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# Borderzone Departure Cities: Jumping-Off Urbanism of Irregular Migration on the Edges of Europe

**Irit Katz**

*Department of Architecture, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK, ik300@cam.ac.uk*

**Abstract:** The increasing fortification of borders produces new urban forms of irregular migration. This paper invokes the concept of "borderzone departure cities" as urban constellations created where global migration routes meet blocked borders in cities which become jumping-off points from which migrants try to depart. The paper examines Athens and Calais as borderzone departure cities located at both sides of the EU Schengen area. By focussing on the Athenian City Plaza squat and the makeshift Calais Jungle camp as emblematic yet relational spaces of departure, the paper moves beyond the squat/camp divide to better understand how irregular migrants struggle against hostile bordering apparatuses through urban practices of meanwhile inhabitation and mobile commoning. The paper illustrates how these spaces were variously assembled, run, and experienced to form the conditions for movement and stay, each holding different potentials for creating solidarity infrastructures and negotiating forms of migrant citizenship to support the uncertain urban realities of those stuck on the move.

**Keywords:** borderzone cities, squats, camps, migrant citizenship, mobile commoning, meanwhile inhabitation

In a conversation in City Plaza—an eight-storey hotel in Athens occupied by a group of squatters including irregular migrants[1]—Olga Lafazani, one of the squat's local founders, reflected that while the main aim of City Plaza was to create a "dignified place for migrants to stay [in the city]", it was also about "making a structure that respects mobility itself, respects a community which is on the move, … bends the rules of moving, creates an infrastructure for that".[2] These words describe how one of the most acknowledged solidarity projects of the 2010s' "European migration crisis" (Raimondi 2019; Squire 2018) was crafted around supporting the mobility of migrants on their way to mainland Europe. This reflection also reveals the subversive alliances and practices which facilitate the meanwhile inhabitation of people on the move when they stay in cities while attempting to depart and cross increasingly blocked and hostile borders.

At roughly the same time yet on the other side of the continent, the Calais Jungle created another "highly symbolic space of the so-called 'migration crisis'" (Martin et al. 2020:758). As an intricate makeshift camp supporting those attempting to cross the fortified English Channel and reach the United Kingdom, the Jungle also formed an environment which facilitated mobility and a

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meanwhile stay, where irregular migrants and solidarity groups acted together against the violent local and regional bordering practices of tight control mixed with dreadful institutional abandonment (Davies et al. 2017; Mould 2017).

City Plaza and the Jungle, similarly to other squats and encampments in Athens, Calais, and other cities in Europe and beyond, significantly differ in their borderzone conditions, urban environments, and their forms of inhabitation. Their spaces, indeed, have mostly been examined separately as particular formations: City Plaza as a "refugee/migrant squat" (Raimondi 2019:559; Squire 2018:115) and the Jungle as a "refugee/migrant camp" (Davies et al. 2017; Martin et al. 2020; Mould 2017), while being compared with migrant solidarity initiatives in other European cities (Fischer and Bak Jørgensen 2021). Differently, this paper analyses City Plaza and the Jungle as distinct yet comparable and relational urban environments of departure which increasingly appear as overlapping realities in borderzone cities across the globe, where "migration corridors" (Gonzales et al. 2019) intersect with today's highly secured turbulent borders (Zhang 2019) and with urban everyday spaces of encounter and reappropriation (Stavrides 2016). These constellations are defined in this paper as borderzone departure cities to convey the urban forms created around today's shifting and splintering borderscapes (Ribas-Mateos 2016; Shachar 2020) to support the violently regulated migrants during their imposed periods of waiting and uncertainty (Jacobsen et al. 2021) while they attempt to depart.

The argument of this paper is twofold. First, it identifies and defines borderzone departure cities as a particular urban spatiotemporal typology formed in specific geopolitical situations of cities located ahead of fortified and hostile borderzones (Hagan 2022) where stuck migrants reluctantly stay while attempting to continue their journey. Second, by focusing on Athens' City Plaza squat and Calais' Jungle camp, it examines how related modes of migrant urban citizenship are configured by claiming both the right to move and stay through radical practices of meanwhile inhabitation as a form of mobile commoning (Dadusc et al. 2019; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013), which stand in opposition to violent bordering regimes and their state-run and humanitarian forms of conditional hospitality (Derrida 2000; Dadusc et al. 2019).

Cities have long been recognised as nodes that circulate things and people, as places of influx and exchange where new frontiers are constantly created and shifted. They have been described as hubs of circulations and flows (Allen et al. 2005), as transit and stopover points on longer trajectories (Iranzo 2021), and as places of arrival (Saunders 2010). Migratory movements are central to these urban pulses, yet today's urban spaces and rhythms of people on the move are increasingly shaped by intentional interruptions caused by intensifying state and regional bordering practices (Darling 2017). However, while many cities have become bottleneck spaces of blocked human mobility, they have also transformed into contingent environments of meanwhile inhabitation and commoning which actively support those attempting to depart. These urban borderzone departure sites, crafted to let live and let move, are violently tied to the colonial roots of the current world order in which immigration control and national citizenship

together form the key technologies for the racialised reproduction of "historical legacies of colonial domination" (Davies and Isakjee 2019:215).

The conceptualisation of borderzone departure cities contributes to the understanding of the new realities of urban borderscapes appearing along the lines of the colonial-based global apartheid, including the EU's violent and racial internal and offshore borders (Mayblin 2017; van Houtum 2010). It also contributes to the understanding of the intricate dimensions of cities, with their diverse and "incomplete crafting of alternative forms of order in practice" (Darling 2017:187; Robinson 2016), which might deviate from the racialised national and regional border regimes. These urban worlds create the ontological conditions of possibility for new collaborative spaces and practices that support irregular transnational mobilities, and their analysis generates the epistemological landscape for studying spaces beyond those created by state-regulated forms of citizenship and hospitality.

The paper begins by locating borderzone departure cities in the global context and their theorisation in relation to today's pixelated borders and to the urban migrant citizenship resisting them through forms of meanwhile inhabitation and commoning. It then examines urban spaces of borderzone departure, specifically those consolidated in Athens and Calais, as responses to the increasing fortification of the Greek–Macedonian and French–British borders respectively. By focusing on City Plaza and the Jungle, the paper then explores how urban departure spaces correspond to the exclusionary bordering and citizenship apparatuses by facilitating both movement and stay.

While acknowledging the limits of a relational comparative examination of these different contexts and their camp/squat spaces, the paper contributes to the understanding of migration urbanism by suggesting that although differing substantially, they share common spatiotemporal–political attributes which are intrinsically connected to both borders and cities. Each of these forms of borderzone departure urbanism is materialised in embodied, informal, and hyper-temporary spaces, creating radical forms of meanwhile inhabitation and transnational alliances of solidarity and justice (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). These facilitate new political subjectivities of migrant urban citizenship while claiming the right to both movement and a daily life in cities experienced through situations of uncertainty while awaiting departure.

