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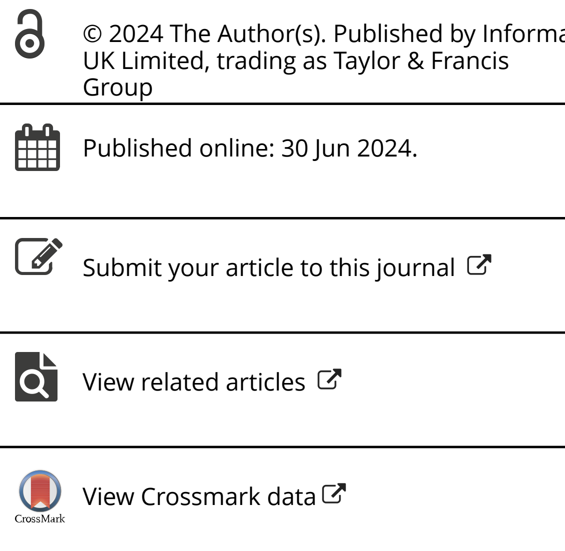

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The colonial face of 'housing' refugees: the construction of the racialised subject within a necropolitical infrastructure

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ABSTRACT

The incredible mobilisation to welcome Ukrainian refugees following the start of the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 demonstrated how housing is an affective sociomaterial infrastructure. In cruel contrast, such mobilisation also exposed the inherently racist and colonial face of accommodating refugees and migrants, and the structural inequalities that racial capitalism continues to reproduce. Drawing reflections across several geographies and temporalities through illustrative vignettes, this paper begs the questions under what conditions do we accept that some people are housed, others not? What kind of power structures allow certain bodies to be welcomed? This paper borrows from postcolonial, black and critical theory to examine refugee housing through the lens of necropolitical infrastructure. It connects Mbembe's notion of necropower with Power and Mee's notion of housing as infrastructure of care, and filters this through reflections across Calais, Brescia and Athens, to illustrate the bio- and necropolitical side of the refugee housing infrastructure in Europe. The paper ultimately argues that refugee housing, because it is an infrastructure and because it is part of the broader extractive and exploitative system of (humanitarian) care, is deeply imbricated in the production of racialised subjects. Specifically, it is complicit with the extraction, (re)incorporation, abandonment and slow death of Black and Brown refugee lives.

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Introduction

> [the migration crisis] is only named as such because the bodies seeking entry into Europe are dark-skinned and thus, demonized (Bhagat, 2021, p. 634).

The incredible mobilisation to welcome Ukrainian refugees following the start of the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 demonstrated how housing is an affective

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sociomaterial infrastructure. In the span of a few weeks, different countries opened their borders and homes, devising accommodation solutions and new policies to make refugees welcome in a transnational heartfelt demonstration of solidarity (Haase *et al*., 2023; Machin, 2023). In cruel contrast, such mobilisation also exposed the inherently racist and colonial face of accommodating refugees and migrants, and the structural inequalities that racial capitalism continues to reproduce. In particular, it exposed how Black and Brown refugees have been and continue to be subject to differential treatments (Astolfo *et al*., 2022; OHCHR, 2022; Zizek, 2022). During the so-called summer of migration of 2015, the large numbers of refugees fleeing from African and Middle East countries did not benefit from open border policies, and open homes schemes. On the contrary, the influx triggered a tightening of border surveillance, the setting up of a hotspot system, a criminalization of migration and perpetual detention (De Genova, 2018; Hodge, 2015). Such differential treatment and the exemption of some refugees from border laws should be interpreted as evidence of the interconnection of race and racism with border policy and migrant management on the 'frontiers' of Europe.

The same can be seen when examining housing access and allocation, as an essential part of the system of humanitarian protection and care. From landowners refusing to welcome African and Middle Eastern refugees, to the multiple forms of state-led accommodation that ultimately erode survival, at all levels accommodation policies and approaches are a manifestation of racialised difference, generating distinctions between wanted and unwanted people, between bodies that qualify and those that do not. Drawing reflections across several geographies and temporalities, this paper reflects on these aspects, and especially on the coloniality of housing refugees, intended as the reproduction of racist and colonial practices and relations within housing and accommodation schemes, humanitarian welcoming, and integration policies. It examines how state racism is ingrained and manifests in everyday housing relations connecting local authorities, providers, landowners, charity workers, refugees. In Italy and Greece temporariness of state-led accommodation exacerbates vulnerabilities. In Italy, housing and house sharing is constantly lived as a hostile, controlled, surveilled and ultimately carceral experience. In the Calais camps and camp-like conditions, violence and abandonment become complementary policies. By launching a conversation across these three different contexts, the paper offers a reflection on the role of housing as related to power and race. In particular, it begs the questions: under what conditions do we accept that some people are housed, others not? What kind of power structures allow only certain bodies to be welcomed?

To address these questions, the paper employs two analytical concepts: housing as infrastructure (of care), and necropolitics. The first involves an extended concept of housing, that covers different forms of sheltering from camps to shared flats, with states and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) playing a substantial role (even if in a subtractive manner). Building on infrastructure theory (Amin, 2014; Amin & Thrift, 2017; Graham & Marvin, 2001; Larkin, 2013; Power & Mee, 2020; Simone, 2004, 2021; Star, 1999), it revisits the idea that housing is a complex and dynamic assemblage of materialities, services, affects and knowledges. What is prominent, in thinking housing as assemblage or infrastructure, is that it comes to constitute the foundation of social organisation that both orders and creates difference,

or with other words, that controls and produces certain types of subjects. While housing as infrastructure can be mobilised for liberatory ends, the risk of discrimination, exploitation and coercion is also always present. Infrastructures are inseparable from the workings of power that operate to differentiate between more or less worthy subjects and reproduce such worthiness in society (Hobart & Kneese, 2020; Larkin, 2013; Power & Mee, 2020; amongst others). In this light, an infrastructural analysis of refugee housing can offer new directions of conceptual enquiry that broaden discussions beyond humanitarian and human-rights based approaches, by making visible the multiple ways in which housing entangles the will to protect and care with everyday oppression and debilitation.

