

# Architecture on the Move: (Re)Creating a Place in a Displaced World

Irit Katz

Refugees, irregular migrants, and other people on the move often plan to remain in their spaces of refuge only temporarily, yet they invest time and efforts in these ephemeral environments. Based on the work of Hannah Arendt on refuge and the human condition, and by focusing on actions of homemaking in the makeshift Jungle camp in Calais, this paper examines the meaning of the “moving architecture” of “moving people,” as they attempt to create a place for themselves in their unstable world of displacement and human mobility. By analyzing the spatial transformations of emergency shelters and camp environments conducted by their inhabitant-fabricants, the article argues that actions of place-making and homemaking materialize a political call of the displaced of their need for an elaborate human place in the world, even if this place makes part of a temporary environment of displacement and refuge.

At the end of November 2015, the makeshift Jungle camp in Calais was a bustling cluster of tents and shacks laid out on the wet ground of the derelict industrial site from which refugees and irregular migrants were attempting to cross the English Channel to the United Kingdom. The Jungle’s main street, curving between the camp’s Afghan, Syrian, Somali, and other neighborhoods, was busy with a constant stream of people walking and cycling up and down the road or chatting next to the grocery stores, barbershops, bakeries, and restaurants that served the camp’s residents and volunteers. At the camp’s several schools and libraries, residents took language lessons while others visited one of the churches or mosques or were busy building new huts in cleared areas between existing shelters. Some of the huts that had been built for quite a while had

front porches or flowerbeds near their entrances, while others were decorated with flags and graffiti, sometimes with political messages on the right to free movement and open borders. At the same time, as the camp revealed itself as an elaborated vivid human environment, it was clear that this was also a violent site of deep neglect and precariousness. The large black puddles and piles of garbage that dotted the camp and the rows of portable toilets and communal taps where people washed and filled buckets with water, indicated that this was a place where men, women, and children were abandoned with no basic



Figure 1. Calais Jungle main street, November 2015. Source: Author



Figure 2. Restaurant in the Jungle camp, November 2015. Source: Author

infrastructure, services, or amenities. The long queues of people waiting for donated food and clothes were also a reminder of the precarious provision on which those living in the camp were dependent.

This was my first visit to Calais Jungle, on which I was accompanied by two fellow architects following an invitation from activists who asked for assistance in designing and building robust shelters in the rapidly growing camp before the European winter set in. We came to the camp, as many others, to act in solidarity with people “on the move” who tried to confront the UK and the EU exclusionary border regime. As three architects, we were to cast the role of “the professionals” who

came to counteract the structured institutional violence and support those who were considered as “people in need” who lived in the camp. Yet the camp’s residents, it was already clear during that visit, did not really need architects to assist them. Similar to other refugee and migrant camps worldwide, despite scarce resources, the Jungle had evolved into an elaborate self-built environment grounded in the residents’ needs and skills, a makeshift camp that developed rapidly by and around them (Katz 2017).

Migrants planned to remain in the Jungle only briefly until they could successfully depart and complete their journeys, and it was clear that the site itself would not last, yet many of them had nevertheless put time and effort in building and improving their ephemeral shelters, businesses, and institutions in the temporary camp. But why invest so much in a place one is aiming to leave? Why build and improve a site that will eventually be demolished? The Jungle, it was clear, was a place that was about more than emergency shelters and basic protection and provision. As such, this article reflects, primarily through an Arendtian perspective, on the meaning of the Jungle as both a temporary site of irregular human movement and an environment developed as an elaborate place that exceeded its functional role in sustaining the life of those “on the move.” By focusing on the spatial movement of shelters and camps generated by their builders-inhabitants, the article examines how actions of homemaking and place-making materialize a political call of the need of displaced people for a human place in the world, even in the ephemeral environments in which they settle for only a short time.



