The micropolitics of border struggles: migrants' squats and inhabitance as alternatives to citizenship.

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Abstract

This paper discusses the struggles of the We Are Here movement in Amsterdam as resistance to both securitarian and humanitarian border regimes. It explores the tensions between everyday forms of commoning emerging in migrants' squats and technologies of enclosure and capture. In first place, the paper contends that the creation of housing squats marked an important shift in migrants' struggles that went from acts of protest, to the performance of resistance at the level of the micropolitics of borders. By squatting buildings and creating common living spaces, current struggles mobilise material, affective and political solidarities and constitute a politics of inhabitance beyond and against dependency on the state and humanitarian practices. The second part of the paper discusses the government's attempts to repress, govern and enclose the We Are Here movement within confined fields of action. With negotiations and humanitarian concessions through the provision of emergency shelters, local authorities attempted to re-direct the movement into politics of rights and recognitions. However, these tactics did not succeed to contain the struggle in its entirety: many migrants rejected humanitarian solutions, continued to create radical home spaces through squatting, enacting a politics of inhabitance beyond citizenship.

Keywords

Introduction

Beginning in 2012, in the Netherlands, isolated acts of migrants' protest have begun to consolidate into long-term collective mobilisations with the creation of the We Are Here

movement. We Are Here is a movement composed of migrants whose requests for asylum have been rejected but who often cannot legally be deported to their countries of origin because the Dutch government considers them unsafe. Yet, they have been ordered to leave the Netherlands and are therefore stranded in a legal limbo that denies access to basic needs including housing, health care, employment and education. As an alternative to living on the streets, or to being monitored and isolated in state-run asylum centers, while waiting for a policy change or regularisation of their status, 'We Are Here' participants decided to break-open these circuits of invisibility and oppression. They began squatting large vacant buildings and creating common spaces for shelter, for collective mobilisation against the border regime, as well as for the organisation of alternative forms of life and social relations. Despite tensions, conflict and constant precarity, the inhabitants of these spaces exit and subvert the material forms of isolation and dependency, as well as the affective politics of fear and silence.

In line with other contributions to this special issue, this paper establishes a differentiation between the provision of housing through emergency and humanitarian shelters, and the practice of home-making though squatting (Dadusc et al. this issue). Drawing on critical humanitarian studies (Agier 201; Fassin 2011; Weizman 2011; Ticktin 2016), the paper argues that the practice of squatting constitutes a practice of resistance not only to the criminalisation of migration, but also to humanitarian forms of government operating through care/control principles. In contrast to humanitarian and state run shelters, squatting becomes a practice of commoning against the enclosures of the border regimes with the creation of common spaces and solidarities constituting a resistance to the violence, isolation and segregation of both securitarian and humanitarian enclosures (for a broader discussion of these forms of commoning see Dadusc et al. this issue and De Angelis this issue).

The formation of political subjects and their interrelation with the norms of citizenship (either from above or from below, recognised or performed) cannot be disentangled from forms of governance, control and capture by the state (Rigby and Schlembach 2013). Following Asli Ikizoglou Erensu's (2017) call for the need to re-think the relation between citizenship and political subjectivity, this paper argues that, despite making claims for integration based on citizenship, the We Are Here movement performs resistance to the micropolitics of borders, as these struggles are enacted and embodied in each aspect of people's lives, subjectivities and affective relations. The everyday forms of commoning emerging in migrants' squats

entail the creation of modes of existence that are not defined by formal or informal citizenship, documentation and government-granted human rights.

Drawing on the definition of *inhabitance* as alternative to citizenship proposed in the introduction to this special issue (Dadusc et al. 2019), this paper highlights the micro-political, affective and ambivalent dimension of resistance that defy both humanitarian borders and the codes of conduct accompanying the performance of citizenship. Through the We Are Here struggle, *inhabitance* constitutes a radical practice of occupying space, of home-making beyond and against the both the normative and informal codes of citizenship, as well as their disciplining implications. Inhabitance is not just a desire or a longing for recognition, but the affirmation of presence, a here-and-now praxis of existence: it entails an active re-appropriation of time, space and social relations, despite attempts to confine people in a limbo of semi-existance. Moreover, the formulation of a politics of inhabitance, rather than of citizenship, provides the grounds for new forms of solidarity that dismantle existing host-guest hierarchies between those who hold citizenship and those who desire citizenship, otherwise addressed as *subjects of lack*.