Expanding on this last point, the paper articulates how housing as infrastructure not only controls, governs and discriminates refugee lives (*housing as biopolitical infrastructure*), but also contributes to their tearing up – where by refugee lives we mean Black and Brown lives. The tearing up occurs through forms of slow violence and aggression, that undermine confidence or health, and prevent the establishment of attachment to place and people (*housing as necropolitical infrastructure*). Such approach is grounded in Mbembe's (2003) necropolitics – the second analytical concept employed here to connect refugee housing with power and race. By reviving his notion of necropower and putting it in dialogue with an infrastructural reading of housing, and especially with Power & Mee (2020)'s reading of housing as infrastructure of care, the paper attempts to expose how refugee housing, as an infrastructure and as part of a system of care which is extractive and exploitative at its core, is always imbricated in the production of racialized subjects. Specifically, it is complicit with the extraction, (re)incorporation, abandonment and slow death of Black and Brown refugee lives. This occurs, first, through the construction of the issue of race, that strips people of their rights; then through the need to incorporate refugee lives into a system that cares for them, that protects them in the absence or limited presence of rights; to finally abandon them to a slow sociopolitical death, the one assigned to those who lose their housing benefits, to those who cannot access the housing market, nor any other form of social and affordable housing, and to those who end up homeless.

We refer to care in two ways – as the broader system of humanitarian care, meaning all those services and regulations that stem from the practice of refugee protection in the context of emergency or protraction, including those shaped by the neoliberal city and inhumane urbanism (Miraftab *et al.*, 2019); and also in geographic and anthropological terms as a more generalised activity, that 'includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our "world" so that we can live in it as well as possible' (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 40). In this literature, care is often connected to the notion of infrastructure, and vice versa. Hobart & Kneese (2020) and Mattern (2018) argue that care is constantly mobilised to repair broken and failed social infrastructures. Likewise, Jackson (2014) defines repair as acts of care that enable the maintenance of complex sociotechnical systems. Tayob *et al.* (2019) argue that infrastructures of care should 'be understood across scales and spatial forms, in relation to the intimacies of daily life and at the level of broader legal, economic, humanitarian and state planning systems'… in order to 'draw out the systemic nature of institutions, mechanisms and agents that facilitate, enable

and hinder relief for forcedly displaced people'. Care is also always highly gendered and devalued (Tayob *et al.*, 2019), imbricated in politics, associated with vulnerability and exploitation, with racism, sexism, heteronormativity and inequality (Dowler *et al.*, 2019; Hobart & Kneese, 2020; Mattern, 2018). In this sense, we should be more careful and critical toward understanding 'who or what tends to get designated the proper or improper objects of care' (Martin *et al.*, 2015, p. 12).

Building on these approaches, the paper draws together different and not so obviously linked literatures, concepts and debates on housing, care and necropower to offer a perspective on the entanglement of race, power and housing, as it is found in different cases across three geographies. It seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate around asylum and home-making in displacement which is becoming increasingly concerning by the day. In UK alone around 56,000 people lived in dispersal systems at the end of 2021. In September 2022 more than 37,000 were in temporary accommodation, which included hotels, houses in multiple occupation, hostels, and self-contained self-catering properties. Still more were in makeshift spaces, sofa surfing, squatting or homeless. Across other European countries the situation is no different. The paper employs a set of 'vignettes' – intended as elicited insights and sketches of places (Thieme, 2021) - to provide glimpses of such situations across three cities: Calais, Brescia, and Athens. Reflections are grounded onto nearly a decade of engagement with the issue of refuge in these places, as part of funded or teaching-based research and knowledge co-production with dwellers, activists, scholars, NGOs, and housing networks.

The vignettes are not strictly case studies. They are fragments of engagement and sites of learning that we repeatedly return to over time. Besides their singularity, they also represent paradigmatic conditions that can be extrapolated from the contingent to be analysed in a comparative light. Although they are not analysed in a complete and exhaustive form, these places and their housing stories have long occupied the authors' minds, and have been the object of several incremental revisits, reflections and either physical or intellectual intersections.

In methodological terms, the paper reviews research material collected in several iterations, through talks and walks with refugees from Ghana in Brescia; through interviews with NGOs members and work shadowing both in Brescia and Athens; through workshops with asylum seekers and NGO workers; through transect walks in Calais camps and sparse settlements; and through formal and informal conversations with humanitarians and grassroots running the camps or supporting activities in and around them. Research methods are deliberately loose and flexible, adaptable to sensitive and complex research subjects and environments, and allowing participants to lead the manner in which their stories are told. Conversations might stop and start or meander, providing participants unpressured time over a coffee or a coke, sitting around a table, walking to someone's home, or to the office, listening more than questioning, seeing and drawing more than talking, driving through, sometimes sitting and staring together, with some despair and a little hope.

Data collected over time forms a substrata of knowledge from which the paper draws to further reflect – through encounter with theories/debates/other places. This form of incremental research unfolds over time and happens at a distance as well as in close proximity. It is a form of permanent dialogue with sites and their

singularity that continues even when the authors are not physically there. Even if fragmented and partial, these three vignettes are chosen to foreground and reveal conditions and practices where certain workings of power, entangled with race and the practice of care, are irreducible elements of the sites. In a short article it is impossible to shed light on the complexity of each – and doing so is beyond the scope of the paper itself. Accordingly, the paper is structured around four sections. The first introduces literature on infrastructure theories and connects them with housing; the second and third explore respectively biopolitical and necropolitical aspects of housing as infrastructure, while the fourth opens space to three vignettes that present different socio-material assemblages of housing and their entanglements with race and death.

The notion of infrastructure in urban and housing studies

Infrastructure is an over-researched concept, and yet one that is always worth turning over and inside out, reading it deconstructively, and re-reading it through other ideas, queering its received meaning. Since the 1990s it has been the object of renewed interest within urban scholarship (Amin, 2014; Graham & Marvin, 2001; Larkin, 2013; Simone, 2004; Star, 1999; …to name a few). Beyond thinking of infrastructure as only a technical system, the term has come to signal complex processes that are technologic, financial, biological and social.

In an early formulation, Larkin (2013) argues that 'infrastructures are matter that enable the movement of other matter' (p. 329) and that 'Their peculiar ontology lies in the facts that they are things and also the relation between things' (ibid). Besides what infrastructures are made of, what really matters here is what infrastructures do: they create difference through hierarchies of provision or access. Within this broad field revolving around the relationality and complexity of infrastructures, Larkin suggests studies of infrastructure 'might thus centre on built things, knowledge things, or people things' (ibid), recognising that to choose one infrastructure over another is itself a political act: 'Taken thoughtfully, it comprises a cultural analytic that highlights the epistemological and political commitments involved in selecting what one sees as infrastructural (and thus causal) and what one leaves out' (p. 330).