Figure 3. Alpha House shelter and art school in Calais Jungle, November 2015. Source: Author

## No place in the world

Migration, including forced migration and seeking refuge elsewhere, is as old as the history of human existence, yet since the early days of modernity, people have lived in an increasingly mobile world. They move, flee, cross borders, and this constant human movement, especially of forced migrants, creates continuous spatial movement in different realms and scales. Refugee camps and makeshift encampments such as the Jungle are continuously built and then demolished often only to be created again in a different form elsewhere (Katz 2019), generating an *external spatial movement* across geographical regions. At the same time, these spaces also move internally by the constant changes of their inhabitation. While their residents have left their homes, hometowns, and home countries behind, they also carried these places with them through their memories, experiences, social ties, and cultural traditions, which form the ways they inhabit their new environments. The homemaking and place-making processes create an *internal spatial movement* that continuously morphs and reshapes these environments.

These external and internal spatial movements, when camps, emergency shelters, and other spaces of displacement change location and form, make part of what Zygmunt Bauman (2000) calls “liquid modernity,” the condition of constant shifts that exist not only in the actual and often imposed movement of people, but also in the relationships, identities, and global economics of constantly re-created contemporary society and its spaces. Hannah Arendt, prior to Bauman, was one of the most significant scholars to consider displacement and refuge, describing the “uprootedness and superfluosity which have been the curse of modern masses since the beginning of the industrial revolution,” while reflecting on how displacement and undesired people in excess “have become acute with the rise of imperialism [and] the break-down of political institutions and social traditions” (Arendt 1962, 475). Arendt describes this uprootedness and displacement, following her own experience as a refugee escaping Nazi Germany and then Europe, as world-shattering: “We lost our home, which means the familiarity of daily life,” she wrote in her 1943 essay “We Refugees” (Arendt 1994, 110), gesturing with her interpretation of “home” to the Latin notion of *habitus* as an intimate condition of inhabitation from which those uprooted are ruptured. The only solution “the world had to offer the stateless,” identifies Arendt, was the camp, which makes the displaced “deportable again” (1962, 284). For those forced into such temporary sites, it was not only impossible to return to their lost homes but also to create a new one in conditions of uncertainty and exclusion.

The meaning of displacement for Arendt is indeed not only the world that was lost but also the world that is being denied to those displaced: “to be uprooted,” she writes, “means to have no place in the world, recognized and guaranteed by others”; “to be superfluous means not to belong to the world at all” (Arendt 1962, 475). By “world,” Arendt means the human world created by people over time through social, political, and cultural structures and institutions. This is the “man-made world of things” that creates “a home for mortal man,” which is distinct from nature (Arendt 1998, 173), a world assembled by what people have created and is therefore distinctively and familiarly human. In order to understand what kind of world is lost and being denied in displacement, and what people in sites and camps such as the Jungle sometimes reconstitute, it is first important to identify the meaning of the human world and its conditions.

In *The Human Condition* (1958), Arendt reflects on three human activities – labor, work, and action – which are fundamental to *vita activa*, the active human life. Labor, whose human condition is life, “corresponds to the biological process of the human body,” with the vital necessities of “growth, metabolism, and eventual decay” (Arendt 1958, 7) provided by repetitive and cyclical activities such as preparing food or cleaning. Differently, the human condition of work is worldliness, which “corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence” and “provides an ‘artificial’ world of things [...] within its borders each individual life is housed, while this world itself is meant to outlast and transcend them all” (Arendt 1958, 7). Lastly, action, which for Arendt means political action, corresponds to the condition of plurality, “to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world” (Arendt 1958, 7). These different human activities and their conditions are interrelated yet have different temporalities. Labor is about our temporary and cyclical biological existence; work is about our ability to create a more permanent world that outlasts our temporary lives; and action is about our ability to gather at the same time in order to act together politically and change our world.

