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“Camping” as a Contemporary Strategy – From Refugee Camps to Gated Communities

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We should not forget that the first camps were built in Europe as spaces for controlling refugees, and that the succession of internment camps—concentration camps—extermination camps represents a perfectly real filiation. (Agamben 2000: 22)

To be sure, the techniques of total exclusion from human togetherness were first developed in the colonies. However, once invented and perfected, they did not cease to come back to Europe; indeed, what the European Christian bourgeois could not truly forgive and forget regarding Hitler was “not the crime of genocide, but the crime of having applied to Europe the colonialist actions” (Bauman 2002: 3). The Nazi’s real crime was to bring the homo sacer to Europe. Today the homo sacer is in the West and is so in many, old and new, ways, in expected and unexpected situations.

This paper deals with the situation of the asylum seeker, who, being “human as such”, is more than anything else an instantiation of the homo sacer. And as Arendt wrote long ago, the “conception of human rights, based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such, broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships – except that they were still human” (quoted in Agamben 1998: 126).

Not much has changed since her time, and the confrontation with the refugee remains in our own time an acid test for politics, a confrontation that incessantly brings into play the “scandal of the human as such” (Dillon 2001: 114). However, the contemporary system into which refugees are enrolled is designed to keep refugees off

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limits through ever-restrictive policies. Thus many are literally immobilized in “non-places” (Augé 1995), e.g. accommodation centers in which they lead a life of “frozen transience” (Bauman 2002: 4) and detention centers into which they are forced without trial.

We focus here on the socio-spatial nature of this extreme form of immobilization, relating it to the concept of the camp. We then move on to discuss some remarkable convergences between refugee spaces and other more respected and more desired contemporary “camps” that effectively problematize the notions of the city and politics.

The Refugee as Exception

As it is well known in contemporary cultural studies, the refugee conveys a gray zone of ambivalence as to his internality/externality vis-à-vis the society, and this provokes a fundamental undecidability. Indeed, just as the ancients could not decide if exile was a punishment or an escape from punishment,² our age cannot decide whether the asylum seeker is the subject of human rights, which we are invited to accept as the most sacred of the sacred in the 21st century, or simply a criminal, a thief, who threatens us with abusing our welfare system. Further, in terms of sociality, the refugee is, like Simmel’s stranger, “both inside and outside”, close to and remote from the context in which he “comes today and stays tomorrow” (see Simmel 1971: 143). And of course belonging to more than one category means ambivalence in as much as the search for distinctions based on either/or is present; on the other hand, adds Bauman, belonging to one side of either/or means order: “Building and keeping order means making friends and enemies, first and foremost, however, it means purging ambivalence” (Bauman 1992: 120).

As the refugee rejects belonging neatly to “us” or “them”, he or she becomes a threat to the image of order, signaling the horrifying impossibility of occupying one pure and distinct position. In this process of ordering the refugee is excluded from politics: whereas the refugee wants to “participate without identification” he is nevertheless forced to “identify without participation”, a process that pushes the refugee further and further away from the political to the anthropological domain along the lines of today’s dominant essentialist politics of difference (Sennett 1996: 193).

This is not, however, the only line of argument we intend to develop here. For all its merits, this image of thought risks missing a crucial point: that modern sovereignty does not work merely according to the logic of a one-way exclusion. The refugee is excluded from the domain of the law but remains subject to it in subtle ways, and thus his life is strictly regulated and restricted by the law. This applies even to the private life of the refugee (e.g. his marriage), even in countries, which champion democracy and human rights.

² To Socrates, “even death as a citizen was more honorable than exile” (quoted in Sennett 1996: 185); to Cicero exile was “not a penalty, but a haven and refuge from penalty” (quoted in Agamben 1998: 110).

In Denmark, for instance, the new immigration law passed during 2002 prevents asylum seekers from marrying during the period in which their applications are processed, which can take up to years. “What the new law means is that young refugees in Denmark are now second class people deprived of the most basic of human rights – that of finding a partner for life – and this is the law. At a time when countries like Poland, Lithuania and the Czech Republic are trying to pass strict tests on human rights to join the European Union, a member state is creating laws that would exclude them instantly, if they happened to be from east of Berlin” (Smith 2002).

The refugee is, in other words, radically internal to the processes of ordering, and, we will argue that ordering does not only seek to “purge” the ambivalence of the refugee but emerges and expands in a relation to this ambivalence. What is necessary is identify the mechanisms behind this relation, or, behind the processes of what Agamben (1998) has called “exclusionary inclusion”. The refugee is included while being excluded and excluded while being included. This zone of indistinction between inclusion and exclusion, in which the life of the refugee borders on the life of the homo sacer, is also the very place of sovereignty, which is why Agamben can provokingly assert that “[t]he fundamental categorical pair of Western politics is not that of friend/enemy but that of bare life / political existence, *zoē* / *bios*, exclusion / inclusion” (Agamben 1998: 8).