Infrastructure as a concept also borrows from system thinking and actors network theory (Latour, 1996). Foregrounding the system centres accounts of translation, circulation and relations across different levels simultaneously. 'Infrastructure in this sense is a kind of mentality and way of living in the world' (Larkin, 2013, p. 331). Recalling Star's (1999) assertion that infrastructures are 'by definition invisible', taken for granted, and that they only 'become visible on breakdown' (p. 380; also Graham & Marvin, 2001), Larkin argues that invisibility is only one aspect of infrastructure and 'at the extreme edge of a range of visibilities that move from unseen to grand spectacles and everything in between' (p. 336). 'We see taps and water but not pipes and sewers' (p. 329). Similarly, we see housing and shelter, but knowledge structures, management, health and safety, for example, may be obscured or occlude.

Urban infrastructures, including housing, co-implicate material and social worlds, human and non-human matter in sociotechnical assemblages (Amin, 2014). The city

is ultimately a sociotechnical arrangement, creating hierarchies of provision and access. Yet, Amin's *Lively infrastructures* also highlights collective effort to co-construct 'habitable space through all kinds of infrastructural improvisation and innovation'. It is a common collective endeavour 'to use infrastructure to address the larger city for rights and connections' (p. 157). Through this lens, urban infrastructure proves as active as any community or institution, and 'also the medium through which much of the latter is orchestrated' (ibid). In a similar vein, and revisiting his earlier theorisation, Simone (2021) reiterates how *people as infrastructure* emerged 'to consider urban collective life as something beyond notions of individuals, households, communities, and institutions' (p. 1). This is a concept that transcends 'sociological designations', and captures people's 'positionalities' and 'practices' (ibid). People as infrastructure encompasses manoeuvres and antagonisms revealing complex imbricacies of power, vulnerability and precariousness.

Conceptualisations of infrastructure represent a powerful analytical tool to understand how housing operates. First, it offers the possibility to understand housing beyond the humanitarian notion of shelter, and beyond the single object, as a complex assemblage that intersects social, material and emotional domains, with multiple, distributed parts (Amin & Thrift, 2017). Second, it implies a set of relations, a multiscalar dimension and different levels of visibility (Larkin, 2013). In line with Simone and Amin's conceptualisations of urban infrastructure and people as infrastructure, housing infrastructures co-implicate the material and social, human and non-human in sociotechnical assemblages. Housing is not just a house, but all the more or less hidden relations that make and hinder it – from knowledges to skills to policies. Third, and more importantly, housing – as any infrastructure – involves degrees and distributed forms of agency and power (Simone, 2021). It orders and creates difference (Star, 1999) and inequality, because it implies choices, and hierarchies of provision – those who can get access and those who can't - which are always political.

In the paper *Housing: an infrastructure of care* published in Housing Studies, Power & Mee (2020) propose a conceptual framework that connects infrastructure, house/housing and care. Combining Star's (1999) and Amin's (2014) definitions, they start from an understanding of 'infrastructures as sociotechnical tools and systems that organize and pattern the possibilities of urban social life including, we add, care' (p. 487). Particular emphasis is put on how 'infrastructures co-constitute urban social life', on the one hand, and how 'interests that are selectively and politically encoded into the functioning of infrastructures' end up '(re)producing social difference as they are incorporated into everyday routine' on the other (ibid). In this light, infrastructures become simultaneously enablers/disablers.

What is new in Power and Mee's approach, is that housing as a sociomaterial system is, or is part of, an infrastructure of care. Housing enables the social organisation of care, 'the infrastructural forms that pattern the organization of care within society' (p. 489). Care itself is a relational process. Infrastructures enable its circulation, but they can also inhibit it. Housing, its materialities, markets and governance, pattern the possibility and organisation of care along lines of social difference. This framework gives visibility and connectedness to the way that housing policy and materiality and social differentiation affect the accessibility and possibility of care, demonstrating relations between care, housing precarity and gender or race. If, as

Hobart & Kneese (2020) contend, 'care is unevenly distributed and cannot be disentangled from structural racism and inequality' (p. 8), then housing, as an infrastructure of care, in its present articulation, can been seen as intrinsically bound up with and instrumental in producing and maintaining structural inequalities and cultivating, forming and framing subjectivities (Butler, 2009; Hodge, 2015).

In this light, an infrastructural analysis of housing offers new directions of conceptual enquiry that broaden discussions, by making visible the multiple ways that housing performs as an infrastructure of care, that simultaneously entangles protection and exploitation. When it comes to refugees and migrants, housing as an infrastructure of care is developed to insure and protect, but most of the time, it ends up being used as a governmental and humanitarian tool to control and manage refugees' lives and, ultimately, as a way to depoliticise migration in an eminently biopolitical approach.

The biopolitics of housing refugees

Literature that examines refugee housing through a biopolitical lens distinguishes between three aspects: compartmentalisation, physical segregation, and depoliticization. By compartmentalisation we mean how migrant housing access produces forms of differentiation within housing provision, markets and laws that disadvantage migrants and contribute to further forms of discrimination and inequalities. For instance, migrants are commonly excluded by law from access to social housing, a right gained through refugee status, or after prescribed periods of legal residence in a country. As Bhagat puts it, for the case of France and Paris in particular, 'even when refugees are accepted their survival falls outside the purview of state welfare' (Bhagat, 2022, p. 956). This is similar in the UK context, as Mayblin *et al.* (2020) explain, 'a series of legislative acts … have prevented asylum seekers from accessing the labour market, have moved them out of the mainstream benefits system and have steadily decreased the levels of financial support paid to those going through the asylum system' (p. 108). Here, competition for insufficient affordable social or private rental accommodation can produce multiple forms of housing instability including homelessness, sleeping rough, doubling up, and using temporary structures (Dotsey & Sapanski, 2021). Housing precarity is not explained sufficiently by the 'temporary and transitional nature of the housing and employment programs provided through the reception system' (ibid, p. 1). Rather, it is 'institutionally constructed, maintained and shaped' (Dotsey & Chiodelli, 2021, p. 720).

Physical segregation is another biopolitical technique within the governance of arrival and housing. Refugee accommodation is often physically separated from residential and central urban areas. See the case of the arrival neighbourhoods in Germany, the reception centres in Italy, the processing centres in the UK, with the Bibby Stockholm barge being the ultimate invention, and the camps or hotspots in the Aegean Islands. Physical separation is used to control and manage, to avoid mobilisation and resistance, to depoliticise, as well as to hide refugees from the rest of society, to protect them from a hostile environment and to avoid 'social' conflict, yet creating ghettos and situations of neglect that, in turn, foment other conflicts. Communal accommodation is often described in case literature not only as removed

from the city, but also as poor-quality, framing residents in a poor light (Brown *et al.*, 2022; Lietaert *et al.*, 2020). In this sense, housing becomes deeply entangled with the reproduction of certain cliched narratives around refugees and with a social crafting of a 'popular accent' (Butler, 2009; Hodge, 2015, p. 122), that shapes 'whose life is a life' (Butler, 2009, p. ix-x) and ultimately impacts their future and wellbeing. The connection of poor quality and basic accommodation with other mental and physical health problems is recognised in several studies (see Bakker *et al.*, 2016; Gewalt *et al.*, 2018; Kreichauf, 2018; Righard & Oberg, 2019; Walther *et al.*, 2020).