## Methodology on the Move

Cities are not only geopolitical metaphors, but also concrete sites to investigate the complex spaces, structures and assemblages of citizenship struggles (Holston 1998; Yiftachel 2009), including those created by irregular migrants (Dadusc et al. 2019; Darling 2017; Fischer and Bak Jørgensen 2021; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013; Rygiel 2010). While I do not intend to reduce the variety of borderzone departure cities worldwide, this paper takes the approach of "comparative urbanism" which builds theory from different contexts and resonates with their diversity yet respects "the limits of always located insights" (Robinson 2016:187). The paper primarily focuses, however, on urban spaces created during Europe's so-called migration crisis to minimise the different variables and maintain

coherence in relation to place and time. The comparability of Athens and Calais was established on the identified geopolitical similarities between them as borderzone cities with sites co-created and inhabited by irregular migrants assisted by networks of solidarity during prolonged periods of suspended departure. Similarly to Huq and Miraftab's (2020:352) analysis of camps and informal settlements as converging spaces of global displacement, this paper also engages in a "relational comparison" which identifies the converging spatialities of squats and camps by examining practices and relations to understand a phenomenon "not in and of itself, but in relation to other processes and places".

The analysis builds on fieldwork conducted during four visits to Calais and two to Athens, of between 2 and 5 days each, between November 2015 and February 2019. It has emerged from my activism in the Calais Jungle through what Picozza (2021:25) identifies as "solidarity as method", in which the field is first accessed through genuine solidarity practices which then feed into research. I first arrived in the Jungle in November 2015 with a group of activists who asked for my assistance as an architect in creating shelters to replace the flimsy tents in the camp (Katz 2022). Later, I returned with other groups supporting camps in northern France in other ways, from supplying food and construction materials to sorting out donated clothes. This has evolved into research which continued in Athens, building on my network of activists and researchers.

As these borderzone environments change tremendously over time, repeating visits and mapping enabled me to follow and analyse their transformations. Participant observations and conversations, mainly with other activists, were complemented with data from relevant local documents, literature and online and media contexts where migrants reflect on their lived realities in these environments. Testimonies from these publications, such as *Voices from the "Jungle"* by Calais Writers (2017), were selected and analysed through open and selective coding. Hence, I use both structural and "enmeshed" epistemologies to illustrate how human mobility, space, and power create new urban practices, forms, and identities. Importantly, the agency and practices of the migrants and activists analysed here are influenced by very personal trajectories and experiences, and it is unfeasible to cover the variety and depth of people's urban paths, which differentiate substantially. The borderzone urban realities examined here, however, are not seen as exceptional but rather as examples of the urban–state–regional–global relations unfolding in many other cities around the ever-changing globe.

## Borderzone Departure Cities

Within the expanding epistemologies, theorisation, and conceptualisation of spaces of displacement, refuge, and irregular migration, the notion of "borderzone departure cities" is particularly concerned with the urban spaces, practices, and (geo)politics of people on the move in their attempt to depart from cities where they are stuck due to heavily securitised and hostile borders. Differently from "arrival cities" such as Nairobi or Berlin (Saunders 2010), where migrants wish to settle indefinitely or at least stay for a significant period, and unlike "transit cities" such as Bamako or Tamanrasset (Iranzo 2021), in which migrants stop

only briefly, borderzone departure cities could be described as urban jumping-off points where migrants are suspended as they attempt to move on.

The term responds to the call for a more nuanced understanding of "transit migration" and its specific violent situations of bordering and im/mobility (Düvell 2012) and the recognition that borderzone urban realities are not equally formed on both sides of the border. This often happens along the global colonial/colonised divide, where settler colonial or former/neo colonial powers block the movement of racialised and formerly colonised populations into European or settler states, creating a global apartheid which keeps out the non-citizen "migrant Others" (Davies et al. 2017:1268). In these cities of contested departure, changing measures of border control, often funded by those on the other side of the border (Mould 2017; van Houtum 2010), frequently intersect with networks of human smuggling and mobile commons of grassroots infrastructures of solidarity (Nordling et al. 2017; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). These support the urban life of migrants and their further movement along the fractured, disrupted and constantly modified global web of migration corridors (Gonzales et al. 2019). These borderzone cities of departure create highly ephemeral urban realities when they appear, change and disappear according to shifting geopolitical situations such as tightened borders forming migratory congestion zones or when urban/state approaches transform from toleration to repression and removal of migrants and their spaces as "matter out of place" (Douglas 2000).

Urban areas of departure can be created as makeshift camps and squats supported by activists yet violently handled by state and local powers, and they may also include hideaway safe houses and public spaces where migrants and smugglers meet. These can appear in cities geographically located near blocked national and regional borderlines, but also in central cities into which today's fluid borders have penetrated. Examples of such borderzone departure cities are Mexican cities near the US border, such as Tijuana, Piedras Negras, Reynosa and Ciudad Juárez (Falk 2019; Kulish 2018), or cities in the Maghreb and the Middle East, such as Tripoli, Nador, and Izmir, where migrants wait before they try to cross the EU's securitised external borders (Cupolo 2016; Gharsallah 2018; Tinti and Reitano 2018; van Houtum 2010). In Europe, urban landscapes of borderzone departure have been created in cities such as Paris, Dunkirk and Calais in France before migrants cross to the UK (Martin et al. 2020), Belgrade and Šid in Serbia before migrants move to Schengen Europe (where border control has been abolished) from the Balkans (Mandić 2021), and Thessaloniki and Athens in Greece (Tsavdaroglou et al. 2019) before migrants depart on the non-Schengen Balkan route.

These urban contexts together illustrate some of the various geographies of borderzone departure cities defined by proximity to blocked borders and by their sites of contested departure—squats, jungles, or other forms of provisional living—which materialise in them. The understanding of the city here includes the multi-scalar, malleable and inherently heterogeneric urban situations worldwide where multiple powers, which form and resist borderzones, collide, and alternative forms of migrant urban citizenship are crafted. I will now theoretically analyse the changes in urban border and citizenship practices and their spaces to

examine borderzone departure cities as an urban typology which exists between shifting border regimes and urban migrant citizenship claimed by radical forms of inhabitation and commoning which are constantly on the move.

## *Splintering Borders, Irregular Migration and the City*

One of the paradoxes of modernity is the opposing relation between the rising ability of people to move and the increasing efforts to control human movement, which are an inherent part of the violence of today's liberal democracies and their racialised borders (Davies and Isakjee 2019). The tensions between global flows of goods, services and (a select group of) people, and the territorialising states aiming to regulate them, are particularly evident in cities, where hostile bordering mechanisms are performed and articulated but also resisted, politicised and reconfigured. Indeed, cities are now considered as key to the re-scaling of border control and its penetration into everyday life (Darling 2017). In these bordering dynamics, it is often the state that sends its long arms into urban areas, including those where migrants are forced to wait while submitting an asylum application to their destination country (Falk 2019).

The ever-changing dynamics between state borders, irregular migration flows, and the city are related to the fact that borders are not fixed and permanent but "manifold and in a constant state of becoming" (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2012:728) and altered by increasingly fluid, reactive and disjunctive bordering practices (Shachar 2020; Zhang 2019). The current pixelation of the border (Ribas-Mateos 2016) from territorial contour lines to shifting border points means that borders create spread and outsourced filters for differential inclusion. Borders might splinter deep into internal or external territories, with cities in neighbouring and more distant countries becoming de facto borderzones of other territories.