The Netherlands, the end of August 2002: a politician from the List of Pim Fortyn, Hilbrand Nawyn, the former head of the Dutch Immigration Office and now the minister for asylum affairs, brought up a proposal, which is, in spite of all its populist triviality, revealing as to the very kernel of the contemporary migration debate. According to Nawyn, those foreigners who already have acquired Dutch citizenship should, if they commit crimes, be denaturalized and denationalized so that they can be sent back to their “home” countries as punishment. Putting aside the question of what then will happen to the Dutch citizens who commit crimes, what is significant here is not only that this idea is not new. Certainly, since the World War I, many European states passed laws allowing denaturalization of their own citizens, and in this respect one should not forget that “[o]ne of the few rules the Nazis constantly obeyed throughout the course of the ‘final solution’ was that Jews and Gypsies could be sent to extermination camps only having been fully denaturalized” (Agamben 2000: 18). What is equally notable in Nawyn’s gesture is its endeavor to establishing a sovereign exception through suspending the law and abandoning the citizen, which is what deserves theoretical scrutiny.

Foucault, and later Deleuze and Guattari, had observed that the foundation of sovereignty is normalizing or capturing the outside – “The law of the State is ... that of interior and exterior. The State is sovereignty. But sovereignty only reigns over what is capable of internalizing” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 360). Sovereign power internalizes excess through interdiction and constructs a social space, an interiority, which only lines of flight can “break through”. That is, in this perspective, the refugee represents the nomadic excess that the State seeks to capture and normalize through panoptic confinement, e.g. in refugee camps. However, Agamben gives a significant

twist to such an analysis, complementing it with the concept of “indistinction”. The launching of the “state of exception” plays a crucial role in this respect. For in the state of exception

what is outside is included not simply by means of an interdiction or an internment, but rather by means of the suspension of the juridical order’s validity – by letting the juridical order, that is, withdraw from the exception and abandon it. The exception does not subtract itself from the rule; rather, the rule, suspending itself, gives rise to the exception and, maintaining itself in relation to the exception, first constitutes itself as a rule. The particular ‘force’ of law consists in this capacity of law to maintain itself in relation to an exteriority. (Agamben 1998: 18)

The origin of sovereignty is the state of exception, the ban: “not application but Abandonment” of subjects to a condition of bare life, stripping them of their political rights (Agamben 1998: 29; Edkins 2000: 5). Nawÿn wants to abandon the “criminal” citizens with foreign origins to: what? It is the answer to this question that is tricky in our context for the ban involves not a simple exclusion but an inclusion by exclusion in the sense that what is excluded or abandoned at the margins of politics, of the polis, maintains its relation to the law as its suspension. Nawÿn’s secret appeal is thus to a sovereignty, which recognizes the refugee as its true subject. The refugee is abandoned only to be included in the domain of power.

Thus one must not be deceived here by the fact that Nawÿn wants to send the refugee “home”. The ban is a kind of relation with no positive content, “the simple form of relation with the nonrelational. In this sense, the ban is identical with the limit form of relation” (Agamben 1998: 29) and, therefore, the refugee with a “limit concept” (Agamben 2000: 23). According to the diagram of sovereign exception, “the law applies to him in longer applying, and holds him in its ban in abandoning him outside itself” (Agamben 1998: 50).

As Badiou observed, power emerges not as an expression of the social bond but as an untying; Agamben adds to this that the social bond itself has the form of exception, or, untying, in which an exclusionary inclusion politicizes the subject, in our case the refugee. “The sovereign tie is more originary than the tie of the positive rule or the tie of the social pact, but the sovereign tie is in truth only an untying” (Agamben 1998: 90).

Then, every time the refugee is “excluded”, we should be looking for the inclusive gesture that follows it, which is part and parcel of the social bond between “us” and “them”. For untying is not merely exclusion and for it at once excludes bare life of the refugee as its outside and captures it within the realm of the law, the sovereign decision is a kind of localization that does not distinguish between inside and outside “but instead traces a threshold (the state of exception) between the two” (Agamben 1998: 19).³ The refugee inhabits this zone of indistinction.

³ “Exception” etymologically comes from the Latin *ex-capere*, “taken outside”, and it does not mean a simple exclusion (Agamben 1998: 18).