Epitomising all of the above, the recent case of accommodating male asylum seekers on the UK Bibby Stockholm barge shows how housing can operate as a 'floating prison', segregated from services and society, where individuals are excluded and contained, highly surveilled and simultaneously hyperexposed – to media narratives of any sort and as targets for far right groups (Corporate Watch, 2023). The Bibby Stockholm already had a reputation as a detention centre where cases of abuse and self-harm were documented, further showing how 'surplus' people can only but be accommodated in surplus spaces. In a not too dissimilar way other temporary accommodation, like hotels, has been used in carceral strategies impacting on asylum seekers. As Burridge (2023) points out there has been a proliferation of hotels used as spaces of detention especially along the borders where containment and expulsion intersect with resistance aligning with the ever shifting border logics and regimes.

Publicised as the antidote to mass accommodation centres, the decentralisation of refugee housing is quintessential biopolitics. Dispersal policies, widely implemented in the EU, including the UK (see Darling, 2022), Italy (see Astolfo & Boano, 2020; Manara & Piazza, 2018) and Germany (Bhagat & Soederberg, 2019) are based on the assumption that individuals have a better chance of 'integrating' into the host community than larger groups in segregated and overcrowded centres. In Germany this materialised as a nation-wide decentralisation movement in the 2010s, pioneered by post-socialist cities such as Leipzig. However the programme has never entirely worked, owing to the financialisation and tightening of the housing market, the lack of available housing, coupled with ongoing racist and discriminatory practices (Bhagat & Soederberg, 2019; Hinger & Schäfer, 2019; Werner *et al.*, 2018). In Italy, the programme has a longer history, starting before the German equivalent, in the 1990s. The dispersal approach appeared to fit well 'the specificity of the Italian territory and its social fabric, formed by a constellation of small and medium-sized cities and small (usually very internally homogeneous) communities' (Astolfo & Boano, 2020, p. 468). Yet, as in the German case, the lack of housing, the temporariness of the programme and the hostile environment attracted wide criticism toward its implementation. The idea of employing a redistributive system – relocating refugees to small towns and neighbourhoods – raises huge ethical issues around the perpetuation of forms of control and policing. In particular, dispersal and relocation largely prevent the organisation and political action of refugees and migrants by atomising their presence in the city (ibid).

Manara & Piazza (2018) have insisted on this point. They argue that dispersal policies impose 'a new spatial order, no longer corresponding to a fixed inside-outside relationship performed by a sovereign state authority' (p. 51). They describe the depoliticising effect of this, showing how 'tensions with the local community, processes of allocation and management of asylum seekers into flats, and the

individualisation of reception programs, … produced situated practices of atomisation that precluded the asylum seekers from a collective way of life and, importantly, from engaging in collective action' Refugees and asylum seekers, thus situated, depoliticised and atomised, constituted a private, as opposed to a public, 'threat', 'which effectively evaded the risk of political disorder or conflict' (ibid).

In a similar vein, Tazzioli (2020) describes dispersal policies as a 'spatial strategy of governmentality' with colonial genealogies (p. 510). Focusing on migrant collectives and camps, she argues that dispersal is 'enacted by state authorities, in collaboration with humanitarian actors, for troubling migrants' presence and autonomous movements, as well as for disrupting and dividing temporary migrant collective formations' (ibid). Dispersal is associated with a deliberate policy of division and with the dislocation and disruption of political formations amongst migrants.

Literature also points at other elements that further biopolitical control and depoliticisation: the privatisation of housing on the one hand, and the hyperhumanitarianisation of housing governance on the other. For instance, Darling (2016) argues that, in the UK, privatisation of accommodation produces 'an asylum market, in which neoliberal norms of market competition, economic efficiency and dispersed responsibility are central' and enact 'new assemblages of authority, policy and governance' (p230). The process is directly associated with depoliticisation through burden framing, in which asylum is positioned as a specific and managerial issue, and as a question of resource allocation, cost and productivity (ibid). This has become even more clear with the Illegal Migration Act, the Rwanda resettlement scheme, with the discussion around hotels cost, the use of the Bibby Stockholm… The same happens in Italy, with the exploitation of asylum and accommodation by private cooperatives. Similarly, Bhagat (2022) and Tilley & Shilliam (2018) describe how refugee governance in France is increasingly characterised by market-oriented growth and welfare retrenchment.

Parallel to the neoliberal financialisation of housing, the housing sector has become even more humanitarianised. Border regimes and migration governmentality, underpinned by logics that define migrants as illegal/criminal, have since the COVID-19 pandemic witnessed further restrictions introduced in the name of hygienic-sanitary protective measures: 'an ambivalent security-humanitarian narrative that crafts migrants as subjects who cannot be protected by EU member states from the pandemic if allowed inside, and, at once, as potential vehicles of contagion - "Corona spreaders" - and thus as dangers on a bacterial-hygienic level' (Tazzioli & Stierl, 2021, p. 549). This narrative supported the acceleration and strengthening of measures to detain, contain and isolate migrants. The concept of 'humanitarianisation of waiting' is used by McNevin & Missbach (2018) to describe such temporal techniques, enhanced and legitimised by parallel efforts to improve accommodation for irregular migrants, and through which 'it becomes harder to disentangle the managerial emphasis on migrant care from the more pernicious practices of border security.' (p12). They show how confinement and waiting are legitimised and depoliticised through attempts to humanise migrant/asylum accommodation and waiting times, appeals to efficiency and pragmatism, as well as through alternatives to the detention model. This is presented as additional to the mobilisation of compassion (Gill, 2016) or hope (Bagelman, 2016) for system-serving results.

Housing as necropolitical infrastructure

As McIntyre & Nast (2011) point out, bio- and necro-politics are often complementary to each other. Biopolitics relates to how lives are surveilled to serve the purpose of sovereign power. Necropolitics, in comparison, expands on the relationship between life and death in the context of state power. When it comes to refugee housing as infrastructure, the biopolitical aspects refer to the ways in which housing operates to govern and manage refugee and migrant lives, while necropolitical ones refer to how housing makes (Black) lives precarious through different means, from forms of (state) inaction, disempowerment, depoliticization, abandonment, erosion, destitution up until (slow) death (Berlant, 2007; Kingstone 2005; Nixon, 2011).

