as in direct opposition to these (Dadusc 2019; Van Isacker 2019). These forms of self-organisation prefigure a no-border world opposing the racialised violence of borders, a world where state and humanitarian interventions are rejected and become obsolete. The networks of solidarity constituted in occupied spaces, moreover, do not reduce migrants to passive, docile or marginal subjects, but rather, places them as 'central protagonists in the drama of composing the space, time, and materiality of the social itself' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 159).

Migrants squats are an essential part of the *corridors of solidarity* that are being created throughout Europe, where grassroots social movements with anti-racist, anarchist and anti-authoritarian politics unfold non-institutional responses to the oppression of migrants: 'From sea rescue to solidarity cities, from access to housing to medical care and fair working conditions, from legal counselling to protection against deportation: we prefigure and enact our vision of a society, in which we want to live'.<sup>1</sup>

These corridors enable possibilities for inhabitation not only at the physical border-zones of Europe but also along the radical networks of solidarity for safe passage throughout the territory, exceeding national boundaries. The forms of solidarity emerging in these spaces disrupt the host-guest relations, which often perpetuates state-imposed hierarchies and categories (Squire and Darling 2013). Moreover, squatted spaces put the voices and needs of migrants at the forefront, and migrants and supporters tend to relate to each other as equals - a far cry from the saviour/victim relationship which exists between the givers and receivers of humanitarian aid (Dadusc 2019).

## Acts of citizenship

Extending upon Agamben's scholarship, critical migration scholars have taken up his conception of *bare life* to delineate the plight of refugees and unauthorized migrants, who exist in an indefinite and suspended state of non-citizenship (Rajaram and

Grundy-Warr 2004; Salter 2008). Accordingly, the illegalisation of migration creates a political limbo, where people's lives are held both 'inside and outside the juridical order' (Agamben 1998, 27), where migrants are denied the right to have rights (Arendt 1973) and the right to (political) existence. This view has been contested by the literature on the *acts of citizenship*, as it poses citizenship as the precondition for any form of political subjectivity. Literature and debates on *acts of citizenship* (see Isin and Nielsen 2008; McNevin 2011; Nyers 2015) places the focus on the formation of political subjectivities by those performing and prefiguring citizenship despite their exclusion from normative citizenship.

Acts of citizenship are conceptualised as collective forms of political mobilisation by undocumented/illegalised migrants who claim the *right to have rights* (Arendt 1973), and pose demands to the state and political institutions, despite their formal impossibility to claim rights. The *acts of citizenship* perspective highlights the contested politics of citizenship, arguing that practices and experiences of migration are generative of new forms of political subjectivity (Nyers 2015). Here citizenship is defined not as a formal property that can be held or given, nor as a settled identity, but as a practice that people produce through social, political and cultural modes of mobilisation (Isin and Nielsen 2008).

Isin (2008) distinguishes *acts of citizenship* from *habitus*, where enacting citizenship is intended both as having the courage of breaking with habitus (of exclusion from rights) and embodying new habits, thereby transforming subjects into claimants of rights. This way citizenship is conceptualised beyond the principle of national sovereignty and becomes a terrain of struggle, a contested institution that non-citizens uproot through 'the plethora of political practices through which (they) make claims to belonging, inclusion and recognition in their societies of residence' (Swerts 2014, 297).

Rigo (2010) defines acts of *illegal* citizenship, those forms of mobilisation that instead of reinforcing state-centred notions of citizenship shift the focus to 'the ruptures and contradictions that these inflict upon the institutional definition and codification of citizenship' (200). This way, those who are formally excluded from citizenship, and as such from the right to have rights, subvert the field of politics by expanding its boundaries. A conceptualisation of *citizenship from below* (Nyers and Rygiel 2012), as opposed to the citizenship granted from the state, sees these struggles as transformative in challenging borders of political community, membership and notions of political subjectivity. Therefore, despite being denied of the formal enfranchisement to rights, undocumented migrants are capable to forge and express new political subjectivities, while challenging the politics and boundaries of citizenship.