After outlining the micropolitics of the We Are Here struggle for inhabitance, the second part of the paper discusses the government's reaction. Particular attention is given to the role of humanitarian discourses and practices, and to the ambivalences and tensions that emerged in this context. Indeed, the language of humanitarian emergency and the technologies of tolerance and negotiations employed by local authorities aimed at channeling the We Are Here movement within a confined field of action: namely, turning turning spaces of *contention* into spaces of *containment*, by fixing ungovernable practices into a static mode, re-establishing forms of dependency to the state and pushing the formulation the movement agendas in the language of rights and recognitions.

The micropolitics of border regimes: the security-humanitarian nexus

European borders are increasingly externalised through a variety of agreements, negotiations and militarisation (Bigo 2014), while internal borders are becoming multiplied, diffuse and ubiquitous (Balibar 2009; Vaughan-Williams 2008; Rygiel 2011). An increasing variety of institutions act as formal and informal border control agents: these include landlords, health services providers, labour agencies, schools (Salter 2006; Anderson et al. 2009; Jones and Johnson 2016). In the Netherlands, during the past decades undocumented migrants have

increasingly been subject to stricter surveillance and security measures (Broeders 2010; Van der Woude et al 2014) through what Stumpf (2006) calls 'crimmigration': namely, the increased convergence of criminal laws and migration laws. Moreover, techniques of repression go beyond the legalistic elements of criminalisation, as they extend to the illegalisation of every aspect of racialised bodies and lives, creating hostile environments for migration (Aas 2011) and placing the border in migrants' everyday life (Jones and Johnson 2016). This production of illegality in everyday lives (De Genova 2002) configures as an interrelation of coercion over migrants bodies, governing their affects and subjectivities.

Two legal measures were responsible for the implementation of crimmigration in the Netherlands, which on the one hand contributed to an overall hostile environment to migration, and on the other centralised the provision of services for undocumented migrants, including housing, in the hands of state-run agencies. In the 1990s, the *Koppelingswet* (Linkage Act), in line with the European pattern of the 1990s, limited access to social services such as education and health care, as well as the possibility to work legally (see van der Leun 2006; van der Leun & Kloosterman 2006). Together with stricter monitoring and registration techniques, between 1999 and 2007 the capacity of administrative detention was increased from 1000 to 4000 units (Leerkes and Broeders 2010: 835).

In 2007, the *Vremdelingenwet 2007* (Aliens Act 2007) placed new restrictions on undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers and centralised authority and responsibility in the hands of the Immigration and Naturalization Agency (IND) and of the Repatriation Agency (DT&V). As a consequence, municipalities and local organisations were not allowed to provide assistance and support to illegalised migrants, and existing emergency shelters were replaced with state-run facilities. With the 2010 Law on Identification and the Benefit Entitlement Act the Dutch government extended the technologies of criminalisation even further. Since then, and through the enforcement of the so-called Return Directive, rejected asylum seekers are handed a notification to leave the Netherlands within 48 hours, and are banned from re-entring Dutch territory. Non-departure is considered a criminal offense punishable with detention and deportation (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 2013:1). Those who cannot leave are then directed toward an asylum centre in Ter Apel, where they may stay for a maximum of 12 weeks.

The government mobilised nationalist discourses to give legitimacy to these legislations, framing them as necessary steps to protect social services for nationals, to guarantee social and cultural cohesion, and to lower crime rates (Leerkes et al. 2012). Moreover, these laws went hand in hand with a redefinition of residence rights and with new moral discourses around illegality of residence. According to the Dutch cabinet, Dutch residence is determined not simply by someone's presence in the country, but by their capacity to integrate culturally, and to respect norms and values of Dutch society, namely to perform good citizenship:

> "Education, speaking the language, and being economically independent are the foundations for the best possible integration. The ones who fulfill these demands and who contribute to our society are, and will be welcome. Illegal residence does not fit in such a society. Illegal aliens *[sic]* do not fully participate in our society […]. Further, illegal residence goes hand in hand with many forms of nuisance and criminality[1]' (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 2013:1).