Enter the camp Woomera, the infamous detention center in Australia. A detainee says: “when we came first to Woomera, we didn’t believe we were in Australia. ... Because the things that happened – they wouldn’t happen in Australia. It must be another country” (quoted in Campbell 2002: 26). “Woomera *is* another country”, adds Campbell, commenting on his interview, but the point is rather that Woomera, established and run by Australian authorities alone, is effectively a frustrating zone of indistinction between the inside (law) and outside (unlaw), a space, in which the link between localization and order breaks down, a space that can materialize only when exception becomes the rule. It is the location of the unlaw within law in the form of an exception that turns Woomera into an unbounded space. Hence the confusion whether it is in or outside Australia. Woomera can emerge only on the basis of an indistinction between the inside and the outside; Woomera is and is not outside Australia, at once. The paradox here consists of sovereign power’s being both inside and outside the juridical order at the same time, a situation in which the experience becomes “the law is outside itself”, or, “nothing is outside the law” (Agamben 1998: 15).

When the frustrating experience of indistinction abounds in open-ended incarceration, the asylum seekers turn desperate in Woomera, which the staff call a “war zone”, and collapse in hopeless acts of protest (e.g. hunger strikes, slashing themselves, hanging themselves from the razor wire, swallowing shampoo and sleeping pill cocktails, or digging their own graves...). 50 of them broke out the camp in 2002, most have been captured: “but they are unlikely to be prosecuted or jailed – if they were, they would have visiting rights and a definite length of imprisonment, luxuries denied them as asylum seekers inside Woomera” (Campbell 2002: 27).

The detainees are legally abandoned outside the legal system through exceptional practices that hold them under their ban. The detention center is a “hybrid” in which the distinction between the legality and illegality of what happens in it does not make sense. Its essence is the materialization of the state of exception, constituting a space topologically different from that of mere enclosure, e.g. a prison, for it at once belongs to the inside and the outside of the normal order (Agamben 1998: 169). It is the reason why the inmates of Woomera can find the panopticon luxurious compared to their camp. Foucault had examined the prison as the paradigmatic political space of modernity, leaving the camp out of consideration, but the prison is not a space of indistinction that is “outside” as well as inside the normal order, which is also why it is impossible to reduce the logic of the camp to the panoptic logic (Agamben 1998: 20). Only in this sense Woomera *is* outside Australia.

Denmark, Hanstholm Refugee Center, July 2002. In the center, the asylum seekers have some rather simple daily responsibilities, e.g. cleaning own rooms and the immediate environs, cooking, etc., and they do not, legally, have to participate in other activities. However, the Municipality of Hanstholm illegally stops paying the support payments, which the refugees are legally entitled to, as a penalty when some refugees refuse participating in Danish language classes. Consequently, the asylum seekers lodge a complaint, and when the media are involved, the Danish Parliament asks

Bertel Haarder, the Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, for an explanation of the juridical practice in the field.

Haarder's answer is not insignificant. He writes that after the illegal practice mentioned above took place the Danish Home Office (Udlændingestyrelsen) has "clarified" for the Municipality of Hanstholm that the responsibilities of the refugees do not include participation in language classes, and that municipalities cannot legally take action in such cases. Haarder goes on to point out that the Municipality of Hanstholm has after this clarification paid the involved refugees their support payments back. That is, not knowing the law turns out to be an excuse for the municipality and "paying back" becomes resolution – curtains! There is more, however, and Haarder gives to the event a very interesting twist precisely at this point:

I can add that the government has established a working group with the aim of strengthening the initiatives of activation and education in asylum centers. Among other things the working group aims at evaluating the valid rules in this field. ... In my opinion the system of support payment and of its refusal should from now on work smoothly. I have therefore asked the working group to consider more closely whether in future the operators [of the asylum centers] should be able to take decisions on refusing to make support payments to refugees without any involvement of the Home Office [Udlændingestyrelsen]. (Haarder, Udvalget for Udlændinge- og Integrationspolitik, 2. samling, Alm. del - bilag 167; our translation)

Which is effectively to say that instead of taking action against the illegal practice, the minister finds it more to the point to change the law. A move, which also pushes the asylum centers into the territory of vigilantism, a paradoxical territory that can be defined neither as a situation of fact nor as a situation of right. Which is "the ultimate meaning of the paradox that Schmitt formulates when he writes that the sovereign decision 'proves itself not to need law to create the law.'" (Agamben 1998: 19). Haarder does not, so it seems, need the law to create the law.