Yet, criticism to this approach argued that enacting citizenship entails the expansion rather than the subversion of the borders, as a politics of inclusion risks reproducing racialised hierarchies of differential inclusion (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). These critiques highlight four cardinal limitations of citizenship. Firstly, as citizenship is bound up with the Western nation-state and the capitalist politics of operations (Mezzadra and Neilson 2019), it is configured to be a device of differential inclusion and hierarchisation (McNevin 2011; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). Secondly, as citizenship is designed as a biopolitical technology of control and subjection, it curtails mobility while institutionalising uncertainty and threats of deportability (Balibar 2009; De Genova 2016). Thirdly, citizenship cannot be assumed as the universally

desired achievement and tool of liberation of migrants' mobilisations (Van Isacker, 2019; Stojić Mitrović and Vilenica, 2019). Lastly, citizenship is seen as a constraining framework, whereas governmental and humanitarian logic assume that non-citizens are devoid of voice and agency (Raimondi, 2019).

Embracing the above criticism to the politics of citizenship, most contributions to this special issue propose different angles of analysis and empirical inquiry of those struggles that exceed the framework of citizenship and counter the politics of borders and their operation at the level of everyday lives. Indeed, the special issue is informed by the acknowledgement that the *acts of citizenship* approach relies on an understanding of resistance that is rooted in institutional politics and state regulation, which emphasises integration as a form of empowerment. Moreover, it might overshadow those struggles that refuse to engage in political demands as well as to pose claims for recognition to the state.

Following these lines of inquiry the following sections address the main bodies of knowledge informing the contributions to this special issue. The first part elaborates upon the *autonomy of migration* perspective, whose concepts are central to the overall approach of the special issue. We then move on to problematising the relation between inhabitation and citizenship. Inhabitation is configured as a constitutive process to opt out of the constraints determined by border management and the institutionalisation within the reception system. As such, inhabitation becomes a liberatory practice enacted through everyday life as well as contentious politics. This contesting function of inhabitation is even more apparent whenever the field of tensions between settlement and mobility leads to squats and other autonomous forms of settlement as the ones described within this special issue. These transformed, re-appropriated spaces become sites for contesting the restriction of mobility as well as for affirming migrants' *rightful presence* (Squire and Darling 2013). As such, they might become sites of the commoning (Linebaugh 2008) where urban and mobile commons (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013) are generated. Lastly, the conclusive section outlines the single contributions contained in the special issue.

## The autonomy of migration

As argued above, the autonomy of migration approach contends that citizenship, whether formalised or performed, granted or enacted, is intertwined with sovereign governmentality, and not merely subjected to it (see Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008; Mudu and Chattopadhyay 2017). Following a Foucauldian understanding of the mutual relations between power and resistance, the *autonomy of migration* approach places resistance first: instead of looking at migration as a response to control and market forces, the autonomy of migration sees control as a reaction to migration, as an attempt to subject and discipline free movement through violence and repression. Here, so-called *border-work* figures as a contested process in continuous transformation, constantly redefined and shaped by those forces that attempt to escape controls (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Walters 2015). The novelty of this approach is to shift the focus from migration as a marginal reaction to the centrality of political and economic structures, to conceptualise it as a constituent force that actively defines political and social structures (Karakayali and Tsianos 2005; Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos 2008; Mezzadra 2010).



Consequently, this approach conceives border as an analytical lens that uncovers the multifarious fields of tensions, processes of subjectivation and politics unravelling in the act of contesting and crossing borders (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). The border is indeed interpreted as an epistemological device, as a *method* (ibid.) to highlight the continuous redefinition of power relations by the conflicts between border governance and migrants' attempts to practice movement as well as settlement (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). In this light, borders cannot be pictured as a fixed line of exclusion, in the same way as citizenship cannot be conceived as a 'static' snapshot of a supposedly socially and geographically discrete society which bestows a series of rights to the formally-defined citizen (Butler and Spivak 2007). In contrast, borders are interpreted as porous and flexible tools that are proliferating and moving from recognised borderlands to multifarious spatial scales, in response and reaction to migrants' movements and defiance.