The precarisation and debilitation of Black lives is core to Mbembe's *Necropolitics* (2003). Elaborating on Foucault's 'let die/make live', he argued that sovereign power does not simply let die, as the French philosopher had it, but it also kills. Or, at least, it creates detrimental conditions that hinder survival and expose to death. Under necropolitical conditions, individuals are 'kept alive but in a state of injury' (p. 21), they are exposed to gradual wounding as opposed to outright extermination (ibid; Davies *et al*., 2017; Mayblin *et al*., 2020).

The connection between housing and (slow) death is nothing new to literature. In recent research on the necropolitics of housing contextualised by neoliberal gentrification, Jha conceptualises 'necrosettlements' 'to account for the state power involved in urban redevelopment that engenders life-threatening housing and living circumstances for Mumbai's poor' (Jha, 2023, p. 2). Similarly, Ortega (2020) introduces the frame of 'necroburbia—spaces of death to which relocated evictees are left to live lives of precarity and uncertainty' in Manila (p. 1176). Connecting more explicitly to race and necropolitics, Danewid (2019) argues that the makings of the Grenfell Tower tragedy (in which 72 people died when the London social housing block was destroyed by fire) are located in the violence of neoliberalism and are 'inherently global-colonial in character'. With global cities forming 'part of a historical and ongoing imperial terrain' (p. 305) she suggests (Grenfell) housing, as a lens, 'reveals a much wider cartography of imperial and racial violence' (ibid.). Also in the UK, the death of the child Awaab Ishak from prolonged exposure to black mould in social housing, starkly illuminated links between racial prejudice, risk to health/life and the 'residualisation' of social housing (Gregory, 2022; Race Equality Foundation, 2022). These recent tragedies in the UK - to name but one country - have furthered more reflections on the matter. They are but two examples of how *housing kills*. The recent case of legionella on the Bibby Stockholm also demonstrates links between harm to health, or slow death, and migrant accommodation and how such issues are increasingly raised within medical circles and by care professionals (for example Davidson, 2023). The relation between death and housing is evident in diverse settings and scales, where lives of diminished value are crafted as ungrievable (Hodge, 2015).

The connection between race and housing, and the racialisation of housing, is addressed in relation to how the hegemonic liberal regime of property, as a relational meshwork, entangles us in relations with others, 'interconnects us all in interdependencies of relative vulnerability and privilege' (Nethercote, 2022 p, 936) and, crucially,

'scaffolds racial capitalism' (p, 938). As a structural and, we would add, infrastructural feature of racial capitalism, 'Unhoming names the deliberate undertow of propertied space that exhausts, suffocates and depletes racialized subjects as they make their homes, that "disorients" racialized subjects caught in its currents' (p. 937). Critically, contextualised by home as a relational process, or the relationship between place and feeling, unhoming is experienced and enacted through diverse infrastructures, from planning to services, and through embedded neglect and ultimately the failure to recognise and address colonial and racial dimensions of housing.

Similarly, the relation between race and death is examined in all fields from health to planning, and the news is a constant reminder of such relationship, from the killing of George Floyd in the USA, to the deathscapes and 'carceral seascapes' of the Mediterranean (Stierl, 2021, p. 1). A relationship that is so much ingrained in society that, as Gilmore (2002) reminds us, racism is 'the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death' (p. 261). Continuing on this line, we argue that in the case of refugee housing the connection with death, and race/death is even stronger.

> Racism is above all a technology aimed at permitting the exercise of biopower, that old sovereign right of death (Mbembe, 2003, p. 17).

By bringing race within Foucault's discourse on power, Mbembe sheds light on racism and necropower. While never explicitly referring to the figure of the refugee, Mbembe articulates how the process of subjectification, which is core to the exercise of sovereign power, is premised upon race. 'Racial meaning is created, and placed, onto social relationships and social practices of particular groups' (Bhagat 2020, p. 362). Contrary to Foucault or Agamben, Mbembe's focus is not the prison nor the camp, but the colony. Colonial governance establishes boundaries and divides people into categories and subcategories which are racialized. This point is developed by many other scholars, thinkers and activists. Picker (2017) insists that the construction of race arises out of the need to diversify between the coloniser and the native other, to create a hierarchy that can sustain white power. In her seminal definition of race, Gilmore emphasises the aspect of separation (partition) of beings, the purpose of which is to feed capital (Melamed, 2015). Racism, for Mbembe, is the inherent feature of a certain type of power, necropower, whose objective is death, or rather, the death of certain subjects, those who can be disposed of. In this sense, Mbembe describes necropolitics as 'the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not' (2003, p. 27)

> Disposability refers to groups that exceed the boundaries of what Marx refers to as the relative surplus population. Refugees, as raced bodies, are disposable because they are mostly unabsorbed by capitalism (Bhagat, 2022, p. 961).

Disposability thus becomes the marker of our times (ibid; Li, 2010). Who are the expendables? The racialized subjects: colonial subjects, plantation slaves, and, we argue, migrants and refugees, are all constructed as expendable for the sake of colonial powers and racial capitalism (Gilmore, 2002; Melamed, 2015; Robinson, 2000[1983]). Discursive and non-discursive practices of governments and media produce disposable subjectivities, expendability, devalued life and which 'constitute

a social crafting where conditions for a flourishing life are constrained' (Hodge, 2015, p. 123). Black African refugees are the epitome of such expendability. Their dual position as Black refugees render them two times surplus: because black and because refugees (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2019). As Mayblin *et al.* (2020) put it, referring to the UK/France border and the Mediterranean Sea Route, 'allowing boats to sink, closing borders, detaining adults and children who are seeking refuge from persecution and burning down spontaneous camps occupied by homeless migrants amount not only to the violation of human rights, but more broadly point to a general consensus among politicians and publics that some human lives are worth less than others' (p. 107). This is not a new phenomenon, but rather 'the logical contemporary expression of historically embedded colonial/modern, racially hierarchical worldviews which have their roots in colonial enterprise' (ibid).

Black bodies, marked disposable, have been forcibly moved and trafficked across borders for centuries. In current times, in the afterlife of slavery, the disposable ones are let die at the border, while the still exploitable ones are made to live, to either become modern slaves or casualties of care (Ticktin, 2011). In the first case, their reincorporation is related to the subordination of their labour to the racial capitalist system (De Genova, 2013, p. 5) because surplus population is always needed in the capitalist logic. In the second case, their re-inscription often occurs through inserting them in the manifold infrastructures of care that encompass reception centres, accommodation programmes, open house schemes and dispersal policies (oftentimes detention, deportation and resettlement). Both cases ensure that inclusion itself is a form of exclusion and subjugation.