Today's urban spatialisation of borders includes spaces which physically block movement like border crossing points or fences running along the edge of cities, such as the "Great Wall of Calais" (Mould 2017) surrounding the city's ferry port and Eurotunnel entrance. Urban borderscapes also include carceral and semi-carceral facilities of containment and other biopolitical and necropolitical forms of "conditional hospitality" (Derrida 2000:77) such as the institutional camps created in Athens, Calais, Paris and Belgrade (Katz et al. 2018; Martin et al. 2020). Bordering regimes, importantly, also include "temporal techniques of border control" (McNevin and Missbach 2018:12) with prolonged situations of waiting (Jacobsen et al. 2021). This is particularly relevant to today's urban departure lounges, where not only spatial but also "temporal borders" (Tazzioli 2018) are shaped.

Borderzone cities, however, also include counter-bordering spaces such as urban smuggler hubs (Tinti and Reitano 2018), like Basmane Square in Izmir (Cupolo 2016) and Victoria Square in Athens (Saleem 2019), and provisional accommodation such as the makeshift camps and squats in Nador, Ciudad Juárez and other cities, including Athens and Calais. These informal spaces, which enable people to both live in and seek ways to move from these cities "under the radar" are particularly important for irregular migrants in Europe because of the EU

Dublin Regulations, which assign responsibility for asylum seekers to the first EU state where they make an identifiable claim. With biometric registration of fingerprints or a facial photo, the border itself is registered into migrants' bodies, determining whether they are entitled to or denied certain rights in certain places. In borderzone departure cities, therefore, spatial informality means keeping bodily identities uncontaminated by intrusive border apparatuses of identification and surveillance.

## *Urban Migrant Citizenship, Mobile Commoning and Meanwhile Inhabitation*

If bordering practices are used to block migrants' movement, then citizenship is the state's legal institution which internally divides those (citizens) who can enjoy various degrees of rights (to freedom, mobility, work, healthcare) from those (non-citizens) who cannot. The connection between national citizenship and human rights becomes particularly problematic in relation to irregular migrants who find themselves exposed without what Arendt (1962:296) identified as the fundamental "right to have rights". Yet, citizenship increasingly displays a volitional quality as a dynamic political constellation and practice, with globalisation challenging "the nation-state as the sole source of authority of citizenship" (Isin 2000:5). By being socially and politically engaged, people de facto exercise citizenship by struggling to shape it, putting less emphasis on legal rules and more on meanings, practices, and identities, including of "citizenship's Others" (Rygiel 2010:23), such as abject subjects and non-citizens. Discussing migrant activism and politics of movement, citizenship is conceptualised "from below" to challenge notions of political community. Nyers' (2015:34) concept of "migrant citizenship", entangled with migrants' autonomous mobility and political agency, adequately illustrates how the urban citizenship of irregular migrants involves "a creative process that is generative of new worlds, identities, and modes of belonging" in the city.

In struggles over inclusive citizenship, the role of the city becomes substantial, as this is where groups with different identities and status often articulate various claims for rights, especially when they are under attack. As Holston (1998:49, 51) suggests, it is in cities where new radical "transnational and diasporic" identities are created while provoking specific disturbances that challenge "the dominant notion of citizenship as national identity and the historic role of the nation-state as the preeminent form of modern political community". These insurgent identities suggest the potential of "multiple citizenships based on local, regional, and transnational affiliations" (Holston 1998:51–52), emerging from the difficulties of lived experience outside the legal codes of the state's "normative citizenship" which also forms a "tool of migration control" (Van Isacker 2019:609).

The connections between lost rights, oppression and the creation of new urban identities could be traced in various spatial processes of urban mobilisation. These environments of "urban informality" or "gray spaces" (Yiftachel 2009) create areas of autonomous disengagement shifting between the authorised and the unauthorised, the tolerated and the no-longer-tolerated. Attempting to remain mobile, irregular migrants indeed often resort to informal or grey spaces such as

squats or makeshift camps created in cities of departure, with local groups sometimes stepping in to offer solidarity and support while participating in resistance to the conditional hospitality offered by the state (Dadusc et al. 2019; Fischer and Bak Jørgensen 2021; Karaliotas and Kapsali 2021; Raimondi 2019). These spaces form alliances that struggle against multiple forms of border violence and institutional abandonment while reframing migration as having its own logics and trajectories, considering the migrants' need for mobility and anonymity but also for alternative modes of urban presence (Darling 2017). Such spaces could be identified as part of what Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2013:190) define as "mobile commons" co-produced and shared as worlds "of knowledge, of information, of tricks for survival, of mutual care, of social relations, of services exchange, of solidarity and sociability" by people on the move. These mobile commons might be achieved through collaborative urban practices of homemaking and "contentious inhabitance" (Van Isacker 2019:609; see also Dadusc et al. 2019; Maestri and Hughes 2017; Raimondi 2019), which enable migrants to turn their hostile borderzone cities of departure into meanwhile homes.

Migrants and refugees create various constellations of home and homemaking practices through which, as Brun and Fábos (2015:14) argue, they "try to gain control over their lives" by negotiating bordering regimes and material structures of restriction and provision. Institutional camps fix the status of those "non-citizens" by containing them in a limiting relationship of conditional hospitality (Derrida 2000; Martin et al. 2020). Differently, radical practices of meanwhile homemaking, which are not necessarily limited to the private domestic realm but are part of placemaking and citymaking, might work against these institutional limbo realities while creating a form of "liminality [which] indicates a more unsettled relationship between fixity and motion" (Brun and Fábos 2015:10–11). Such forms of making as an answer to necropolitical border apparatuses which appear in the city reveal how the production of urban space through inhabitation is inherently political. Purcell's (2002:105) reflection on Lefebvre's (1996) idea of "urban inhabitance as the key to political inclusion" is particularly pertinent here, identifying how practices of inhabitation shift the control over "the production of urban space", taking it "away from capital and the state and toward urban inhabitants" (Purcell 2002:101–102). Inhabitance, suggests Butler (2012:116, 126), is indeed performed by "active and meaningful participation in social life that flows from the right to use urban space", with the "politics of inhabitance" being "attempts to reappropriate space through self-managed alternatives". Rolnik (2014:294) also sees inhabitation as fundamental to inclusive urban life, arguing that the "condition of inhabitance" is at the "core of all 'right to city' urban struggles" (see also Boano and Astolfo 2020). Urban inhabitation performed by irregular migrants through autonomous spaces could therefore be seen as a political act claiming inclusion while working against the state's exclusionary bordering apparatuses.

In reflecting on migrant squatting in Europe as practices of homemaking and inhabitance, Dadusc et al. (2019:531) conceptualise home as "a political and contested space constituted through relational and affective practices" which create radical sites of insurgent and egalitarian citizenship "from below"

(Raimondi 2019:566). These autonomous spaces of inhabitation "become sites for contesting the restriction of mobility as well as for affirming migrants' rightful presence" that might generate "urban and mobile commons" (Dadusc et al. 2019:528). The creation of mobile commons through radical acts of meanwhile inhabitation are complementary to citizenship practises and are fundamentally urban. As Nordling et al. (2017:712) argue in their piece which links between migrants' mobile commoning and citizenship, it is not only that "substantive citizenship is exercised *in* the city", but "strategies and technologies of citizenship are played out *through* the spaces of the city" (emphasis added); it is "through the [commoning] practices taking place in the space of the city" that "memberships and belongings are negotiated".