In the modern age, for Arendt, having a place in the human world is inherently connected to the political modern systems of citizenship and rights. In the age of modernity, the earth has been frantically divided into nation-states through which people are subjected to material, social, legal, and political systems that protect their freedom and rights, and as such have become fundamental to our human existence. In this tightly knit modern global arrangement of nation-states, those ejected as displaced people from “the trinity of state-people-territory” are not only deprived of their intimate homes and familiar life, but also lose their “place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective,” a world acknowledged by a political community that guarantees their humanity and, ultimately, their basic “right to have rights” (Arendt 1962, 281–82). Those who are denied citizenship might also be placed, as either humanitarian objects or undesired people on the move, in temporary in-between spaces, such as the Jungle, where they are denied a recognized and legitimate place. The Jungle, however, as an in-between bottleneck site of waiting, has become much more than what the municipality of Calais intended when it instructed a set of separate individuals to concentrate their makeshift shelters on the specific derelict industrial site where the camp was formed (Reinisch 2015, Katz 2017). Such makeshift environments of refuge are designed to be unworldly and often violent spaces of “the undesirables” (Ager 2011), yet they could also become places of “world-building” (Singh 2020) which are actively transformed by the spatial agency and spatio-political actions of their inhabitants into an elaborate home in the world.

---

### Unworldliness by design

The designated space for refugees, stateless people, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants left outside the state-people-territory trinity is often, as highlighted by Arendt and many others since, the temporary space of the camp, whether refugee camps, migrant camps, detention camps, or camps of other forms and titles (hotspots, reception facilities, hospitality centers). These sites are marked by their technologies of control and minimal provision (Martin et al. 2020) and function as spatial instruments of containment of those displaced. Camps create what Agamben calls “spaces

of exception” (1998), which exist within the state territory yet outside the normal juridical and social order. Those suspended in these spaces are given ephemeral shelters rather than houses or homes in order to control them as temporary undesired guests (Agier 2011) rather than permanent inhabitants.

Such prefabricated emergency shelters tend to be primarily designed with standardized features for anonymous universal users and are the product of rationalization, industrialization, and standardization. Their design prioritizes budget and logistics so they can be easily transported as flat-pack kits to be rapidly erected in different parts of the world. The impersonal spaces and environments they create go together with the objectives of the states and aid agencies who purchase and deploy them for only temporary use. These shelters are primarily designed for the *external* spatial movement of camps which are created in emergency situations across different geographical regions only to be liquidated as soon as possible. They embrace a strictly technocratic approach generated by elementary biological needs and technical measures based on the standardized human body that both assembles and inhabits them (Katz 2017, 2020). The institutional camp, often composed of these prefab temporary shelters laid out in a rigid grid for a better-controlled environment, creates a biopolitical space in itself that answers only the basic necessities of its inhabitants with food and hygiene facilities provided outside the minimal shelters. As such, institutional camps and emergency shelters work in tandem to create a system which keeps displaced people as temporarily warehoused living bodies while ignoring their more meaningful human needs. Informal emergency camps, where basic forms of informal shelters and minimal provision are used, are also often erected and function to answer only the essential needs for the mere survival of their dwellers.

These shelters and camps correspond to no more than the basic condition of life and to its related activity of labor, conducted to maintain not more than basic biological existence. They also correspond to Arendt’s analysis of modern mass society that tends “to ‘normalise’ its members” (Arendt 1958, 40) with interest in maintaining “life process itself,” and aims only for the “survival of the animal species man” (Arendt 1958, 321). As the structures provided for the displaced are only the most basic, with only the minimal needs of food and hygiene met, in order to be erected and liquidated as quickly



Figure 4. The Calais container camp within the Jungle camp, April 2016. Source: Author



Figure 5. Prefabricated shelter with added extension in the camp near Dunkirk, April 2016.  
Source: Author

as possible, such shelters and camps create detached, unhomey, and alienating environments. Their purpose is no more than sustaining the life of those who are deprived of control over their own destiny and the spaces they inhabit. Displaced people often name such shelters after spaces for animals – the prefabricated shelters in a camp near Dunkirk, for example, were nicknamed “chicken houses” – and describe their feeling in such shelters as being “like animals” (Woensel Kooy 2016, Katz 2017, 2020), manifesting their purpose of merely sustaining life. Camp dwellers such as those in the Jungle and the abovementioned camp near Dunkirk, however, sometimes use their capacities to reshape their environments, creating *internal* spatial movement through which their basic spaces are transformed to become a temporary home in the world.