While this ignores the fact that illegality is not an ontological condition, but is instead defined and produced by the State itself, it also poses Dutch identity, norms and values as intrinsically superior[2]. Accordingly, not only citizenship, but residence on the Dutch territory is framed as a privilege to be granted on the basis of people's capacity to conform to Dutch norms, values and culture. This resonates with Étienne Balibar's (2016) reflections on how the production of the figure of the so-called 'illegal migrant' as a 'foreign body' has become the major site for the production of codes of citizenship and to the 'citizen's body'.

As it will be discussed in relation to the We Are Here movement, humanitarian modes of governance of migrants' bodies, lives and voices increasingly complement state criminalisation and securitisation (Pallister-Wilkins 2015; Ticktin 2016; Cuttitta 2018). Humanitarian borders (Walters 2010) are enforced by addressing migrants as a humanitarian emergency, victimising them as vulnerable objects of lack and of need, and mobilising allegedly 'a-political' ideals of universality and benevolence (Hyndman 2000; Nyers 2013; Vaughan-Williams 2015). Instead of manifesting themselves through direct forms of repression, humanitarian borders are coercive, disciplinary and biopolitical modes of power, governing and controlling by fostering life as well as through technologies of care that are

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[1]   Translated from Dutch from: *https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-33512-3.html*

[2]   See Rutte's (the Dutch Prime Minister) response to Trump's inauguration. "A letter to all Dutch citizens" **https://vvd.nl/nieuws/lees-hier-de-brief-van-mark/**

strictly entangled with control over migrants bodies and lives (Fassin 2011; Ticktin 2016). Rather than providing an alternative to illegalisation and criminalisation, humanitarian interventions co-produce and fortify multiple forms of sovereign control (Pallister-Wilkins 2018). As much as securitarian approaches, they keep migrants in a 'state of emergency' and in relations of dependency which trap them in a condition of spatial and temporal immobility (Tazzioli 2014). Therefore, humanitarian assistance and protection constitute security devices that operates alongside, and not outside of, the violence of borders

The combination of these technologies creates complex forms of enclosure that go beyond detention of individuals, forced mobility or forced immobility within certain territories. Enclosures manifest in a multiplicity of technologies for the intervention on migrants' bodies and everyday lives, from spatial segregation (spatial enclosures), suspension in temporal limbos (temporal enclosures), dependency on care-control practices (humanitarian enclosures) as well as labels and discourses that legitimise structural harms and that divert the attention from the violence of borders (epistemic enclosure). Moreover, as argued below, these technologies also constitute *affective enclosures,* through intervening on migrants' capacity to exist and to resist by keeping them in a condition of fear, invisibility, precarity, silence and dependency.

Affective Enclosures

Since the emergence of the so-called "affective turn" (Clough and Halley 2007; Gregg and Seigworth 2010), feminist, queer and postcolonial scholars have attempted to subvert dichotomous understandings of political action, developing concepts that would highlight complex inter-relations between ethics and politics (Bargetz 2015). These approaches aim at understanding the political dynamics and potential of affects as political and cultural technologies of power, implying not only normative but affective modes of government (Bargetz 2015; Boler 2004; Clough 2010; Pedwell 2012). Indeed the spheres of everyday life, of affects and subject formations cannot be separated from politics as these are in themselves objects of government (Revel 2009). The affective technologies of power circulating through border regimes constitute forms of subjection 'through the material production of specific modes of experience' (D'Aoust 2014: 269) to create a *micropolitics* of borders: micropolitics is here intended as the level where politics and ethics intersect, where affects, social relations

and everyday lives cannot be separated from what are generally defined as political technologies of government (Read 2003).