In the second case in particular, refugees are first excluded from citizenship and citizenry, just to be reincluded as exceptions, through humanitarian frameworks that care for and manage their infantilised bodies. It is a form of inclusion through exclusion premised upon the maintenance of difference (Mezzadra and Nielson 2012; Darling, 2009) and upon race (Mbembe, 2003; Davies *et al.*, 2017). Their inclusion is as different subjects, as black bodies: is differential and conditional, as well as revocable (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2012). Within this frame, (Black) refugees are rendered less than human, stripped of their history, and agency. Importantly, as Mayblin *et al.* (2020) argue, this form of inclusion into the system of care is not aimed at making their lives better – but to keep them in a state of impoverishment and endangerment based on hierarchies of human worth.

Borrowing from Ticktin (2011), Black refugees emerge as 'casualties of housing'. This is evident in temporary accommodation programmes, dispersal policies, makeshift settlements, and hotspots across Europe. Accommodation programmes for asylum seekers and refugees are temporary, lasting a few years only. Many individuals are relocated out even before the asylum procedure is completed. Many are kept in a state of hypermobility, what Tazzioli (2020) describes as 'containment through mobility', of ongoing detention and circuitous displacement (Bhagat, 2022). These are examples of cycles of incorporations and abandonments that are multiple, that might end eventually with the slow death of refugees and asylum seekers, if not literally, at least sociopolitically. Housing refugees, we argue, is one of Mbembe's (2003) '*death worlds*': a form of 'social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead' (p. 40).

In the attempt to respond to Wallace's (2018) call for further research revealing necropolitical landscapes of refugee governance, but also following on Povinelli's (2011) political-economic landscapes of abandonment, the following section further examines how accommodation, shelter and housing for refugees constitute a complex infrastructure that erodes and debilitates refugee lives, and accelerates death. It is grounded in longitudinal engagement, research and teaching since 2015 on the issue of arrival, accommodation and housing of refugees in different locations - Calais, France; Brescia, Italy; and Athens, Greece. Each of these cities offer a sort of vignette that in turn builds a more composite representation of the bio- and necropolitical side of the refugee housing infrastructure in Europe. We draw from several interviews, mobile interviews, formal and informal conversations with NGOs, local charities, representatives from municipal departments of government, refugees and asylum seekers, conducted between Calais (2016)[1], Brescia[2] (2015-2019) and Athens (2018-19)[3]. These often involved encounters with the painful everyday of asylum seekers and migrants, discussing mundane and ordinary aspects of their lives and basic issues such as difficulties seeking jobs, volunteering, buying food, writing a CV, learning a local language, finding friends and co-nationals, moving in the city and so on. The paper does not account for each and every narrative or life story and their trauma and suffering, but rather attempts to synthesise commonalities related to the main frameworks of Mbembe's necropolitics and Power and Mee's infrastructure of care.

These three vignettes are chosen out of many different situations we encountered across various projects, activities, and workshops. They represent a specific 'tempo' that humbly attempts a gaze onto the either cyclical, permanent or arrested movement of people seeking refuge. 'Out', 'in', 'neither in nor out' define a bodily, spatial and temporal condition without any consequentiality, nor specific order. Each of them is presented in a narrative form, rather than an analytical one. Truths – if we dare – are anecdotal, to respect the stories that we were told, or we understood, and the ordinary heroism and pain they enshrine.

In all of them, we have tried to show how housing – whether present or absent, state led or makeshift, in mass reception centres or small flats - operates both as a biopolitical infrastructure of care (which has already been theorized) but also as a necropolitical one, toward the debilitation and the sociopolitical/slow death of those who it aims to support and protect. While necropolitical literature mostly focuses on the role of states, we extend the discourse to para-governmental apparatuses, such as NGOs and we foreground the role of race related to every aspect of the infrastructure of housing from camps to flats.

Three vignettes

'Out of' accommodation. Temporariness and transitioning out of housing schemes in Greece and Italy

'They end up in the street. Often they disappear, we lose contact. None of us know where they are, how they are doing'. This is what a humanitarian worker employed in one of the dispersal programmes in Italy tells us. In Italy and Greece, the

temporary nature of state-led accommodation, as well as the resulting atomisation, have a deep impact on the individual ability to cope and build a meaningful life. In both countries, accommodation programmes run for only two or three years - a very short time to establish networks, find jobs and independent housing. Humanitarian workers and activists in Brescia and Athens insist that, despite their best efforts to avoid it, asylum seekers are often relocated out of accommodation even before receiving their status. This might occur for different reasons, from lack of funding to changes in regulatory frameworks. When this happens, no further support is available to them, and individuals are expected to find their own housing pathway from one day to another. This represents to us one of manifold forms of necropolitical abandonment that refugees endure within the infrastructure of housing they are supposed to trust.

Once expelled by the system, asylum seekers and refugees might end up in makeshift settlements, or sleeping rough in the streets. In Italy, they often end up in rented flats with same nationality groups, however often in very exploitative conditions. The situation can last some months, or years. In certain cases, they relocate, in others they 'disappear'. We have not learnt about any successful collective housing endeavour. Accessing 'the material features of survival' (Soederberg, 2019 in Bhagat, 2022, p. 956) after a year or two in group accommodation or shared flats, is difficult; the majority of asylum seekers are not ready to make home on their own. They lack jobs, networks and savings. Access to the rental market and to social or affordable housing is complex and challenging, if not impossible. Even more so given the current financialisation of housing and austerity urbanism (Bhagat, 2022; Bhagat & Soederberg, 2019), and let aside in situations of poor mental health and trauma. People are left alone, rendered homeless and jobless, abandoned by the system and forced to survive through informal structures (Dotsey & Chiodelli, 2021; Dotsey & Sapanski, 2021), subtracted of a future, and destined to debility and slow death.

Humanitarian workers and members of local charities made clear to us that the process of transitioning out of humanitarian housing only exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, enhancing precariousness and marginalisation and creating situations of deep deprivation (see also Astolfo & Boano, 2020; Brown *et al.*, 2022; Lukes *et al.*, 2019). No forms of resilience were found. As Bhagat (2020) puts it, for another context, 'In doing this, refugees … are brought into the folds of capital accumulation through modes of survival based on self-reliance' (p. 439). The neoliberal myth of self-reliance (ibid), does not serve the cause of refugees. It is only useful to replace state welfare (p. 958). In so doing, it constitutes a 'continual endangerment of refugee life' (ibid) or, as we argue, a slow death for refugees and asylum seekers. It means deepening marginality through placing the burden of survival on people themselves.