Indeed, it is the city which truly enables mobile commoning through inhabitation. With its complex and "rich network of practices [which] transforms every available space into a potential theatre of expressive acts of encounter", writes Stavrides (2016:67) in *Common Space*, the city provides both the point where heterogeneous forces and actors might meet, and the porose spatial fabric which could be reappropriated and inhabited by them. Alternative forms of commoning and inhabitation are intrinsically linked to the formation of insurgent migrant citizenship in cities of suspended departure, where homemaking also means forms of contested citymaking. These "disruptive acts of citizenship" might "enact new subjectivities" (Nordling et al. 2017:712) which are inherently political. As Stavrides (2016:67) explains, "common spaces are the spatial nodes through which the metropolis becomes again the site of politics, … an open process through which the dominant forms of living together are questioned and potentially transformed". In the case of mobile commons, these nodes install forms of "thick justice which creates new *forms of life* that sustain migrants' ordinary movements" (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013:192) of both living in and departing from borderzone cities.

Importantly, the emancipatory potential of alternative homemaking, commoning and citizenship in borderzone departure cities must be considered together with their precarities and necropolitical realities, recognising the generative together with the oppressive. In Athens and Calais, as in other departure cities, irregular migrants are stripped of adequate legal and infrastructural protection and left exposed to the state's "violent inaction" (Davies et al. 2017) or to the violent urbicidal and domicidal actions against migrants and their spaces (King and Manoussaki-Adamopoulou 2019; Mould 2017; Van Isacker 2019). While urban sites of departure might remain hidden so as not to attract the violence of the authorities, such threats might also prompt their exposed residents to visibly articulate political claims for rights through creating urban public spaces of protest which make "what was unseen visible" (Rancière 2010:38; see also Bauder 2016; McNevin 2013).

Departure cities, then, activate "from below" apparatuses of power which are linked to two intersecting counter-hegemonic struggles related to both citizenship and bordering. While the first struggle calls for the right to meaningfully stay in cities while waiting to depart, the second calls for the right to move from them and cross blocked borders. The first struggle could be examined as "insurgent citizenship" (Holston 1998), while the second could be understood as "insurgent

movement", forming a double claim for "both participation and mobility" (Darling 2017:189–190) through making urban worlds by actions of commoning and inhabitation.

## Urban Transnational Analysis on the Edges of Europe

Within the countries, regions and continents fortified against irregular migration, Europe has been a central actor. Over the last two decades, "irregular migration" has been a "priority issue" for the EU (van Houtum 2010), yet its political and urban intensity has dramatically increased since 2015, when a record number of more than a million irregular migrants crossed the Mediterranean to Europe (Pew Research Center 2016). Athens and Calais have become focal points of media and academic debates around the control, abandonment, and hosting of migrants in the continent during that period, much due to their respective locations in relation to the European border regime. They are situated on opposite sides of the migratory routes in the EU Schengen area, with Greece separated from it by the non-EU Balkan countries and France being the last stop before the non-Schengen (and now non-EU) United Kingdom, separated by the English Channel.

Over recent decades, Athens and Calais have functioned as departure hubs for migrants from the Middle East, South Asia and Africa who, like other migrants in Europe, originate from former European colonies (Mayblin 2017). These cities are comparable in relation to borderzone departure as they were not considered as points of quick transience nor aspired for as arrival cities,[3] but have similarly become bottleneck spaces for migrants trying to depart. Yet beyond their relational settings and processes, Athens and Calais also create significantly distinct urban settings, presenting very different configurations and scales of urban space, political life and solidarity infrastructures. While in Athens the ongoing political struggles over the use of urban space go beyond its changing roles in migration routes (Mezzadra 2018), Calais' contested urbanism is more related to its function as a border town (Katz 2019; Katz et al. 2018). In addition, the typical formations of departure hubs in Athens and Calais, the squats and jungle camps respectively, present distinct genealogies and forms, with squats run mostly by Greek activists and jungles mostly being self-organised and constructed by migrants supported by solidarity groups. The political contexts of these cities are also different, affecting not only how national but also urban governments reacted to autonomous migrant spaces, making these departure spaces a distinct urban question.[4]

### *Squats in Athens*

Athens, the capital of Greece, the most south-eastern of the EU nation-states, has functioned over the past two decades as a major entry point for migrants arriving on the "Eastern Route" (Kandylis et al. 2012). In 2015, according to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) statistics, the flow of forced migrants included more than 850,000 people who arrived in Greece by sea and often contained in state-run camps on the islands and continent (Dadusc et al. 2019). In Athens, these migrants met a large city of more than 3 million

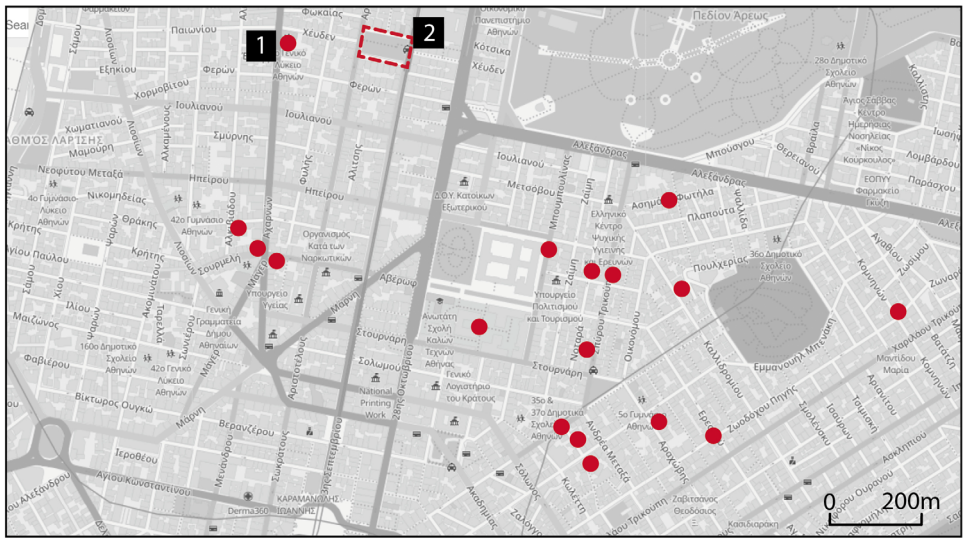
people, which was still confronting the harsh austerity measures of the 2008 Greek economic crisis. This reality, which plunged many Greeks into unemployment, poverty and homelessness, led to an increase in vacant buildings and the rise of squats, with Athens becoming a core space of social struggle and solidarity against austerity (Mezzadra 2018), including the establishment of self-organised services such as popular kitchens, autonomous hospitals and other forms of mutual care. The 2015 "migration crisis" evolved in this reality, with the increasing fortification of Europe's internal borders limiting the mobility of migrants, who found themselves stuck in debt-ridden Greece while trying to depart. At the same time, these migrants also found well-developed alternative urban social networks and commoning practices (Stavrides 2016) ready for actions of solidarity and insurgent politics.

In the central Athenian neighbourhood of Exarchia, known for its anarchist activity of autonomous living, activists opened squats for migrants after seeing "thousands of men, women, and children sleeping rough in the area".[5] Notara 26, opened in September 2015, was the first squat created for migrants, followed by a series of other squats occupying Athens' urban cracks of empty private and public buildings, each hosting between 100 and 200 migrants. These squats were often linked to a political group—the Coordination of Refugees Squats Assembly (Sintonistikò Prosfigikon Katalipseon)—created by Athenian activists as spaces for both migrants' "freedom of movement" and "the right to stay" (Squat!net 2019).