Fortier's (2016) understanding of *affective* citizenship provides a key tool for understanding the role of affects in constituting citizenship and state/citizen relations, as well as for addressing the affective technologies of enclosure that are mobilized through humanitarian practices and discourses. Indeed citizenship is not only bound with government or corporate disciplinary power relations, but entails the political mobilization of affects, which constrain, define and demarcate populations (ibid): namely, governing technologies which define legitimate modalities of how to feel as citizens, how to protest as citizens, how to claim rights as citizens, amongst others.

As affects are tools of power, they are also important sites of resistance (Butler 1997; Ahmed 2008; Hynes 2013; Pedwell and Whitehead 2012). Moreover, if what characterizes the *micropolitics* of borders is the governmental power to manage populations not only through rights and forms of inclusions/exclusion, but through the *conduct of conduct*[3] *(*Foucault 2007), namely the production of specific affects, values, desires and modes of life (Cadman 2010; Lazzarato 2009; Read 2003), then practices of resistance reconfigure themselves as attempts to create different modes of thinking, acting and of relating to the norms and rules that govern lives. According to Fortier *affective citizenship* can thus become 'a site for radical modes of belonging that might be shaped by governing technologies but one that also refuses to be determined by it (Fortier 2016: 1039).

Enclosures and subjection, indeed, do not come without resistance. As argued in the following section, as much as criminalisation, victimisation and the violence of borders become diffuse and ubiquitous, so do migrants' struggles (Ataç et al. 2016; Stierl 2019).

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[3] Foucault's understanding of micro-physics of power, addresses technologies of government, devices, tools, techniques, and apparatuses that enable the shaping and acting upon individual and collective conduct (Foucault 1982). Foucault (2007) proposes the concept of conduct as translation of the Greek 'oikonomia psuchon and the Latin 'regimen animourum' (Foucault 2007: 192), namely, the way in which modes of government operate through management of souls insofar as this direction (conduite) of souls involves a permanent intervention on everyday conduct (conduite), on people's bodies and affects. In this context 'conduct' is a technique to lead others, but also the way one conducts oneself, a reflexive power on the self.

While modes of governance and enclosures seek to produce, channel and contain spaces of possibility (of mobility, action and existence), these are constantly disrupted by a multiplicity of acts of subversion that counter, escape and create cracks in the smooth operation of bordering regimes (Mezzadra 2015). Whereas many forms of contestation are moved against the securitarian management of migration, there are limited (political and academic) discussions around the need to resist humanitarian enclosures and their affective technologies of governance that come with citizenship.

The micropolitics of border struggles: We Are Here to stay

In the Netherlands, as in other European cities (see contributions to this special issues as well as Mudu and Chattopadhyay 2016), squatting has been a tool of undocumented migrants to mobilise protest and to create platforms for mobilisation against the bordering of Europe, as well as to open common spaces for organising their lives and for taking their needs into their own hands. Since that winter of 2012, 'We Are Here' squatted about 50 buildings, including a former church, office spaces, former schools, and vacant residential premises. These squatted buildings are used for shelter as well as for creating social and political hubs where different groups of people can act in solidarity, mobilise protest and organise themselves collectively and autonomously.

The creation of housing squats as opposed to the containment in asylum centres or camps, marks an important shift in migrants' struggles and anti-state practices. The peculiarity of migrants' squats is the refusal to reproduce humanitarian affective politics of dependency, in favour of modes of organisation based on solidarity between documented and undocumented activists and squatters. While the security-humanitarian nexus strand people in a spatio-temporal limbo of uncertainty (Hyndman and Giles 2011) and dependency, by organising collectively, protesting on the streets and creating common homes, the We Are Here movement challenges the affective politics that keep them 'stuck in the present' (Brun 2016), and exercise what Catherine Brun defined as 'agency-in-waiting' (Brun 2015), prefiguring the possibility of alternative spatio-temporal, political and affective relations. The networks of solidarity by local activists that emerged around squatted spaces do not merely seek to help migrants survive – they create places where a livable existence and everyday resistance go hand-in-hand. Rather than being passive receivers of help and subject to care-control practices, the inhabitants of these spaces live collectively, organise daily activities, including

collective cooking, workshops, discussions and demonstrations to raise awareness and to build connections with allies and supporters.