---

### Worlding a displaced world

The displaced people living in the emergency shelters and camps often refuse to comply with the restrictions of these minimal spaces and actively reshape them as articulated places of refuge. The prefabricated timber shelters erected in the camp near Dunkirk were significantly expanded from the first day they were occupied, and in other camps around the world the refugees have turned their minimal shelters into elaborate homes built according to their cultural traditions, forming memoryscapes of the environments left behind (Peteet 2005). In the Jungle, while prefab emergency shelters were transformed and reformed in both shape and function, informal shelters and temporary institutions were carefully designed according to the cultural and social traditions, preferences, skills, and the limited resources of their builders. Traditional Darfurian semicircular compounds, Afghan restaurants with elevated hoo-kah lounges, wide mosques with specific entrance features, and an Ethiopian Orthodox church with raised roof sections and turquoise-colored entrance gates, were all sophisticated interpretations of places left behind and of places needed for a particular form of life that is distinctly human. The builders’ available skills and resources have created specific architectural qualities of well-articulated spaces, which, through

processes of “precarious placemaking” (Hinkson 2017), confronted the perilous environments within which they were formed.

Migrants and refugees, as Brun and Fábos (2015, 14) argue, re-create places as particular articulations of their past and current realities, as environments that exist “in a range of different places across space and time” and “within circumscribed geographic, historical, and political contexts.” The Jungle’s residents created spaces that exceeded the basic provision of shelter, seeking to sustain the fundamental aspects that establish who they are as people with specific backgrounds, identities, and particular modes of living (Katz 2017, 2020). In addition, these environments evolved from a collection of isolated and isolating shelters and camp spaces to a collective enterprise of complex social and cultural practices that go beyond the survival of their residents as an arbitrary gathering of isolated outcasts. The creation of such articulated environments, it is important to note, was not limited to the Jungle but happened, and still is happening, in informal and institutional refugee camps around the world (Peteet 2005, Dorai and Piraud-Fournet 2018, Refugee Republic, n.d.).

These spatial actions that transform the minimal shelters and camps could be linked to Arendt’s discussion on work (Singh 2020) and its related human condition of worldliness, which has three key attributes. First, worldliness, or the human world, is constituted by producing things that are durable, “works and deeds and words” that transcend the lives of those who create them and “at least to a degree, are at home in everlastingness” (Arendt 1958, 18–19). These durable things have the function of “stabilizing human life” (Arendt 1958, 137), creating a world that was there before us and will continue after us and therefore confronts our uncontrolled biological movement in time and space. In addition, the ideal parts of this man-made world, for Arendt, are not instrumental but are created for their own sake. Such work, differently from labor, is not “a matter of utility but of meaning” (Arendt 1958, 154); it is not created “in order to” but “for the sake of,” and can appear as an end in itself and not as a means to an end, transcending “both the sheer functionalism of things produced for consumption and the sheer utility of projects produced for use” (Arendt 1958, 173). It is therefore not surprising why it is the work of art, including architecture, which for Arendt is “the most intensely worldly of all tangible things” (Arendt 1958, 167). Lastly, our human world must also be acknowledged by others, going beyond the realm of the private creation while existing in, and creating, the public sphere. “In order to be what the world is always meant to be, a home for men during their life on earth,” writes Arendt, “the human artifice must be a place fit for action and speech” (Arendt 1958, 173), and unless it creates the “web of human affairs and relationships and the stories engendered by them,” this world “lacks its ultimate *raison d’être*” (Arendt 1958, 204).

Inhabiting a place, and particularly emergency shelters and camps, it could be argued, is a substantial part of world-making. If, as examined earlier, these initially instrumental spaces could be identified as aimed at the mere biological lives of their residents and to the labor of sustaining them, including the labor of assembling these shelters, then the reappropriated shelters and camp environments could be identified through their relation to work and its condition of worldliness. These transformed spaces were not only created for the bare necessities of life but were also formed as carefully crafted spaces intended for particular human uses and sometimes for the sake of their very creation.