Through this approach, traditional definitions of political action and mobilisation are contested. Instead of defining migrants' movements as actors who become political through demands for rights, inclusion and recognition, the *autonomy of migration* sees mobility and illegalised border crossing as political movements that escape state institutions and delegitimise sovereign control. This shifts away from politics concerned with the realm of citizenship-related rights, and instead highlights those horizontal practices, experiences and modes of contestation that circulate through borders, as well as the strategies and tactics that groups of migrants mobilise in their everyday encounters with border controls and security technologies (Papadopoulos et al. 2008).

The theoretical implications of this approach lead us to focus on how institutional politics is overwhelmed by autonomous forms of mobilisation, beyond and against the state and other forms of governance. Within this special issue, the autonomy of migration approach is therefore cardinal to the construction of a critical theory of citizenship and borders and it functions as an interpretative framework for practices of inhabitation through the commoning of everyday life and the establishment of solidarity networks. *Mobile commons* are largely accounted for as 'a world of knowledge, of information, of tricks for survival, of mutual care, of social relations, of services exchange, of solidarity and sociability' (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013, 190). Within this panoply of possibilities, housing squats (as City Plaza in Athens, We Are Here in Amsterdam, 4 Stelle Occupato in Rome and Ohlauer Strasse 12 in Berlin) can represent one of the possible materialisations of the mobile commons in the guise of invention, experimentation and multiplication of different practices and modes of life.

While the autonomy of migration perspective points at the constitution of *mobile commons* as on the move, precarious and ephemeral cracks and ruptures to bordering regimes, we argue that the forms of commoning produced in migrants' squats consolidate into forms of liberation that are not temporary or ephemeral. Under subjective, political and organisational circumstances unravelling in specific temporal and spatial arrangements, they may become durable and tangible infrastructures that can support people's efforts to move and settle according to their needs and aspirations, as well as spaces for expression of imperceptible politics (Linebaugh 2014). As such, inhabitation as a process of home-making can constitute a site of construction, maintenance and proliferation of mobile commons, inside and against borderlands, and beyond citizenship.

## Inhabitation beyond citizenship

Following Lefebvre's articulation of *habitat* and *inhabitation*, we seek to draw parallels to current debates on the distinction between housing and home. In doing so, we address the practices of home-making in migrants' squats as an alternative to *being-housed*, as the pathways of citizenship and migration reception systems would prescribe. On the other hand, we propose the notion of inhabitation as a commoning practice that transgresses and subverts humanitarian and institutional attempts of housing people within emergency shelters and camps, as well as a practice that exceeds the politics of rights and citizenship.

This contrast uncovers the ambivalence of the notion of *home*. In the context of the bordering of Europe, *home* is often conflated with the individual's native state, hence with the nation and its identity politics, shaped around a racialised construction of otherness (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Moreover, often infused with naturalised gendered norms about heterosexual marriage and private life, home has often been addressed as in opposition to capitalism, rather than necessary to the reproduction of capitalist and patriarchal relations (Federici 2012). Doreen Massey (2013) critiques (mostly male) conceptualisations of home as a romantic, private and sacred space of safety and belonging. From this perspective, home is inevitably experienced as an enclosed site, a cage, where patriarchal violence, state morality and exploitative relations of production and reproduction are enforced (Fortier 2001; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar 2017). Besides, in a neoliberal context home-making is conflated with the individualised access to marketised housing through indebtedness, or to residual (and often stigmatised) social-welfare based housing (Martin 2002; Lazzarato 2012). Neoliberal individualised housing models turned homes into commodities subject to marketisation and dispossession (Madden and Marcuse 2016). Home, therefore, is a porous place that is neither private nor public, but is constituted at the intersections between the domestic and political worlds (Massey 2013; Blunt and Dowling 2006) and it constitutes a spatial and political technology of government of the population.