Following the 2016 EU–Turkey deal which further limited irregular movement, of the 60,000 irregular migrants stuck in Greece in March 2017, some 2,500–3,000 men, women and children, many of whom wished to cross into mainland Europe, found shelter in squats in Athens, particularly in and around Exarchia (see Figure 1). The alternative urbanism of Exarchia was central to the formation of these emancipatory practices of migrant urban commoning (Raimondi 2019; Stavrides 2016). Described as an iconic "sign of resistance" to institutional and capitalist forces,[6] Exarchia created what anarchists call a "free zone" (from the violence of both fascists and police) where both citizens and non-citizens could feel protected in the city. Adjacent to Exarchia, City Plaza was occupied on 22 April 2016 as a Greek migrant solidarity initiative, with about 350 migrants hosted at the same time in the 100 hotel rooms (City Plaza 2018; Squat!net 2019). Over its 36 months of existence, more than 2500 migrants from 13 countries stayed in the squat, some for long months, until they managed to depart, with residents accessing institutional services in the area, including the squat's children regularly attending school.

## *Camps in Calais*

Calais, a French port city of 75,000 people on the north-western edge of the continent, overlooks the Strait of Dover, the narrowest point on the English Channel. As the closest French city to England, it was, and still is, the main point of departure from mainland Europe to the United Kingdom. The camps that were increasingly created in and around the city during 2015 (see Figure 2), and the many created since (Hagan 2022), are part of a longer history of makeshift jungle and institutional camps of various sizes and types that have developed in Calais over




1 City Plaza squat 2 Victoria square

● Locations of some of the squats in and around Exarchia, Athens, 2015-2019

**Figure 1:** Map of migrant squats created between 2015 and 2019 in and around Exarchia, including the City Plaza squat (source: author)

the past two decades (Katz 2019; Katz et al. 2018; Rygiel 2010). In January 2015, when the number of migrant encampments and squats in the city began to rise, the municipality announced that they would no longer be tolerated. Instead, migrants were forcedly displaced to a derelict industrial waste site on the edge of Calais, around 6 km from the city centre. While the basic provisions of food, water, hygiene facilities and one hot meal a day were offered by the nearby Jules Ferry migrant centre (Katz 2019), these services were displaced from Calais' centre by the right-wing mayor (Van Isacker 2019), who criminalised solidarity acts while creating the camp as a form of semi-carceral structured informality.

The Jungle camp, hosting at its peak more than 6,000 migrants, was the largest and most elaborate makeshift migrant camp created in Europe, examined as a racial colonial-based space of exception, abandonment and domicide (Davies et al. 2017; Van Isacker 2019), of informal citymaking (Wainwright 2016), as a slum of London's making (Mould 2017), as a distinct urban camp (Katz 2019; Katz et al. 2018), and as a space of meaningful material and political configurations (Martin et al. 2020). Yet, in most accounts the Jungle is analysed as "a camp", while its creation as part of other forms of migrant urban citizenship is often overlooked.

While the two case studies of Athens and Calais are significantly different from one another, they are relational spaces which are mutually relevant to the examination of borderzone departure cities and the ways their urban realities unfold in the same region and period. Their diverse spatial constellations of departure—squats and camps—show some of the variety of the socio-political and spatial

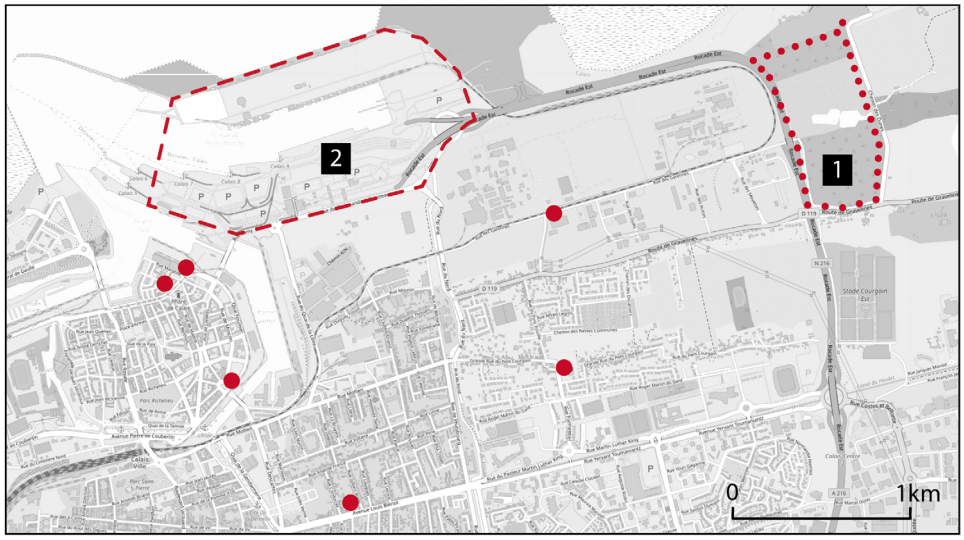



**Figure 2:** Map of some of the migrant makeshift camps created since 2014 in Calais, including the Jungle camp (source: author)

articulations that take place in such borderzone contexts, while their geopolitical and spatial similarities—located ahead of fortified borders and consisting of precarious spaces of meanwhile inhabitance and mobile commoning—enable certain borderzone departure dynamics and their alternative forms of migrant citizenship to be illuminated.

## Assembling Borderzone Departure Cities in Athens and Calais

How do people stuck on the move inhabit the city while trying to depart? What are the urban conditions for alternative modes of commoning and migrant citizenship which form urban moments of possibility and hope supporting departure, while enabling life in the city for those waiting to move? I will now examine two key aspects—movement and inhabitation—which are simultaneously facilitated by the urban jumping-off environments of the Athenian City Plaza squat and the Calais Jungle camp. These and similar spaces of borderzone departure cities, I argue, are formed through actions of mobile commoning against the bordering practices and conditional hospitality imposed by the authorities, and as a claim of migrant urban citizenship combining both mobility and stay.

### *Facilitating Movement against Bordering Practices*

Irregular migratory movements from borderzone cities are facilitated through creating the conditions for successful departures and arrivals to the desired

destinations and also by supporting migrants in their often-reoccurring failed attempts to depart. Autonomous informal urban spaces such as City Plaza (see Figure 3), which allowed migrants to live in the city while remaining unregistered by the authorities, have supported their unauthorised movement by keeping their identities "uncontaminated" by the EU's biometric bordering system, therefore enabling them to potentially claim asylum elsewhere. Informality, however, presented various challenges, from the contested event of the squat's establishment, when neighbours and the hotel owner gathered outside the building, threatening to call the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party and the police, to the squat's day-to-day operation, with the constant need to hook to the electricity grid after being cut off by the authorities.[7]

Movement, including the inherent possibility of failing to move, was also supported by City Plaza's location and form of management. Located near Victoria Square, a core node of departure in Athens where migrants meet potential smugglers (Saleem 2019; see also Figure 1), the squat was close to the city's departure hub. Furthermore, the squat actively facilitated successful departure by holding rooms for people who were trying to cross the border for several days or until they announced their safe arrival. This method of room occupancy, as reflected upon by activists and migrants, significantly reduced anxiety around the uncertainty of movement and the "permanent feeling of stress" (City Plaza 2018:27) caused by the fear of losing the stable urban place of departure due to the constant effort to depart. Departure was also inherent to the social relations and atmosphere in the squat, where residents saw movement as part of the experience there: "again and again people come and leave", reflected H from Afghanistan (City Plaza 2018:14), while B from Afghanistan also described how "many came and left", adding that "It is good that they left, because they went to better countries" (City Plaza 2018:23).