NGOs and activist groups do offer alternative forms of housing after relocation, however not without enormous difficulties, including funding shortages, and manifold institutional barriers that range from local regulation to lack of political support and widespread hostility. Some organisations end up purchasing flats, while others negotiate with local municipalities the use of available empty municipal housing stock. In certain cases, they act as intermediaries between refugees/asylum seekers and private market/land owners. The latter, however, has proved extremely difficult

due to widespread hostility and racism. It is also very difficult for us, and for them, to gauge whether and to what extent these options actually support refugees over the long term.

'In' accommodation. The house as a border in Italy

Examining the UK context of dispersal housing, Walters (2004) and Darling (2011) coined the term of 'Domopolitics' intended as an articulation of border politics that occurs within the house and that results in 'a politics of discomfort for those at the limits of the nation' (p. 263). With other words, refugee accommodation emerges as 'a regulatory tool' for the sovereign power, and especially it 'forges the affective construction of discomfort, marginality and insecurity for those accommodated' (p. 264). Darling explaines that domopolitics produces modes of governmentality that 'create an account of housing which is deliberately decoupled from feelings of security, as accommodation becomes a key space through which a relation to the border is lived for asylum seekers' (p. 263). Rather than representing security, protection and safety, the house, within these accommodation schemes, comes to represent the exact opposite.

While Walters and Darling refer to the UK context, the house as a border is common to other countries, including the case of Italian 'accoglienza diffusa' (broadly translated as 'diffused hospitality'). During our five year long engagement with asylum seekers in Brescia and surrounding municipalities, we collected several testimonies around how the house was often lived as an hostile place, as a site of harm and slow death, that limited individual freedom and comfort, relief, joy. Within these houses restrictions and rules applied, individuals were controlled, and their behaviours were subject to scrutiny – including their guests, alcohol consumption, and so on. In these houses as borders, hospitality was enacted as a form of control, ensuring protection but only at the expense of free mobility and choice. Houses were managed by humanitarian organisations and private companies, which turned themselves into policing bodies - most often unknowingly or unwillingly - distributing fines, and issuing penalties to retain control (Astolfo & Boano, 2020). Paradoxically, there was the expectation that asylum seekers developed a sense of attachment and belonging to those houses that represented an extension of the border, a perpetuation of a condition of racialized displaceability.

Despite deep discomfort in acting as policing bodies, it appears that some organisations lack alternatives when it comes to overcoming the house as border situation – continuing to reproduce its coloniality and racism. Policing homes, forms of domestic surveillance and disciplinary control constitute a unique entanglement of humanitarian (Fassin, 2012) and black reason (Mbembe, 2017) that ultimately produce a system of legitimised legal oppression in the name of care, protection and solidarity. Its dismantling is an extremely complicated endeavour that would require antiracist activism combined with equality and diversity training to begin with. NGOs and local charities as housing providers negotiate their positions and are complicit in constructing a certain vision of community. They are unconscious, or partially conscious, that race as a facet of 'integration' is still implicit in community building. They often focus too much on integration, behavioural change, social

conflict. Their increasing role as housing providers and simultaneously as 'agents of "integration" and of exclusion, rather than as neutral arbiters, are seen to have placed housing at the centre of the entanglement of race, housing and cohesion/integration' (Finney *et al*., 2019, p. 3217).

Neither in nor out. Makeshift camps in Calais

Wallace (2018) and Davies *et al.* (2017) in their influential papers explain with detail how abandonment and state inaction erode the lives of refugees in Calais. Davies *et al*. point to the confluence of 'necro' and 'bio' forms of governance in relation to the UK-France border. They write of the biopolitics of managerialism evident in both the strategies and rhetoric of immigration control, governing the lives of refugees; while it is 'the racialized identity and status of Calais' migrant population that allows for them to be neglected by state authorities in this way' (Davies *et al*., 2017, p. 1268). Wallace (2018), drawing also on the necropolitics of migrant governance, presents refugees in the Calais 'Jungle' as embodying a paradox: 'Stuck in a perennial state of limbo, there appears to be an irremediable paradox in one's ability to be considered both human and a refugee simultaneously: neither citizen nor human; neither living nor dead' (p. 14). This is a paradox recognised in the disposability of refugees, who are at once in need of assistance and subject to heightened securitisation and exclusions (Bhagat 2020, 2022). In Calais, Black refugees and migrants are abandoned and left in spaces with no services, but they are also simultaneously expelled and killed with state sanction.

We visited Calais for the first time in 2016 a few days after the settlement of the Jungle was bulldozed. What was left seemed a ruin in the sand, yet some of the shops and gathering places were still busy with life. The first bulldozing, the eviction notices, and all the subsequent bulldozing, clearances and fires that Van Isacker (2019) would call 'domicides' - are clearly forms of iterative violence toward refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, with a specific purpose of marking them as illegal and transgressive and of hindering their means of survival. These overt forms of violence perpetrated by the border police are complementary to the abandonment and inaction described by Davies *et al*. What they describe as inaction sits at the threshold between a form of abandonment (Gill, 2010; Leshem, 2017) that kills, and a form of indifference that in the past made survival - if not hope - possible. In the jungle there used to be a form of very precarious autonomy that has however changed over time with the tightening up of migration management. Aru (2021) captures this specific aspect in Ventimiglia, at the border between France and Italy. Katz (2015) described it for Calais as a form of 'political birth and hope' triggered by migrant and refugee spatial practices (p. 85).

Beyond what Davies *et al*., Wallace, Bhagat, Katz and Aru have already explored, our argument here is that Mbembe (2003) offers further distinctions between bio and necropower, which are useful to understand the conditions of refugees in the makeshift settlement of Calais, as we have observed them, but also in other border contexts. The philosopher argues that 'under the conditions of necropower, the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom are blurred'. (p. 40). And this was precisely the situation in Calais five years ago

and now. Lives are lost in the Channel, under the lorries, in the small boats, or in the tents for the cold. The same happens along the Mediterranean Sea Route (see Saucier & Woods, 2014), or close to the Aegean Islands, but also in the reception centres, in flats and shared houses. In Italy, in 2022 alone, 73 amongst migrants and refugees killed themselves. Overall, asylum and housing is an ongoing process that actively prevents the survival of racialized bodies, to the point of taking their own life.