Looking at the material manifestations of home in relation to migration, housing provision for migrants produces and reproduces forms of subjection, spatial segregation and racial discrimination. State-run shelters and humanitarian camps engender a provision of home that is not oriented towards the satisfaction of needs, but rather prioritises forms of custody and containment through strict forms of control. These forms of governance do not only materialise through the securised architecture of these spaces, such as fences, razor-wires, guards and observation points. They extend to biopolitical forms of care and to devices that order, schedule and confine migrants' bodies and everyday lives, according to minimum standards for survival (Agier 2011; Weizman 2011).

These policies fix migrants in temporal and spatial limbos, confining their possibilities of taking control over their lives and to make homes in displacement (Brun and Fábos 2015). According to Iris Marion Young, the notion of 'home as a critical value', minimal shelter prevents the possibility to exercise agency, as well as 'the development of the spirit of resistance' (Young 2005, 45). Following Young, Brun (2015), argues that migrants 'are often assigned to shelters that make people survive, but that cannot be transformed into home – they are shelters representing the interstices in displaced people's lives; no one is

expected to stay there long, but rather to return home or move on' (ibid: 47). As these interstices unfold temporally and isolate them spatially, migrants experience the mixture between institutionalised boredom and the helplessness of waiting for their position of being *stuck* to be altered. Here, housing is a device to keep people *in their place*, thereby reinforcing the racist and patriarchal functions of home.

Rather than creating homes and forms of inhabitation, these politics produce *habitats*, namely containers of *habits* and social behavior through 'manipulating their environments' (Burgess 2012, 3). Habitat is here intended as a spatial technology of discipline and governmentality of *habits*, where racialised, classed, gendered and colonised populations are subject to 'a reinforcement of the disciplinary rigors of habit as the only effective means of guiding conduct' (Bennett et al. 2013, 6). However, following the work of Sullivan (2006), Carolyn Pedwell argues that the notion of habit contains an ambivalence, as it can engender both *stasis* and transformative practices: 'on the one hand, *habit* conjures unthinking reflex, mindless repetition, and hence *stasis*. Yet, on the other hand, without the formation of enduring habits, no substantive embodied, social or political change can take shape, and become rooted enough to sustain' (Pedwell 2017, 12). The question that follows, therefore, is how to produce liberating, rather than disciplining habits and habitats? In the next section we discuss the practice of home-making in migrants' squats as an attempt to subvert and transform the spatial technologies of *habitat* and *being housed* thereby producing forms of inhabitation that counter *stasis*, the state and its politics of citizenship.

### Squatting, home-making and inhabitation

As opposed to the association of home to a patriarchal cage and prison, for post-colonial feminist scholars home can also be envisioned as a space for solidarity and resistance against oppression, slavery and racism (Collins 2002; hooks 1992; Young 2005). Blunt and Dowling's 'critical geography of home' (2006) places attention to the practice of home-making as a relational process and lived space continually created through everyday socio-political practices. They distinguish between housing as dwelling and *home*, where the latter is constituted by the relation between the material and the affective. They depict home as a 'spatial imaginary' and as a politicised process of both oppression and resistance: 'as spatialized feelings of belonging *and* alienation, desire *and* fear' they argue, 'the spatialities of home are broader and more complex than just housing' (10) and 'can be conceptualized as processes of establishing connections with others and creating a sense of belonging as part of rather than separate from society' (14).