The Jungle should also be examined as an informal space supporting departure from Calais, with migrants living in the makeshift camp remaining anonymous to be able to claim asylum in the UK. Movement itself, like in City Plaza, was supported by the location of the Jungle and the way its informal shelters were managed. Accommodation in the camp was secured for those attempting to depart, with locked shelters opened and "inherited" by friends or relatives only after the safe arrival of their inhabitants in the UK had been confirmed,[8] while newly arrived migrants have shared how they were showed "all the ways how you can go to the UK" (Gueguen-Teil and Katz 2018:94). The camp was also close to Calais' central departure points (see Figure 2), the port and the Channel Tunnel entrance, areas to which migrants walked night after night in their attempt to cross. As M from Iran explained, "Crossing the border is the important thing, because they are so strict … I am staying in Calais because it is the nearest place to the UK … This is also the biggest port with the most ferries, so there are more chances" (Calais Writers 2017:188). Yet, as W from Afghanistan shared, crossing is not easy: "for three months I tried hiding in trucks in the parking [lots]"; but while he constantly tried to depart from the Jungle, "every time they found me with scanners" (Jones 2016).


**Figure 3:** The City Plaza hotel squat, July 2017 (source: author)

The Jungle and City Plaza, similarly to other encampments and squats in Athens and Calais, were spaces which facilitated movement: their informality allowed their inhabitants to remain unidentified, therefore enabling them to claim asylum elsewhere; their rooms and shelters were kept for those who attempted to depart;

they were hubs of knowledge exchange on departure; and they were located near their cities' departure hubs. As such, these spaces represent one of the possible materialisations of mobile commons, generating "*knowledge of mobility*", "*infrastructure of connectivity*", and "*informal economies*" (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013:191), through which migrant citizenship is claimed.

Time is as important as space in cities of departure. As migration scholars have indicated, different temporalities shape migration experiences and practices (McNevin and Missbach 2018; Tazzioli 2018), with the centrality of suspension, including the suspension of movement, and waiting (Jacobsen et al. 2021). "What am I waiting for?", asked a 13-year-old who found himself trapped in the Jungle after already receiving approval to cross as a minor to the UK (Elgot 2016). "Today I feel sad because I haven't yet managed to go", reflected A from Syria while staying in City Plaza; "My husband and my son are in Belgium. I am too long here" (City Plaza 2018:16). Yet waiting and its related uncertainty could also open political moments of resistance that contest the "wasted" time imposed on the powerless, with migrants "stealing time" by giving it meaning and value through their active presence in places of suspended departure (Jacobsen et al. 2021). It is here where meanwhile inhabitation becomes a form of mobile commoning and negotiate migrant citizenship in cities of suspended movement.

## *Inhabiting Meanwhile Spaces of Departure against Conditional Hospitality*

Institutional spaces which contain irregular migrants are strongly criticised as sites where basic freedoms and rights are negated and where people are "warehoused" and "assistance is based on survival" (Brun and Fábos 2015:9). As Dadusc et al. (2019:530) demonstrate, migrants in such places "experience the mixture between institutionalised boredom and the helplessness of waiting for their position of being stuck to be altered". Yet, migrants often resist this exclusion from space and time through different homemaking practices through which, as Brun and Fábos (2015:14) show, they attain control by managing their daily lives and negotiate not only "specific understandings of home" but also "specific locations and material structures". This includes reclaiming the city and urban life as liveable human environments as opposed to the alienating institutional camps. Similarly, City Plaza and the Jungle created places which formed meaningful urban living environments which their inhabitants felt part of by articulating a form of "autonomous migrant inhabitance" (Van Isacker 2019:612). As such, they represented "one of the possible materialisations of the mobile commons" (Dadusc et al. 2019:528) where "citizenship is enacted from below" (Raimondi 2019:566).

The potential which meanwhile inhabitation of borderzone departure cities hold for remaking citizenship is very different, however, depending on their urban contexts and on the varied capacities of the opposing bordering/anti-bordering forces working within them, allowing for different levels of homemaking and cohabitation. After successfully arriving in Berlin, J reflected that "City Plaza is not a hotel. It is home", explaining that "It was my home" because "I was not a

foreigner there, but felt respected" (City Plaza 2018:64), suggesting that being recognised by the community of co-inhabitants has provided her a feeling of familiarity and homeliness. In a different squat in Exarchia, a Palestinian refugee reflected that the place was important for him "because I feel more like home, I feel a little more human. We have space to sleep, neighbours and a neighbourhood around us" (King and Manoussaki-Adamopoulou 2019), highlighting the importance of being an integral part of the city to a meaningful stay. Indeed, not only the Athenian squats themselves, but also their urban neighbourhoods, have contributed to their homely feeling, with an activist reflecting that the "dynamic of the [Exarchia] area meant that [local] people were willing to help"; "artists, middle-class people, brought furniture and building materials", while "50 residents gave their telephone numbers" to coordinate showers for the migrants in their homes when there was no hot water in the squat.[9] This reveals the city as a meaningful site of mobile commoning through networks of solidarity and co-inhabitation, either at the level of the squat or of the neighbourhood, where "alliances and coalitions between different groups" generate "transnational *communities of justice*" and "*politics of care*" (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013:191–192).

Migrant squats such as City Plaza practice and produce different "cartographies of belonging" (Raimondi 2019:568), while re-negotiating the meaning of home in conditions of transience. Unlike exclusionary and uninhabitable humanitarian and state biopolitical spaces of conditional hospitality (Dadusc et al. 2019; Derrida 2000), which prioritise containment and minimal provision for those considered non-citizens, the squat, as Lafazani (2017) reflected, intended to form "co-habitation in dignified conditions in the heart of the city", enabling migrants to take control of their uncertain realities through generating new identities, alliances and modes of belonging. Differently from the limiting camps, where migrants are brutally treated as "unwanted guests" of racialised bodies (Martin et al. 2020), City Plaza not only provided migrants with their basic needs, such as warm meals, a place to sleep and a doctor's clinic, but also created an egalitarian and emancipatory environment based on values and practices of collective living (Karaliotas and Kapsali 2021). The mutuality between the squat's migrants and activists was reflected in shared day-to-day tasks such as cleaning and cooking, and in the slogan "we live together, we fight together" (Lafazani 2017), which created an alternative form of meanwhile inhabitation beyond the host/guest hierarchy. Local squatters did not see themselves as aid providers for the migrants but as partners in their anti-authoritarian struggle, with the City Plaza's clear aim "not to be a 'refugee' shelter, but a place of cohabitation and common everyday life" (Squat!net 2019). As written in the City Plaza booklet, "if border policies aim to subjugate bodies, to create obedient, docile subjects, City Plaza attempts to overturn exactly this situation: relations of cooperation and solidarity promote emancipation and equal participation against exclusion and dependency" (City Plaza 2018:7–8).