The constitution of solidarity networks between local squatters and We Are Here, led to the mobilisation of common struggles that exceed the walls of each squat, and that enable the formation of common *political* subjectivities which do not take citizenship as a referent. While groups of local squatters have initially supported We Are Here with the technical skills required to open new spaces, We Are Here activists have often contributed to, and participated in, a variety of political spaces and mobilisations organised by local squatters. Hierarchies between documented and undocumented people are here challenged by creating modalities of *mutual* solidarity and the formulation of common struggles that distrupt *host-guest* relations imposed by the codes of citizenship (Squire and Darling 2013). Solidarity is here expressed as a political practice rather than a humanitarian approach, an act of resistance rather than an act of assistance.

Therefore, the struggles of the We Are Here movement go beyond right claiming and recognition and constitute semi-permanent infrastructures for mobile commons (Papadopoulos et al. 2013) to circulate, to sediment and to multiply. The occupation of squatted homes brings border struggles to the intimate level of homes, as spaces to create the possibilities for different social, political and affective relations based on solidarity, cooperation and mutual aid. The goal is not to provide plasters that make the situation more tolerable, nor to ameliorate the conditions of oppression, but to transform the very foundations of racialised border regimes, as to counter the operation of the military-humanitarian borders nexus.

Besides the formation of new *political* subjectivities that do not take citizenship as a referent, these struggles perform resistance in the field of affect and *ethics*: silenced individuals, who needed to hide and wait in a condition of constant fear and dependency, became active and powerful collectives, appropriating and inhabiting urban, social and political spaces, creating collective platforms to challenge the affective technologies of border regimes and of the codes of conduct of citizenship.

Inhabitance is here proposed to address the commoning *praxis* in migrants' squats, namely the permanent constitution of common struggles, spaces and networks of solidarity, which despite the precarity of each squat, are not temporary ruptures. Moreover, inhabitance entails a radical *ethics*, as it brings the struggle to everyday forms of social reproduction, to the

constitution of spaces for radical affects, subjectivities and social relations (Revel 2008) that border regimes seek to enclose, displace and erase. Moreover, inhabitance figures as a *politics* of transformation of the codes that define citizenship. While citizenship sets political practices within a fixed and governable field, in these autonomous spaces there is an attempt to make new webs of relation possible. By *inhabiting* common living spaces, current struggles mobilise material, affective and political forms of solidarity that engender resistance to spatial and social injustice, but also constitute grassroots forms of organisation beyond and against the state, challenging the operation of borders and the way migrants bodies and affects are disciplined and governed. Inhabitance as a politics, an ethics and a *praxis*, can entail the constitution of living alternatives to the violence of borders, creating relational webs and bridges in the face of enclosures.

Yet, there is always a tension between these liberatory practices and technologies of enclosure and capture (Papadopoulos et al. 2008). The following section discusses the government's attempts to repress, govern and enclose them within confined field of action. As the eviction of each squat lead to the opening of new ones, direct forms of repression through criminalisation were replaced by more subtle modes of governance, in an attempt to intervene on the We Are Here's capacity to create ungovernable struggles. Here, a key question emerges: to what extent is it possible to produce forms of resistance to the process of subject-making based on humanitarian principles, as well as to the *conduct of conduct* that comes with the requirement of performing good citizenship by those who are excluded from citizenship?

From Spaces of Contention to Spaces of Containment

Despite squatting in the Netherlands having been criminalised in 2010 (see Dadusc 2019), local authorities reacted to 'We Are Here' squats by refusing to enforce the law, and instead undertook an approach that favoured tolerance and negotiation. Local authorities argued that the We are Here squats were to be treated differently than other squats because of the 'humanitarian nature' of the movement. Yet, rather than ameliorating the conditions of migrants, these strategies resulted in stricter monitoring and control. The We Are Here squats were tolerated in an attempt to depoliticise and silence the struggle, and to avoid the formulation of structural change to the border regimes. Granting residence permits to key

figures of the group and providing emergency shelters to parts of the group was used as a strategy to break down existing solidarities and create internal tensions and differentiations.