As one of the Jungle's Sudanese residents stated, "I do not want to stay, I want to go to England, but when I am here, I want my Calais home to be nice so it reminds me of my home in Sudan" (Ma 2016), reflecting on how his beautified home in the camp did not answer only his basic needs of physical protection, but was also decorated for the sake of aesthetic preference and the feeling of a homely connection to the home left behind. This form of homemaking in the camp should not be dismissed as an insignificant act of a person on the move who is bound to eventually abandon his temporary informal home. Rather, it should be linked to a variety of studies showing how everyday inhabitation practices of beautification and modification of precarious spaces allow people to "establish a sense of home, as well as constructing a clear sense of self and agency" (Handel 2019, 14; see also Parsell 2012, Hinkson 2017). This active form of homemaking in the camp means a form of control over a space which is otherwise uncontrollable for its inhabitants. As Parsell (2012, 160) explains in relation to people sleeping rough, this form of homemaking and "control over a space also means the ability to exercise a degree of autonomy over their lives." The active process of making a shelter a home therefore also means the remaking of human agency in the dehumanizing space of the camp.

Yet it was not only their own homes that the refugees in the Jungle were creating; they were also transforming the camp itself into a worldly human environment. The Ethiopian church, for example, with its elaborate roof structure that incorporated windows of transparent plastic sheets that allowed the sunlight to enter the space from above, was created for elevating religious purposes. The space of the camp itself was also carefully organized, with shelters and institutions not scattered arbitrarily but relating to one another to form a meaningful space, whether it was a neighborhood or a main street, turning the camp into a human environment formed by logic and intention. This *internal* spatial movement of shelters and other camp spaces by their reappropriation and careful creation was transforming the camp from a mere functional space into a space created for human life as a whole with purposes beyond providing for the body's basic needs.

This is related to the important attribute of the endurance of these camp spaces. Although these camps are considered temporary, and the Jungle indeed no longer exists, this environment could nevertheless be considered as a space of endurance. This is in part because the representations of the camp still endure in the human world through media reports, academic analysis, West End theatre shows, and architectural exhibitions and discussions, all preserving the Jungle beyond its physical existence. But the human endurance of the Jungle and similar camps was and still is formed through their very materialization as spaces that encapsulate and maintain the particular cultures, spatial traditions, social ties, practices, and memories of their inhabitants-builders, and therefore allow their human world to endure within and through them. This works despite and often against their builders' uprootedness and rupture, temporariness and uncertainty, which are often enhanced by unstable and alienating environments of the informal and institutional camps. Instead, such transformed spaces allow for identities and the very humanity of their inhabitants-creators to be represented and endure during and beyond the precarious situation of uncertain realities and unknown futures.

While these spatial transformations often happen in radical conditions in the camp, they are not dissimilar to other ongoing actions of homemaking and place-making in



“ordinary” environments, which are also seen as part of an ongoing and never-ending process of change (Massey 2005). Such continuous processes of constant transformation, which are an inseparable part of modern environments, question the idealized, stabilized conditions of home and inhabitation and their related permanent, fixed, sedentary, or not-in-motion modalities. As Nowicki (2014, 788) argues, places are constantly being “made, unmade, and remade” as part of continuous “temporal, material and geographic fluidity of the homespace,” and processes of homemaking in the camp could also be seen as being part of this broader spatial fluidity. While these rapid homemaking and place-making actions in the camp could be seen as hyper processes of inhabitation, they are not dissimilar to mundane processes of inhabitation which are always in-motion, never static, and entangled to various scales, geographies, and temporalities of spatial production and operation, as identified by Bauman’s liquid modernity. As people in the camp who are rendered out of place and those who inhabit prosaic places worldwide constantly transform them in a variety of forms and rhythms of home- and place-making, they together challenge rigid place-related notions such as being “at home” or an “outsider,” a “refugee” or a “citizen,” which are violently tied to the “Postcolonial New World Order” (Sharma 2020).