In City Plaza, as in similar squats, this form of radical co-habitation created new types of hybrid political subjectivity of squatter–activists who were both migrants and non-migrants, or what Karaliotas and Kapsali (2021) call "equals in solidarity". As Lafazani (2018:900) notes, migrants were "members of the community with responsibility and obligations" which bonded them to the place and to one

another, or as a Kurdish family explained, "we are brothers and sisters here" (City Plaza 2018:18). The fact that there were not only shared tasks but also shared spaces, such as the bar and the dining room, and shared events such as birthdays and Eid, meant that the suspended time until departure was not lost or confiscated but fully experienced by the migrants, often with additional values. "In Plaza I improved my English", reflected L from Syria (City Plaza 2018:28), while J from Iran shared that "in City Plaza, I was for the first time a person with responsibilities acknowledged by all others … That was very special for me" (City Plaza 2018:22), revealing how migrants have changed their "temporal architectures of waiting" (Jacobsen et al. 2021:9) through their active presence in their places of suspended departure. Thus, by structuring "different geographies of solidarity" through inhabitation, migrants have enacted new "forms of urban citizenship" (Fischer and Bak Jørgensen 2021:1063) through which they claimed their freedoms and rights in their meanwhile city. The Athenian urban infrastructures of support and spatial porosity in the form of vacant places, both consequences of the economic crisis, were instrumental for this.

The Calais Jungle also created a space of co-inhabitation through which alternative forms of migrant citizenship were claimed, yet in a different manner. Like in other semi-carceral situations of encampment, radical inhabitation was difficult in the Jungle, as squatting and homemaking were criminalised and re-territorialised through evictions, demolitions and other domicidal interventions (Van Isacker 2019). Migrants, however, have created elaborate makeshift shelters and everyday spaces of human activities in the camp (Katz 2017), although they were on the move and aspired to leave it as soon as possible, investing time and effort in inhabiting their provisional spaces. These spaces have connected inhabitants to both their meanwhile homes and to what they had left behind: "I do not want to stay, I want to go to England", reflected one of the camp's Sudanese inhabitants; "but when I am here, I want my Calais home to be nice so it reminds me of my home in Sudan" (Ma 2016). A, a Mauritanian artist who built the Blue House shelter and art school in the Jungle, reflected that he "designed it to respect myself and to respect the country where I am [from]" (Wainwright 2016), revealing again how the informal meanwhile homes linked migrants not only to their potential future but also to their past, giving meaning to their uncertain present. The Jungle was "a place no one wants to live in" and everybody wanted to leave, "yet also a place that camp residents made into a valued temporary home" (Calais Writers 2017:111), even if they had no way of knowing how it will mutate or for how long it will endure.

These practices of homemaking were tightly connected to the social aspect of co-inhabiting spaces of departure, and therefore also to the creation of mobile commons. In City Plaza, inhabitation was based on a strong activist–migrant relationship. Differently, in the Jungle, while many activists, including ones from the city itself, were involved in acts of construction and other forms of provision, claiming that "to create [together] is to resist" (Calaismag 2016), the camp was primarily formed by migrants who negotiated citizenship through inventive socio–spatial practices that resisted the exclusionary, divisive and semi-carceral practices of the authorities. The shelters in the camp were often created by migrants as shared

spaces of mutual help in everyday activities such as cooking, with migrants saying that in their communal prefabricated shelter "it is not Sudanese against Sudanese, it's Sudanese against everything—against the situation" (Gueguen-Teil and Katz 2018:89). A, from Sudan, has also reflected on the strong social relations in the camp: "I don't have good neighbours in here, I have good brothers. I have brothers from Syria, Eritrea, Sudan, Kurdistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Egypt. 6000 people, those are my brothers" (Calais Writers 2017:156). Undoubtedly, the Jungle was experienced by many as an unsafe space, where violent interactions and physical conflicts have frequently erupted between groups of migrants who were pressed together in the misery of the camp while being in a stressful situation of attempting to move (Katz 2019). Nevertheless, the Jungle was identified by some migrants as a homely environment of belonging, as M from Syria has reflected before leaving: "Saying goodbye to the camp is like leaving your home once more … I had become linked to this place" (Calais Writers 2017:206).

Importantly, as the camp was distant from Calais city centre, migrants turned their shelters into businesses and social and cultural hubs to answer their broader everyday needs, creating grocery stores, bakeries, restaurants, mosques, churches, libraries and art and language schools, mostly lining an improvised high street (see Figure 4), while reflecting on how they themselves have "built this city" (Wainwright 2016). By doing so, they have claimed both their "right to the city" (Lefebvre 1996), that is, their right to transform the city according to their needs through active forms of inhabitance (Butler 2012; Dadusc et al. 2019; Purcell 2002; Rolnik 2014), but also their particular form of "migrant citizenship" (Nyers 2015) in which urbanity, even if created precariously, was essential to their human sense of being. Indeed, the Jungle's self-made city made the exclusionary borderzone experiences more tolerable in its sense of familiarity and homeliness:

**Figure 4:** The Jungle camp "high street", April 2016 (source: author)

"The street in the 'Jungle' is not just a street; it is a road of life with all its sadness, happiness, hope and disappointments", reflected M from Iran; "Anytime I came back from a try [to cross the Channel], sometimes at dawn, when I walked in this street after maybe five, six or more hours of walking, running and escaping the police in the freezing weather, the first step in this street was like the first step in paradise" (Calais Writers 2017:190). This reveals the multi-scalar nature of commoning which goes beyond the domestic realm and, as Maestri and Hughes (2017:628) argue, "reinstate transient inhabitants" into "the framework of urban belonging".

The importance of these linked homemaking and citymaking practices was also respected by the French court, which rejected bids to demolish shops and public institutions in the Jungle, acknowledging that these were "collective spaces whose purpose is to provide services of a social, cultural, medical or legal nature", which "correspond, by their nature and their functioning, to a real need of the exiled living spaces" (Calaismag 2016). The articulated makeshift camp was posed by the migrants in contrast to the institutional container camp opened at the heart of the Jungle, which was considered uninhabitable (Gueguen-Teil and Katz 2018:88). The Jungle also contrasted their isolation from Calais city centre as an imposed semi-carceral space, with migrants replacing the urban environment denied from them which was nevertheless needed for human and material exchange.

The camp, however, was not only detached from Calais through the city's local exclusionary practices and politics (Katz 2019; Katz et al. 2018) but was also connected to the city's infrastructure of care and support. This included local Calaisiens who created links of "solidarity and mutual aid" (Calais Migrant Solidarity 2017:62; Van Isacker 2019:611), such as warehouses and back gardens in Calais used to sort out donated clothes and build prefabricated shelters (Katz 2017). It also included the city's reluctant support through providing street lighting, communal water stations, latrines and garbage pickup which the court ordered the City of Calais to supply (Katz 2017; Katz et al. 2018). Like other urban camps, which emerged in their cities as "ephemeral infills" within "urban cracks" (Katz et al. 2018:68), the Jungle was "part of the city while being simultaneously divorced from it as a temporary space of separation and containment" (Katz et al. 2018:62). Although it functioned as a semi-carceral necropolitical space by which migrants were violently rejected from Calais, it was linked to the city in spatial, institutional, social, political and material aspects, while creating urban mobile commons facilitating both departure and meanwhile inhabitation.