Brun and Fábos (2015) discuss the multiple 'constellations of home' constituted by displaced migrants. They characterise home as a day-to-day practice as well as an affective space, while differentiating it from nationalist politics that construct exclusionary notions of homeland. As opposed to state policies and humanitarian practices that house migrants, Brun and Fabos refer to *making home* as the ways in which 'people try to gain control over their lives and (which) involves negotiating specific understandings of home, particular regimes of control and assistance, and specific locations and material structures' (ibid: 14). While the forms of control and immobility of the camp fix people into a static mode, they argue that the practices of making home engender forms of liminality, possibilities of movement, transgression, and transformation.

Following these discussions this special issue addresses the practice of home-making in migrants' squats as an alternative to *being housed*, thereby creating forms of inhabitation as opposed to being contained through *habitat*. Home is here conceptualised differently to the traditional domestic site, as it is instead a political and contested space constituted through relational and affective practices (Mohanty 2003; Ahmed 1999; Fortier 2001). Similarly, home-making is here addressed for its possibilities to engender commoning processes across which spaces are produced through scales of organisational, affective, political and social relations. The latter connect and hybridise with surrounding ecologies, subjectivities and infrastructures (Cooper 1986; Haraway 1991; Grazioli 2018).

The occupation of space is a well-established protest repertoire of urban movements across Europe. Over various decades, across a multiplicity of cities, squatters' movements have occupied vacant buildings and have created spaces for autonomy and self-organisation. Squatting is a form of direct action that is inseparable from housing struggles, where rent strikes, squatting, alternative planning and anti-eviction activism are the major forms of resistance to the relation between the hyper-commodification of housing, gentrification and intersectional injustices across class, gender and ethnic lines (Madden and Marcuse 2016).

In particular, the occupation of vacant buildings enables the satisfaction of immediate material needs such as housing, as well as the provision of self-managed spaces for political organisation. While migrant squatters might engage in rights-claiming campaigns, a more significant feature of their politics is their immediate appropriation of spaces and infrastructures to foster their autonomous organisation. These practices engender resistance to a multiplicity of forms of hegemony and governmentality embroiled in everyday social reproduction. As squatting and informal settlements imply a process of construction of space and self-management of everyday life, they are increasingly included into debates around those political, relational, spatial processes that enable the commoning (Linebaugh 2008). As Montagna and Grazioli point out in their contribution, the burgeoning debate about *commoning* deflects the emphasis from the ownership and formal entitlement to the commons, in order to point out those human needs and radical infrastructures that are demanded within a post-capitalist, post-crisis world (Gibson-Graham 2006; Cattaneo and Martínez 2014). Besides, squatting as a direct act of spatial repossession allows manifold experimentation in the *here and now* of grassroots forms of governance based on solidarity, where new subjectivities are constituted (Dadusc this issue; Raimondi, 2019).

According to this reflection, the contributions to this special issue address squats and informal settlement as spaces where migrants re-appropriate and resignify saturated and contested spaces, while experimenting modalities of everyday social reproduction that are alternative to capitalist ones (Gibson-Graham 2006; Linebaugh 2008). This includes contesting the spatialised housing segregation produced by racialised border regimes which curtail migrants' access to welfare-based provisions in neoliberal policies, and which force them into institutionalised housing (i.e. reception centres), camps, marginalised slums, or even detention centres.

Martínez (2017) distinguished four categories of migrants' involvement in squatting in the city of Madrid: autonomy, solidarity, engagement, and empowerment. Migrants can occupy buildings without the support of non-migrant local squatters. Sometimes

a mutual cooperation between both groups is established. This can lead either to keep separate buildings for migrants and non-migrants, or to merge in the same buildings. Migrants can also join squats which were initiated by non-migrants usually according to the political traditions of squatting in the locality. The more cooperation occurs, the more likely is for migrants to be empowered and to incorporate squatting in their repertoire of action, survival, and political affirmation. Several activists and scholars (Dadusc 2017; Makrygianni 2017; García and Jørgensen 2019) emphasise the tensions that may arise between the autonomous initiatives of migrants and the solidarity they enjoy when native non-migrant people, with more or less background in squatting, become engaged. In short, the citizenship status and the strength of social networks create structural differences between migrant and native squatters, although a long-lasting anti-racist and anti-fascist stance in left-libertarian milieus helps to ease solidarity and cooperation in this matter.