Arendt’s third aspect of worldliness, the recognition by others, becomes an inseparable part of worlding the camp in terms of both internal and external recognition. The Jungle and other camps such as Za’atari in Jordan and Dadaab in Kenya, have become iconic spaces of refuge manifesting the human resourcefulness and creativity of their residents and were broadly recognized by scholars, journalists, artists, and the general public external to the camp. Yet, as importantly, the articulated spaces in the Jungle, as in other camps, allowed their residents to recognize one another as human beings with different backgrounds and life trajectories in their self-created camp environments. By together establishing new relations and realities in their spaces of refuge, as a plurality of people with unique identities, rather than the unifying identity imposed



Figure 6. Calais Jungle church, November 2015. Source: Author

on them as excluded and contained refugees and irregular migrants, the space of the camp itself became not only the object of speech but created in itself the scene “fit for action and speech” (Arendt 1958, 173) between its inhabitants. This was done not only through actions of homemaking in the camp’s private realms of the shelters but importantly also through the actions of place-making that reshaped the camp’s public realm and exposed the unique humanity of its dwellers to one another.

The Jungle, therefore, similar to other rearticulated camp spaces, is revealed as a worldly place, whose creation beyond mere functionality and with endurance and recognition by others, have together made it a home in the world for its inhabitants. Such a space should be looked at not only as an environment fit for speech and action, but also as a political action in itself conducted by its residents, reconnecting them to one another and to the world outside the camp, an action that works against the form and intention of the camp’s original function.

---

### Acting through architecture

In a reflection on Arendt’s thought, architectural theorist Kenneth Frampton (2002) shows how architecture relates to both labor and work. Architecture, argues Frampton, combines the never-ending processual labor of building and dwelling necessary for our purely instrumental needs. At the same time, the fact that a work of architecture is usually enduring and intentionally created for our particular human use, and occasionally as a work of art, for its own sake, that is widely recognized, makes it a worldly creation. While the spaces of the emergency shelters and camps, with their instrumental functionality, could be related to the labor around the mere biological necessity of shelter and minimal provision, the reappropriated shelters and camps could be linked to the work of their inhabitants, which transformed them into spaces that are distinctively human.

Architecture is defined as the “formation or construction resulting from or as if from a conscious act” (Merriam-Webster 2020). The internal movement which transformed camp spaces from being purely for functional provision into worldly human spaces through the intentional and conscious acts of their residents could therefore be recognized as an architectural creation, turning the instrumental spaces into carefully designed dwellings and institutions that were constructed and related to one another in a meaningful manner. Contemporary architecture is often considered as being designed only by professional architects, while being an architect today requires the qualification and accreditation of authorized educational and professional state-related institutions. Yet those who redesigned their minimal shelters or makeshift institutions in the camp could also be defined as architects. These refugee-architects, who are not only unauthorized by the state to design buildings but are also deemed unqualified as citizens, have nevertheless transformed their designated minimal environments into articulated places of human life. But these spaces are not only articulated everyday spaces or an architectural work of art. More profoundly, they form performative spatial actions creating worldly environments by those denied a place in the world, creating places formed by those deemed out of place. By that, they are not only environments of labor and work, as reflected Frampton, but they are also spaces of political action through which the displaced resist the isolating naked biopolitical environments in which they are contained.

For Arendt, political action constitutes the highest realization of the human condition. It is based on the human condition of plurality, which “is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives or will live” (1998, 8). In our human world, the arrival of every one of us creates a new beginning, and as our realities change, we can generate further beginnings through political actions that aim to create together a better world for ourselves. It is therefore natality, for Arendt, which is the ontological condition of political actors as beginners who realize their human freedom to begin something new through action; “[b]ecause they are initium, newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth, men take initiative, are prompted into action” (Arendt 1998, 177). It is the political action and its condition of plurality that discloses the identity of the agents as unique individuals who are also political actors capable of new beginnings by interrupting the routine and the expected and creating the unanticipated while realizing their freedom.