In all these vignettes we found the presence of both bio and necropolitical elements – from depolicitisation, to segregation and abandonment. In two of them, physical separation is employed to keep refugees hidden from society; in one vignette, on the contrary, visibility is enforced as a vehicle for 'integration', to coerce social acceptance and avoid social conflict– while neither the low nor the excessive exposure are nearly close to what individuals might actually desire. For those living in camps and makeshift settlements the quality of living conditions, of their tents, tend to frame them as either outcasts or victims within extremely polarised narratives but always reproducing them as subhumans, less than humans. In all the vignettes, despite the different contexts, and moments, all housing arrangements and provisions show ingrained forms of racism – no matter whether such racism is evident or not. Racism is the technology that creates and maintains difference, and housing as infrastructure enables its circulation, alongside care. In the housing as necropolitical infrastructure, care operates as a biopolitical technology, while racism operates as a necropolitical one.

State inaction in Calais and hypersurveillance though dispersal in Italy, produce similar effects in terms of evading political mobilization and action, recognition and so on. All the vignettes constitute a spatial strategy of governmentality enacted by governments to obstacle collective formation, hence survival through interdependence and collaboration. By breaking the ties and bonds of people and places, this form of power – necropower - reduces the means of survival, making people survive as mere flesh, racialised bodies. It involves an act of separation that sustains white western power amidst that widespread tacit consensus that Mayblin *et al.* (2020) spoke of in terms of 'some lives can be saved other not'.

But there is more to it.

Even after being discriminated against, isolated, abandoned and torn down, there is still a way to extract value out of Black refugee lives - for instance through making profit out of hospitality, housing them in hotels. Here, state inaction – the retreat of welfare – is complemented by more value extraction in an endlessly cyclical self-reproducing racial capitalist system.

Conclusion: is this a housing system that cares? (Power & Mee, 2020)

The paper started with the questions 'under what conditions do we accept that some people are housed, others not?' and 'What kind of power structures allow certain bodies to be welcomed?' While we are unable to offer an exhaustive reply to these existential questions, what we hope the paper contributes is to foreground – once again – the entanglement of race and power: how race is constructed to distinguish, discriminate and kill; the inherent racism of migration governance, asylum and

housing policies; and the perpetuation of the construction of Black bodies. This manifests and enacts not only through evident systems but in less visible mechanism, such as how mobility is governed/forced into people but also in more subtle mundane aspects masqueraded under the paradigm of care and humanitarianism, and in the seemingly innocent homes/flats, state-housing programmes, and so on.

We have shown this across three places, completely different geographically, in terms of housing type, and system of provision. Through the vignettes we have hoped to explain how housing emerges as a complex system (an infrastructure of care) that makes visible bio and necropolitical power relations that render migrants racialised and ultimately expose them to a form of 'death-in-life' (Mbembe, 2003, p. 21). In all of the different places, housing emerges as a deadly racialised practice, that contributes to the construction, wounding and following destruction of the racialised subject. The argument is that the construction of the Black refugee is not only the result of the coloniality of migration management, as many scholars have already aptly argued, but also and especially it is the result of housing governance, including housing allocation, accommodation schemes and policies, home making pathways, all of which are premised upon difference – who gets what and who doesn't – and which retain aspects of coloniality, reproducing the same killing logic. With other words, housing as infrastructure plays a key role within the broader extractive and exploitative system of humanitarian 'care' and, as such, it is deeply imbricated in the reproduction of difference, namely in the reproduction of the racialised subject, its consequent subjugation, debilitation and/or elimination.

The three vignettes also aim to show that race-making and housing refugees are deeply entangled, and cannot be dissociated. Housing matters to the construction of race, and what is viewed as purely sheltering is also a matter of racialisation/race-making. The lived experience of the house as border in Italy, of a shared flat within the accommodation scheme in Athens, of a tent in a makeshift camp in Calais, have a deeply racial dimension. In all of them, race is a key variable in determining the different housing journeys.

By using refugee/migrant housing as a necropolitical infrastructure, comprised of 'spaces of death' (Ortega, 2020) and 'life-threatening housing' (Jha, 2023), we hope we have disclosed in each place the entanglement of refugee governance and care with debility, violence and coloniality, where the latter are often hidden or normalised by the presence of the former and thus difficult to call out, and delink, to the point that housing as infrastructure is conducive to social, political and biological death. The necropolitical regimes of housing/care in all the places have created an environment not conducive to life, in particular amongst Black refugees, as two times marginalised, two times others. Afghans in Athens, Ghanaians in Brescia, Nigerians in Calais, do not literally die, they undergo sociopolitical slow death, slowly losing the sovereignty of their bodies. What is even more paradoxical, is that their destitution often becomes necessary for survival. Some people are cared for only if their lives are at risk, which means that getting out of precarity implies losing the means of survival. Within such colonial structural inequalities, housing refugees becomes not a system that cares, but rather entangled in the social reproduction of inequality and difference, generating distinctions between wanted and unwanted people, between bodies that qualify and those that do not.

Within such a context it becomes really difficult to understand what refugee agency, counterstrategies, spaces of refusal (Jones, 2012), critique and acceptance (Strange *et al.*, 2017) could be. Necropolitical and biopolitical approaches have often received criticism for overlooking agency and for portraying refugees and migrants as victims. We still believe that these approaches can help visibilise broader colonial structures and racial hierarchies of worth embedded in state (in)action, in humanitarian logics and migrant management and encoded within the infrastructure of refugee and migrant accommodation. By using housing as infrastructure as a lens to view racialisation processes/the construction of race, maybe it is possible that larger structural workings of power can be visibilised, and thus challenged.

In unexpected ways and places, often precarious people undertake different practices of doing and undoing, repairing and resisting, that allow them to negotiate forms of visibility, recognition and coproduction. In some way, they manage to 'withdraw from death in order to escort it' (Boano, 2021, p. 42). Whether escorting death is just a matter of how we live, or a barely acceptable form of life, we do not know. But as Simone (2021) put it, we have to live with the trouble. Infrastructures, conceived as alternative systems, can also be capable of fixing things, and of provoking opposition (Hodge, 2015). In contexts of displacement and refuge, they may enable people to 'piece together some fragile and limited versions of collective force and action' (Simone, 2021, p. 1345).

Notes

1. See 'Border and camps' project: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/research-projects/2020/nov/borders-and-camps
2. See the EPIC project: https://epicamif.eu/and 'BUDD camp' workshops: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/programmes/msc-building-and-urban-design-development/buddcamp
3. See the 'Curing the Limbo project': https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/city/athens and the Summerlab workshop: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/athens-arrival-city-age-austerity.

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