The practices of self-organised collective squatting of buildings and land by migrants in Athens and Calais could be seen as both mobile commons (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013; Nordling et al. 2017) and as "inhabitance beyond, against and within citizenship" (Dadusc et al. 2019:521), negotiating citizenship through alternative liveable spaces, alliances, and political subjectivities. "Citizenship is inextricably and irreducibly spatial", argue Maestri and Hughes (2017:625, 628), acknowledging that space is not merely a "passive backdrop for human action", but is "actively embedded and strategically involved in the performance of (de)politicised subjects". This includes the space of the city which, through its ever-changing cracks and heterogeneous forces, enables contentious forms of

inhabitation to amplify the visibility of migrants' hardship and create opportunities for solidarities to emerge while claiming the "right to the [migrant] city" (Lefebvre 1996; Nyers 2015).

These actions, which are far from passive but adaptive pulses of urban cohabitation, were pushed further by more performative forms of resistance, which turned hidden practicalities of inhabitation into visible protests, in what Bauder (2016:258) identifies as migrant "transformative activist politics" (see also McNevin 2013; Rancière 2010). In the Jungle, multiple signs and graffiti made demands to "open borders" and "change the power structures that oppress refugees in the Jungle" (graffiti on the Jungle's shelters, April 2016), while in City Plaza large campaigns were organised with the slogan "Open Borders, Open Buildings". Mobile urban commoning through meanwhile migrant inhabitation could therefore evolve into visible protests which clearly articulate migrant urban citizenship while using the city's public spaces, including those the migrants created themselves as the arena where their claims could be seen, heard and be explicitly political.

Borderzone urban spaces of departure, however, should not be idealised. Migrants in City Plaza revealed how they were "tired and sad in general", constantly wanting their "family to be united again" (City Plaza 2018:17), contemplating how they were "tired of Athens, of all of Greece" (City Plaza 2018:23) while missing "friends who left since we moved here" (City Plaza 2018:25). Experiences in the semi-carceral space of the Jungle were similar: "People here have problems—often they are sad for a long time", reflected S from Afganistan (Calais Writers 2017:134), with migrants losing hope of departing while witnessing fellow migrants being injured and dying in their attempts, or dying because of the unliveable conditions in the camp, which in itself created a public health disaster due to the authorities' necropolitical "violent inaction" (Davies et al. 2017). Both spaces, it seems, "reproduced [state] violence through [activists'] protection and solidarity" (Picozza 2021:154).

Indeed, violent domicidal and urbicidal actions eventually demolished the Jungle in October 2016, deliberately erasing the migrants' autonomous forms of inhabitation (Mould 2017; Van Isacker 2019), yet other jungles are still created on Calais' outskirts in violent cycles of construction and destruction (Hagan 2022). Squats in Athens experienced similar violent endings after being evacuated by the police (King and Manoussaki-Adamopoulou 2019). Differently, City Plaza was closed in July 2019 following a collective decision due to the fatigue of the activists who could not share the ongoing responsibilities with the migrants due to their regular departures, even when some have resided there for months (Fischer and Bak Jørgensen 2021; Squat!net 2019). In both cities, then, the changing migratory movements and transforming policies and practices regulating and/or supporting them have created ever-shifting departure spaces which eventually moved, or were removed, together with their inhabitants.

## A Conclusion and a Point of Departure

In a global reality of fortified states and regions, borderzone departure cities could be identified as an inseparable part of today's splintering and shifting

borderscapes. The various spatial and temporal formations of the borderzone departure cities examined in this paper could be seen as spaces of urban migrant citizenship evolving around two limitations with complementary demands. The first is the demand to depart and move beyond blocked borders, while the second is the demand for an adequate stay in the city against exclusionary practices limiting non-citizens. Both limitations act as racialised constructs in the current global order which reproduces the violent and longue durée hierarchies and structures of coloniality (Davies and Isakjee 2019; Mayblin 2017; Picozza 2021).

The makeshift Calais Jungle and the Athenian City Plaza created very different urban spaces which are often analysed as a "camp" and a "squat" respectively, and perceived, together with their cities, as inherently separate realities on the spatial spectrum of migratory environments. Yet, as this paper argues, such accounts overlook the similarities, relationalities and overlapping realities of their geopolitics and workings between border and city, between exclusion and commoning, and between movement and inhabitation, where life which is more than mere survival could be found in the most difficult environments. Indeed, Athens and Calais form distinct urban borderzone situations due to their particular geopolitics and forces working within them. In Athens, a large city with existing substantial infrastructures of solidarity movements formed during the economic crisis, squats in central neighbourhoods were crafted as mobile commons of migrant spaces of departure and meanwhile co-inhabitation. Here, remaking migrant citizenship was based on forging deep alliances of solidarity with locals who used vacant urban spaces and their existing social infrastructures to form an alternative to the detached camps. Differently, in Calais, a much smaller port city with a right-wing mayor, migrants were expelled from the centre to this necropolitical semi-carceral space yet managed to form, with the support of local and mostly foreign activists, spaces of departure and meanwhile inhabitation through autonomous actions of homemaking and citymaking, recreating in and through the Jungle the urban life they were denied. These two places, where migrants worked together to get by and get along, are best understood within the framework of the city as the porose and rich socio–spatial network of heterogeneous forces and practices able to reappropriate and transform spaces into mobile commons of solidarity and co-inhabitation, claiming "immediate justice for sustaining [the] everyday life" of those on the move (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013:188).

As a point of closure, which is also a point of departure for new understandings about urban spaces of irregular migrants, we can return to Lafazani (2018:904), who, in one of her reflections on City Plaza, has written that "one of the greatest accomplishments of the project has been that, for hundreds of people, it has transformed what is a transitory period of their lives—an intermediate period of uncertainty, loneliness, intense insecurity, anxiety, and worry—into a time that also offers a sense of community, creativity, security, joy, and optimism". While precarious urban spaces of departure such as City Plaza and the Jungle should not be idealised, they have provided support and a sense of presence for people stuck on the move until they managed to successfully depart.

Calais and Athens form very different urban situations, where various forms of inhabitation and local alliances have differently claimed modes of migrant urban

citizenship. In both cities, however, racialised border spaces of immobility and abandonment have been turned into fragile yet functioning infrastructures of departure. Identifying the workings of and linkages between these alternative urban forms is key not only for a better understanding of today's ever-changing borderscapes, but also for defining the need for less precarious urban forms of support for irregular migrants inhabiting borderzone cities, while facilitating their successful departure from them.

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## Endnotes

[1] Much has been written on the problematic and changing categorisation of "transmigrants", "forced migrants", "displaced people", "refugees", "asylum seekers", and "illegalised migrants". This paper uses the term "irregular migrants" which, although very broad, is regarded as more inclusive and flexible (Jacobsen et al. 2021:1).

[2] A conversation with Olga Lafazani, City Plaza hotel squat, Athens, 20 February 2019.

[3] The number of EU asylum applications received by both France and Greece in 2015 was relatively few compared with inland countries such as Sweden and Germany (Pew Research Center 2016).

[4] See comparative examination of the urban camps in Calais, Dunkirk and Paris (Katz 2019).

[5] A conversation with an activist in Exarchia, Athens, 12 July 2017.

[6] A conversation with an activist in Exarchia, Athens, 10 July 2017.

[7] A conversation with Olga Lafazani, City Plaza hotel squat, Athens, 20 February 2019 (also see Lafazani 2017, 2018:896).

[8] Conversations with activists in the Jungle, November 2015.

[9] A conversation with an activist in Exarchia, Athens, 12 July 2017.

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