The internal movement of camp spaces through reappropriation and change is how the inhabitants are recognized by one another as unique human beings and how their plurality is spatially articulated and expressed. Within a confining environment that was designed to treat people en masse according to their biological similarities rather than their human differences, this spatial action is in itself a political action that enacts the human plurality and freedom that were deliberately denied. These rearticulated spaces could be considered as the materialization of the power of people living together as unique individuals who can further act politically together after recognizing one another as such. This further political action happened in the Jungle through protests and demonstrations, similarly as in other camps, until the camp was violently destroyed by the French authorities. By these actions of spatial creation and protest, the self-created architecture in these camps is submerged in multiple layers of political meaning of a dehumanizing space that becomes worldly by its residents. The unique human significance of the Jungle’s improvised spaces was not only meaningful to its inhabitants but was also acknowledged by French legal and political authorities. The French court repeatedly halted attempts to demolish businesses and public institutions in the camp, recognizing that the Jungle is characterized by “collective spaces whose purpose is to provide services of a social, cultural, medical or legal nature,” and that “these places have been carefully arranged, and that they correspond, by their nature and their functioning to a real need of the exiled living spaces,” and therefore should not be destroyed (Calaismag 2016).

For architecture to represent a collective value, argues Frampton, its “representative role would have to be contingent on the establishment of public realm in the political sense” (2002, 42). This political power, argues Frampton, is dependent “on its social and physical constitution, that is to say, on its derivation from the living proximity of men and from the physical manifestation of their public being in built form” (2002, 42). The creation of articulated places by encamped people with compromised freedom, rights, and provisions formed a specific political relation between the status of these people and their buildings, which enables their plurality to, literally, take place. Such a collective value of people living together as humans in the camp, which is undoubtedly represented by the camp’s architecture and facilitated by it, makes the camp a public realm in the political sense derived from the living together of those who were denied such a space altogether yet created it, nevertheless.

In this respect, the Jungle could be identified as Arendt's definition of the *polis* as a political public space. The *polis* "is not the city-state in its physical location," writes Arendt; "it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be" (1998, 198). For Arendt, such *polis* stands for the "space of appearance," the space "where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living things" but as explicitly human. Such public space of appearance can be always re-created anew where individuals gather together politically, that is, "wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action." The Jungle's insurgent place-making, or rather *polis*-making process, re-created the camp as an elaborate "home in the world," where voices and acts of residents were articulated, seen and heard and where architecture was formed as distinctly political.

---

## Conclusion

The space of Calais Jungle was on the move from the day it was formed in January 2015 until it was demolished in October 2016. The camp was created, grew, changed shape, and was eventually demolished according to the various forces of irregular movement and the attempts to control it that worked within and upon it, forming, together with many other formal and informal migrant and refugee camps around the world, a mobile space that constantly moved geographically and spatially. These spaces moved *externally* in their geographical location following the workings of regional and local powers, but they also moved *internally* by the creation and change of their architectural forms. Their initial spaces, which were created as instrumental environments aimed to answer only the biological necessities of their residents, were then reappropriated by them and transformed into human worldly environments based on plural particular needs, preferences, and skills.

While the first external movement is related to the will, need, and active demand for free global mobility and the right to move from one place to the other and the attempt to block it, the second internal movement is related to the need for a meaningful environment and an active realization of a "place in the world" that answers the human needs of its inhabitants. Such a place is connected to the multiple aspects of being human in intertwined social, cultural, and political ways, as opposed to what these spaces were originally planned to do - to sort and store people on the move outside and away from the human world. As such, these shelters and camps have turned from dehumanizing spaces into worldly places created by architectural and political action of homemaking, place-making, and *polis*-making of their inhabitants-architects.

Yet, while considering the resourcefulness and endurance of the camps' fabricants in their precarious situation, these environments should not be idealized and sentimentalized, and their broader context should not be forgotten. While their dwellers were and still are making remarkable efforts to live as human beings, many of these spaces have been and still are violently disconnected from the environments around them, blocking the physical, social, and human mobility and mobilization of their inhabitants to become an equal part of the human world. While they create a place in the world for their inhabitants, they are also the materialization of their forced exclusion from everyday environments to which they must have the freedom to belong. These reappropriated camp environments should therefore not be read as an answer or as

a solution but rather as a demand. And this demand is expressed by their humanized re-creation, which articulates a clear political call to provide their inhabitants with a place in the world.