After the occupation of the first building, the *Vluchtkerk*, the Mayor demanded a list of names of the migrants involved in the movement. At the end of the same year, after several occupations and evictions, We Are Here squatted an empty office building in front of the *Rijks Museum*: literally, the museum of the Empire, which uncritically celebrates the Dutch Golden Age and colonial violence. This direct action made 'We Are Here' visible, placing migrants presence at the centre, rather than at the margins of the colonial Empire that created the conditions for the so called 'refugee crisis' to emerge in the first place. This occupation aimed at dismantling the dialectic between margin and centre, between citizens who belong to the city and the undesirables presences excluded from political and social space (Squire 2016).

As a forced eviction would have provoked undesired visible protests, the Mayor opted to negotiate and offered a temporary emergency shelter in a former prison (*Havenstraat*). Access to the shelter/prison was granted under the condition that the hosted migrants would cooperate with immigration in the assessment of their cases and with their return to their home country: namely, their own deportation. Most members of the movement were about to refuse the offer, as accommodation in a former prison – with former prison guards, curfews, controlled access and strict monitoring of daily activities - was not considered a safe option. However, threatened with immediate eviction, the group accepted the offer and voluntarily left the squat. Only once all inhabitants of the squat signed the agreement, the Mayor announced that only those on the pre-existing list were allowed to access the shelter/prison, thereby dividing the group and leaving homeless those who were not registered (Dadusc 2016).

A few weeks later the excluded part of the group squatted a municipality-owned building in Amsterdam-Bijlmer: the *Vluchtgarage*. The building lacked running water and electricity, and was situated next to a mosque. Bijlmer is a neighbourhood at the edge of the city, built in the 1980s to host the post-colonial diaspora of migrant workers. It is often referred to as a *ghetto*, due to the spatial segregation of ethnic minorities. While most of the squatted spaces in the city centre were evicted within a few weeks, here the group was allowed to stay for 18 months. However, the local council refused to provide access to water and electricity, leaving the building in precarity and unfit for human habitation.

In April 2014, after a few months in this situation of spatial segregation, a part of the group decided to leave the *Vluchtgarage* and to bring the struggle back to the city centre, squatting

four buildings in a gentrifying neighbourhood (*Ten Katestraat – Amsterdam Oud West*). Three former social housing buildings and a warehouse, all in the process of demolition, were renovated by the inhabitants to create living spaces and a social centre: the *Vluchtmarkt*. Here several workshops and demonstrations were organised, including the international 'March for Freedom'[4] (see Nigg 2015), which connected We Are Here to broader international struggles for the freedom of movement and against Frontex.

While in previous cases, the evictions of the 'We Are Here' group were approached differently to other (criminalised) squats, in the case of *Vluchtmarkt*, the public prosecutor, the chief of the police and the Mayor decided to enforce the existing law that criminalises squatting and evicted all the buildings. According to the public prosecutor in this case a different approach was legitimised because, while other We Are Here squats served as humanitarian shelters, the *Vluchtmarkt* constituted a political space. As he stated during a conversation with the lawyer of the group: 'these are not refugees, they are no-border squatters'. A clear differentiation was made between, on the one hand, squats like the *Vluchtgarage*, operating as emergency shelters and as 'spaces of containment' which could be tolerated and on the other, 'spaces of contention' which kept the struggle alive and therefore had to be repressed. Therefore, tolerance of some squats operated as a mechanism to leave power relations undisturbed (Brown 2009) and as a tool of governmentality to de-politicise and pacify the We Are Here struggles. This was achieved by setting the boundaries, establishing the limits and the norms of what could be done (and how) in order to comply with specific conditions of acceptability, while maintaining the threat of repression (Dadusc 2019).