Migrants have joined housing movements and organisations such as *Droit Au Logement (DAL)* in France (Aguilera 2018), *Coordinamento Cittadino di Lotta per la Casa (CCLC)* and *Blocchi Precari Metropolitan (BPM)* in Italy (Grazioli and Caciagli 2018), or the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH)* in Spain (Martínez 2018). Although from the perspective of the ‘deprivation’ approach there would be a tendency to demand state-backed access to housing or the legalisation of the squats (usually, in terms of affordable rental contracts) promoted by these housing groups, these struggles have also politicised and radicalised housing issues beyond the limited scope of some autonomist networks of squatters. Some remarkable examples, such as *Metropoliz* in Rome (Grazioli and Caciagli 2018) and *City Plaza* in Athens (García and Jørgensen 2019; Raimondi, 2019) have shown that strong and horizontal forms of self-management of the squats are not only possible, but also foster intersectional everyday politics as well as forms of mobilisation where diverse social and political struggles can converge. Although each squatted space is ephemeral, precarious or uncertain, the forms of commoning created in these spaces survive the eviction of each individual squat, and multiply beyond its walls. Their peculiarity is that they do not only form momentary ruptures to the sovereign filtering of mobility. Rather than mere episodes or events that disrupt habit they produce alternative habitats and forms of inhabitation, through the practice of space-making and home-making. Through squatting migrants do not only perform resistance in the sense of opposition and reaction to bordering regimes, but organise their lives differently, as to counter and escape economic, social and political subjection.

There is always a dialectical relation between the enclosures and the opening of new possibilities of commoning and resistance. The enclosure of these forms of commoning is performed through repression and erasure (Van Isacker, 2019), through humanitarian interventions (Dadusc 2019), through rights and laws (Grazioli and Montagna, 2019), through forced circulation (Stojić Mitrović and Vilenica, 2019) as well as through what Sara Ahmed (2014) defines *atmospheric walls*, namely visible and invisible techniques and micropolitics that inevitably make spaces available to some more than to others.

Indeed, squats are far from romantic ideas of harmonious communities, as they engender tensions, conflicts and contradictions (see Raimondi, 2019). As Julia Downes (forthcoming) argues, grassroots movements ‘are not immune from perpetuating

systems of domination; however, we can work towards attending to power inequalities that emerge in our interventions'. These spaces do not attempt to provide blueprints and 'solutions' to fix all the problems created by global inequality, but engender attempts and failures, learning from mistakes, facing internalised forms of racism and privilege: *Caminando preguntamos* (as we walk, we ask questions).

## Towards a politics of inhabitation

Following the lead of these main conceptual threads, the contributions presented in the following and final section develop critical perspectives rooted in the materiality of migrants' struggles within European borderlands. This empirical approach is nurtured by the authors' activist participation into the fieldwork (Juris and Khasnabish 2013; Dadusc 2014). Indeed, the editors' and authors' shared perspectives, which shaped the special issue, is that activist researchers "must always stress the inseparability of knowledge and action, which impel them to be self-consciously interventionist in approach" (Routledge 2013, 267).

Marta Stojić Mitrović and Ana Vilenica look at the migrants' struggles about housing in Serbia in the context of the securitisation policies that characterise the EU's external *borderscapes* of Serbia. The Western Balkans, they argue, became not only transit spaces, but also *circular transit* spaces where migrants are forced to cross borders endlessly without moving forward to their destination. The authors propose the notion of 'housing-scapes' to address those practices that emerge from mobile spatialities and vulnerabilities. In particular, they point to the intersections of state-run camps and migrant self-organised squatted housing. Squatting initiatives have taken place along the main migratory routes, crossroads and borders, but also next to the state-run camps and even within them. Therefore, Stojić Mitrović and Vilenica show how these housing infrastructures constitute practices of commoning and of 'debordering circulation', which imply a confrontation and transformation of the border regimes forced circulation.