When, back in November 2015, we went to the Jungle as architects who wanted to support those living in the camp with a minimal shelter for winter, we realized that, while such shelters were indeed necessary, the more elaborate environment that the camp inhabitants created was equally important. In the visits since, we not only witnessed how camp inhabitants were acting as architects and through architecture, but we also realized how our own role as architects has changed into being activists that work for and demand political change. It is therefore not only spaces and their meaning that are continuously shifting in the camp, redefining what architecture is and what it could be, but also subjectivities and identities of those connected to these environments, including the destabilization of who architects are and in what ways they can act.

---

## References

- Agamben, G. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Agier, M. 2011. *Managing the Undesirables*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Arendt, H. 1962. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books.
- Arendt, H. (1943) 1994. "We Refugees." In *Altogether Elsewhere: Writers on Exile*, edited by M. Robinson, 110–19. Boston, MA: Faber and Faber.
- Arendt, H. (1958) 1998. *The Human Condition*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Bauman, Z. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Brun, C., and A. Fábos. 2015. "Making Homes in Limbo? A Conceptual Framework." *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 31, no. 1: 5–17.
- Calaismag [online magazine]. 2016. [http://www.pereou-paris.org/pdf/Actions/CALAIS\\_16\\_mag\\_anglais\\_ONLINE.pdf](http://www.pereou-paris.org/pdf/Actions/CALAIS_16_mag_anglais_ONLINE.pdf).
- Doraï, K., and P. Piraud-Fournet. 2018. "From Tent to Makeshift Housing: A Case Study of a Syrian Refugee in Zaatari Camp (Jordan)." In *Refugees as City-Makers*, edited by M. Fawaz, A. Gharbieh, M. Harb, and D. Salamé, 136–39. Beirut: American University of Beirut.
- Frampton, K. 2002. *Labour, Work and Architecture*. London: Phaidon.
- Hinkson, M. 2017. "Precarious Placemaking." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 46: 49–64.
- Katz, I. 2017. "Between Bare Life and Everyday Life: Spatialising the New Migrant Camps in Europe." *Amps: Architecture\_Media\_Politics\_Society* 12, no. 2: 1–21.
- Katz, I. 2019. "En Route: The Mobile Border Migrant Camps of Northern France." In *Architecture on the Borderline: Boundary Politics and Built Space*, edited by A. Pieris, 119–38. London: Routledge.
- Katz, I. 2020. "Adhocism, Agency and Emergency Shelter: On Architectural Nuclei of Life in Displacement." In *Structures of Protection?* edited by T. Scott-Smith and M.E. Breeze, 235–46. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Massey, D. 2005. *For Space*. London: Sage.
- Ma, A. 2016. "Homes in Calais' Refugee Camp Reveal Stories, Hopes, and Dreams." *HuffPost*, February 29, 2016. [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/calais-jungle-refugee-camp-homes\\_n\\_56d45a9be4b0bf0dab32b77f7r18n=true](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/calais-jungle-refugee-camp-homes_n_56d45a9be4b0bf0dab32b77f7r18n=true).
- Martin, D., C. Minca, and I. Katz. 2020. "Rethinking the Camp: On Spatial Technologies of Power and Resistance." *Progress in Human Geography* 44, no. 4: 743–68.
- Nowicki, M. 2014. "Rethinking Domicide: Towards an Expanded Critical Geography of Home." *Geography Compass* 8, no. 11: 785–95.
- Parsell, C. 2012. "Home is Where the House Is: The Meaning of Home for People Sleeping Rough." *Housing Studies* 27, no. 2: 159–73.
- Peteet, J. 2005. *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Refugee Republic [website]. n.d. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://refugeerepublic.submarinechannel.com>.
- Reinisch, J. 2015. "'Forever Temporary': Migrants in Calais, Then and Now." *The Political Quarterly* 86, no. 4: 515–22.
- Singh, A. L. 2020. "Arendt in the Refugee Camp: The Political Agency of World-Building." *Political Geography*: 102–49.
- Sharma, N. 2020. *Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Woensel Kooy, E. 2016. "Living In Between: How Refugees and Volunteers in Negotiation (re)Construct Citizenship and Humanitarian Care in the Camps of Grande-Synthe, France." Master's dissertation. Utrecht University.