Bed, Bread and Bath: humanitarian enclosures

In parallel to these events, in January 2013, the Dutch Homeless Organization and the Protestant Church, in collaboration with the Conference of European Churches (CEC) submitted a complaint to the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR)[5]. The CEC demanded that the Dutch government should take *basic* social rights seriously, and provide shelter and food for everyone regardless of their legal status. Non-provision of minimal social

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[4]   See: http://freedomnotfrontex.noblogs.org

[5]   See: https://www.coe.int/en/web/turin-european-social-charter/processed-complaints/-/asset_publisher/5GEFkJmH2bYG/content/no-90-2013-conference-of-european-churches-cec-v-the-netherlands?inheritRedirect=false

services to the undocumented was addressed as an offense against article 25 of the Human Rights Declaration. In response, the ECSR issued an 'immediate measure' to the Dutch authorities, inviting them 'to suspend the operation of the Linkage Act with regard to shelter, food and clothing, so as to prevent further harm and safeguard health and life.

In 2014 after the recommendations by the ECSR and subsequent pressure from humanitarian organizations, municipalities implemented the so-called 'Bed, Bath and Bread' policy (BBB) to provide emergency night-shelter for rejected asylum seekers. This resulted in tensions between central and local governments, with the former refusing to provide assistance to illegalised migrants, and the latter attempting to implement humanitarian solutions. The provision of shelter and food, was presented by a number of municipalities as a solution to an alleged humanitarian emergency and as a measure that would allow the Netherlands to comply with human rights laws (Starling 2015).

This could be considered a political victory, a recognition of undocumented migrants' *right to rights*, and a successful outcomes of We Are Here demands and protests. After the implementation of the BBB, part of the group accepted the conditions and moved to the night shelters. Yet, as a response to the 'Bed, Bath and Bread' policy (BBB), the We Are Here movement also organised several demonstrations and re-defined BBB as 'Blah Blah Blah'. Instead of accepting humanitarian emergency shelters, a part of the group rejected the fulfillment of their basic human rights and the confinement of their struggles within these frameworks and refused the choice as offered. As stated in an open letter to the Amsterdam Municipality in response to the BBB plan:

> "We have a lot of questions about the concept of 'night shelters', because it means that you will be on the street again every morning (…) For migrants it means that they are punished every day for their request for help and that night care leads to being displaced, without any prospect of a solution (…). For migrants, only a sleeping place is no progress compared to the situation they are currently in. We prefer to stay in a leaky and cold *Vluchtgarage*, than to be driven into the streets during the day[6]."

Moreover, as a result of the implementation of the BBB, the Municipality argued that housing squats were not a necessity anymore, as basic human rights had been granted and shelter had been provided. This created a divide between those who challenged the politics of borders

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[6]   http://wijzijnhier.org/2014/11/

through illegalised and undesirable forms of action (i.e. squatting houses, direct action, refusing 'human rights' based solutions, rejecting night-shelters) and those who, often advised by humanitarian organisations, or afraid of turning the state against themselves and of jeopardising their asylum applications, diverted from these possibilities of mobilization. Those who refused to be accommodated in emergency shelters and who currently continue to squat are being delegitimised, considered ungrateful, and further criminalised by means of eviction and repression, rather than negotiation. On the other hand, 'humanitarian solutions' towards We Are Here were granted at the price of cooperation with the authorities, providing support only to those migrants who wished to register their presence, to make their irregular status visible to the authorities and to cooperate with their own deportation.

Humanitarian 'remedies' such as the provision of BBB shelter and containment in the former prison were not only offered at the cost of higher monitoring and control, but operated as a strategy to divide, discipline and tame ungovernable forms of action, thereby co-producing, rather than challenging, existing forms of enclosure. As in the cases outlined above, tolerance and humanitarian forms of intervention are inscribed in a relationship of power between benevolent donor and receiver (Fassin 2011; Tickin 2016), and came with conditions and a political cost. Historically, the `Dutch' model of regulated tolerance and compromise aimed at reducing the possibilities for unexpected events, conditioning the circumstances and the conditions under which things happen. *Gedogen,* the Dutch word for the 'regulated tolerance' refers to the mode of negotiation between the government and other social actors, aimed at reaching agreements rather than conflict (Brants 1998; Buruma 2007). Through negotiations and constant dialogue the desired effect of keeping potential 'dangers' close to the government gaze, rather than in opposition to it, thereby exercising forms of control to tame, rather than simply suppress, subversive forces. However, the boundaries between tolerable and unacceptable modes of action can be extended or reduced at any time.