Valeria Raimondi's article analyses the socio-political form of the migrants squats, the (new) subjectivities they contribute to create, and the socio-spatial interactions they foster and generate, both within them and in relation to other spatialities in the city of Athens. The implementation of the analysis happens at different spatial scales – from the intimate scale of the body to the wider one of the city. Theoretically, the article develops along the lines of three concepts: citizenship, space and autonomy. Migrants squats are interpreted here as practices and sites for contesting citizenship, intended as a category of political status; as such, they exceed the limits of this category and move beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, originating practices of citizenship 'from below' (Nyers and Rygiel 2012), while at the same time they produce subjectivities that choose to *opt out* of citizenship as legal status (McNevin 2013).

Nicola Montagna and Margherita Grazioli's paper examines the case of Rome (Italy), where the linkage between migration, urban planning and self-management has been constitutive of the urban fabric since the end of WWII. As the 2000s so-called 'migratory crisis' unfolded, thousand of migrants with different statuses and migratory trajectories settled, transited or got forcibly 'stuck' in Rome. Grassroots forms of inhabitation, including housing squats, urban camps and informal settlement, represented a viable alternative to the institutional reception system, and for opting out the

pathways established by the Dublin border regime. The interplay of autonomy and coercion underpinning these forms of self-made inhabitation situates the ontological conditions of possibility under which they can be constituted, and maintained, as urban and mobile commons (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). The latter are understood as those organisational, relational and political deeds which foster migrants' settlement and mobility. The potentiality, and odds, of self-made inhabitation as urban-mobile commons are discussed through three case-studies: the housing squat '4 Stelle Occupato', affiliated to Housing Rights Movements; the urban camping Baobab Experience; and the informal settlement Ex-Penicillina Leo.

Deanna Dadusc's paper addresses the autonomous forms of inhabitation of We are here grassroots movement in the inner EU borderland of the Netherlands. According to the author, the creation of housing squats, as opposed to the containment in emergency shelters, marks an important shift in migrants' struggle that goes from acts of protest, to the performance of resistance at the level of the micropolitics of borders. Through these spaces, indeed *illegalised* migrants enact presence without necessarily conflating with, or demanding, citizenship. Moreover, focussing on government's responses to these forms of inhabitation, the paper uncovers the simultaneously 'humanitarian' and 'securitarian' nature of border regimes.

Travis van Isacker's contribution addresses the iterated eviction and dismantlement of Calais' unauthorised camps and squats as domicide (Porteous and Smith, 2001) and as a technology of citizenship. Here, *domicide* qualifies as the deliberate destruction of autonomous forms of inhabitation. The clearance of these spaces through forcible evictions and displacement operates as a technology of citizenship in two main ways: prescribing politically acceptable forms of inhabitation by dismantling others, and physically removing sites of contestation where networks of solidarity and politics of anti-citizenship are nurtured. This politics of exhaustion is read as an attempt to implement citizenship as a device of control of settlement and mobility.

De Angelis' postface addresses the above papers and proposes an understanding of commoning as an ongoing flow constituent of rights that are enacted and exercised, rather than being *granted* by the state. In particular, De Angelis explores the relation between commoning, enclosure and citizenship and argues that the common is a pre-condition for citizenship and it exceeds its constraints: 'in the here and now, in the daily challenge of migrants' social reproduction, commoning emerges as a way to facilitate existence while increasing the power of resistance'. In this context, besides a multiplicity of attempts to enclose bodies, lives and spaces, these struggles become increasingly ungovernable.

## Note

1. <https://alarmphone.org/en/2018/06/17/toward-a-coalition-of-solidarity-for-the-right-to-mobility-and-equal-rights-for-all/> .

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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