Similarly to the negotiations and tolerance of certain squats, humanitarian shelters operated as a technology of government to contain and channel migrants' struggles within limited fields of acceptability; differentiating between legitimate and illegitimate demands and delineating the codes of conduct of good citizenship for people without citizenship. The promise of rights and forms of humanitarian assistance are often operating as smoke and mirrors; honey traps that confine the possibility for thinking and acting beyond the fields of possibility defined by the state. Those who are excluded from formal access to rights, or from

the possibility of claiming rights, are still expected to formulate demands and claim recognition in the field of institutional politics and in dialogue with the state. These expectations produce disciplined subjects that express their struggles within governable channels, that seek recognition from the state and that as such are forced to comply with the norms and laws of the state that exclude them.

In this context, waiting for recognition, seeking citizenship, and accepting not only the rights, but also the responsibilities and codes of good conduct implied by citizenship, operate as a form of subjection rather than as an act of subversion, despite the claimant's (non)citizenship status. Obedience, discipline and good conduct are the results of these forms of subjection; exercising the power of the state upon oneself even when one's existence is negated, desiring the state despite the violence it exercises on people's lives. As Jack Halberstam (2013) argues in relation to the *undercommons*, in the refusal to be included and integrated within these enclosed fields of politics lies the possibility to "shape desire, re-orient hope, re-imagine possibility and do so separate from the fantasies nestled into rights and responsibility" (12). Accordingly, we need to "listen to the noise we make and refuse the offer we receive to make that noise music" (7).

Conclusions

By creating common and autonomous spaces and homes, migrants' squats resist and oppose state-led social engineering related to the organisation of spatialities, temporalities, affects and lives, while also prefiguring societies and modes of existence that *escape* and *counter* the state and borders regimes. Namely, they open the possibility for radical subjectivities to be formed, which have the capacity to transform the very relations of power in which we constitute ourselves as citizens, and where everyday life is disciplined, domesticated, and confined within specific modalities of experience (Revel 2009; Lazzarato 2009). This way politics of inhabitance are constituted, creating spaces where undocumented migrants' lives are not disciplined nor oppressed, and where border violence is not ameliorated but made visible and contested.

The creation of common squatted spaces outside of state control constitutes radical practices where the struggle is not formulated around demanding basic human rights, but seeks to challenge the very foundations of racialised border regimes and their multiple forms of enclosure, be they securitarian or humanitarian. Rather than relying on assistance and the

fulfillment of pre-defined rights, these struggles entail direct action for seizing freedom of movement, of inhabitance and of existence. When people live their lives in common, care does not come with control and instead constitutes a radical praxis of collective liberation. Therefore, the heterogenous communities that emerge through housing squats not only resist and oppose borders, but produce forms of inhabitance that create conditions to live outside and against the modes of subjections engendered by migration control, citizenship politics, and humanitarian rhetoric and interventions.

Yet, while refusing basic rights and contesting the politics and affective technologies of humanitarian approaches, to some extent parts of the We Are Here movement had to accept government negotiations and compromises (temporary accommodations in former prisons, night shelters as solutions and cooperation on the revision of their status) and adopted more traditional forms of rights-claiming. Humanitarian discourses and forms of tolerance were used as a strategy of cooptation of those squats that constituted informal emergency shelters, while differentiating them from those squats that, instead of containing the 'problem', aimed at creating *cracks* (the latter were considered *political*, instead of humanitarian, and as such further criminalised). Moreover, the provision of shelter, food and basic rights through the BBB, reinforced the operation of border regimes by creating forms of dependency on charity and the benevolence of the state, and enclosed migrants' capacity to articulate collective voices and organise their struggles.

Thus, these technologies operated as a subtle technique of governmentality, coercing people to conduct themselves the way the government wishes them to, governing at a distance, while masking the structural violence of these modes of subjection. However, these tactics did not succeed to contain the struggle in its entirety: many migrants rejected humanitarian solutions, continued to create radical home spaces through squatting, enacting a radical politics, ethics and *praxis* of inhabitance beyond citizenship.

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Endnotes