The idea of exception permeates almost every aspect of refugee life. For instance, recently, it was revealed that the French voucher company, Sodexho, running a new detention center near Heathrow airport in the UK, is supported by the British government to pay refugees 34p an hour for cleaning and cooking, less than one tenth of the British minimum wage. This procedure was made possible by the logic of exception: that "the legal obligation to pay the minimum wage has been waived for UK Detention Services" (Bright 2001). In this way the company would save millions in staff costs by paying about £12 a week to asylum seekers, which is less than one tenth of the British minimum wage, and which, reminiscent of forced labor camps and their economy of exception, e.g. "slave labor" schemes, would contribute to the creation of an underclass of refugees without the same rights as citizens.

And last but not the least, the exception lasts very long time. Even when the asylum seeker is successful to cross the indiscriminating barrier of "refuse and return" policies and attains the status of refugee, starting to lead a "normal life", his life remains subject to exceptions. Here is another example, from Danish psychiatry. Facts: a middle-aged man from the Middle East comes to Denmark with his two eldest children of 5 and 7 years of age, and gets asylum. His wife and the youngest child are left in the

home country. He manages life in Denmark relatively well, finds a job, and can take care of his children. He gets his wife to Denmark after a long waiting time, meanwhile repressing, according to the psychologist we interviewed, the fact that his marriage had been problematical in the past. At this stage he starts showing symptoms of depression, anxiety and apathy, although it was though unclear to the psychologist whether these were signs of post-traumatic stress disorder following war, violence and refuge; he became increasingly paranoid, which is a usual symptom of traumatic experiences. When the wife arrives, the marriage shatters. All his hopes had been based invested in re-establishing the marriage, and when it is not realized, he cannot bear the frustration, becomes aggressive, threatening and sometimes violent. He is taken to the court for violence. They get a divorce. The wife moves out with the three children and it is forbidden for him to contact the ex-wife and the children with the consequence that for some years he totally loses contact with them, gets more and more lonely, and increasingly psychotic, with hallucinations he experiences as demons which will punish him for his wrongs - he blames himself for loosing contact with his children.

Normally, that is, if this were a Danish family with “problems”, says the psychologist, the authorities would try to make sure that there are arrangements so that the father and the children can keep in touch. In this case, however, the authorities did literally nothing to this end but have threatened him with compulsory internment all the times he attempted to contact his children. In other words, the normal rules, procedures and the ethical considerations were suspended. Instead, the authorities have treated the man automatically as guilty. Indeed, our interviewee suggests that the man came to function as an easy target for the latent aggression and anxiety, which the personnel and the authorities bear in relation to the “evil, inhuman, and violent, other”: the immigrants in Denmark.

As basic norms are sat in relief (e.g. as psychiatrist one is supposed to believe in what the patient says as long as the opposite is proved) and in this case there emerged an opposite procedure. The patient was hit twice: as mentally ill and as “ethnically different”. It is significant that the psychiatrists did not try to establish the necessary documents which can contribute to the diagnosis (e.g. the documents from the refugee center might have counted in the direction of post-traumatic pain). Such is life as an “exceptional” figure even when you come out of the asylum center. Like the razor wire of the camp, the interval between diagnosis and the juridical consequences delimits an extratemporal and extraterritorial threshold in which the refugee is separated from normal scientific/juridical process and abandoned to an extreme misfortune, that of the homo sacer.

The Refugee as *Homo Sacer*

Having left the origin, stripped of his former identities, the refugee is socially a “zombie” whose spectral past survives, haunting his nights and turning into handicaps in a world in which his symbolic capital does no longer count, and whose present takes place in a condition of “social nakedness” characterized by the lack of social definition, rights and responsibilities (Bauman 2002b: 6). Or, a werewolf: neither a

beast nor a man, an outlaw that can be exposed to violence without facing legal sanctions (Agamben 1998: 104-105). “They are dealing with us as animals, not as human beings”, says the detainee in Woomera (quoted in Campbell 2002: 26).

In the detention center the human and the inhuman enter into a zone of indistinction, and the detainees can be subjected to all sorts of physical and symbolic violence without legal consequences. Banned and excluded from the city, the werewolf is forced to survive in the forest. Banned and excluded from the society, the detainee is forced to survive in an open-ended period of incarceration, sealed off beyond the scrutiny of the very best zoom lens. It is important, however, to bear in mind that this “state of nature” does not exist prior to civilization but is established through the ban, just as it does not exist outside the society but is radically internal to it:

The state of nature is not a real epoch chronologically prior to the foundation of the City but a principle internal to the City, which appears at the moment the City is considered tanquam dissoluta, ‘as if it were dissolved’ (in this sense, therefore, the state of nature is something like a state of exception). Accordingly, when Hobbes founds sovereignty by means of a reference to the state in which ‘man is a wolf to men’, homo hominis lupus, in the word ‘wolf’ (lupus) we ought to hear an echo of the wargus and the caput lupinem of the laws of Edward the Confessor: at issue is not simply fera bestia and natural life but rather a zone of indistinction between the human and the animal, a werewolf, a man who is transformed into a wolf and a wolf who is transformed into a man – in other words, a bandit, a homo sacer. Far from being a prejudicial condition that is indifferent to the law of the city, the Hobbesian state of nature is the exception and the threshold that constitutes and dwells within it. (Agamben 1998: 105-106)

“A bandit”. Clinging to high speed trains, attempting at to cross the channel in rowing boats, hiding among the refrigerated fruit and vegetables in long distance lorries – and all that to become the bandit against whom affluent people would feel no political or moral obligation. One of the relevant features of the contemporary discourse is, indeed, the criminalization of the asylum seeker. It is the very equation of the bandit and the refugee that makes it possible to locate the refugee in a zone of indistinction, in which the refugee is excluded from the domain of moral responsibility and exposed to violence both from the civil society and the state without legal consequences.

Thus, Udo Voigt, the leader of the National Democratic Party in Germany, could say that attacks on refugees are “a responsibility of the established parties who continue to allow uncontrolled flows of foreigners” (White & Travis 2002). Here “foreigners” stand in for the mobile evil, the bandit, whose “flows” destabilize the established society. The bandit/refugee steals our wealth and enjoys in excessive, “uncontrolled” ways, and the source of it all is our enjoyment, our wealth. Thus, the secretary of home office, David Blunkett, can describe asylum seekers as “swamping” British medical services and schools (White & Travis 2002).

Thus, the Danish prime minister Anders F. Rasmussen could promise in his election campaign a controversial immigration and asylum ministry, proposing that newcomers must wait seven years before they can access the Danish welfare system: “That will be a way to protect our welfare” (quoted in Osborn 2001). The refugee is someone who holds “our” wealth under threat, promising no more than uncertainty, insecurity and unsafety, someone against whom “we” are determined to defend our fortress, whatever

shape it has. It is through this figure – the “theft of enjoyment” – the figure of the refugee as the other borders on that of the bandit.

Why does the Other remain Other? What is the cause of our hatred of him? ... It is hatred of the enjoyment in the Other. This would be the most general formula of the modern racism we are witnessing today: a hatred of the particular way the Other enjoys the Other as he who essentially steals my own enjoyment. (Jacques-Alain Miller, quoted in Žižek 1993: 203)

As a bandit the refugee is not simply excluded from the law in an indifferent manner but rather abandoned by it, that is, rendered vulnerable on a threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinct. “It is literally not possible to say whether the one who has been banned is outside or inside the juridical order” (Agamben 1998: 28-29). He is at once at the mercy of the juridical context in which he seeks asylum and exposed to any kind of (cultural, social, religious, political, economic...) threat and violence, at once dwelling paradoxically within and outside.

Now it is possible to understand the semantic ambiguity ... in which ‘banned’ in Romance languages originally meant both ‘at the mercy of’ and ‘out of free will, freely,’ both ‘excluded, banned’ and ‘open to all, free.’ The ban is the force of simultaneous attraction and repulsion that ties together the two poles of the sovereign exception: bare life and power, homo sacer and the sovereign. Because of this alone can the ban signify both the insignia of sovereignty ... and the expulsion from the community. (Agamben 1998: 110-111)

If the state of nature is “the being-in-potentiality of the law”, and if it is the sovereign act that establishes this “ground zero” of the social through the state of exception (Agamben 1998: 29, 35-6), then exception (the ban) is “the originary structure in which law refers to life and includes it in itself by suspending it” (Agamben 1998: 28). The production of untying is bare life (*zoē*), life stripped of political rights and thus located outside the polis. Thus, if the formal structure of sovereignty is untying, or, exception, its substantial figure is the homo sacer. In other words, the *homo sacer* and the sovereign are two symmetrical figures: “the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially *hominess sacri*, and *homo sacer* is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns” (Agamben 1998: 84). The homo sacer is inscribed in a zone of indistinction situated between the *zoē*, the natural life common to humans, Gods and animals, and the *bios* which is the life proper to humans (Agamben 1998: 1). Being neither human nor divine, the life of the homo sacer belongs to humans in so far as it cannot be sacrificed and does not belong to it in so far as it can be killed without the commission of homicide (Agamben 1998: 71-74, 81-85).

However, the “sacred” dimension of the *homo sacer* must not be located within the religious domain. The sacred in Bataille’s sense, for instance, involves the distinction between the sacrificeable and unsacrificeable, a principle “according to which *what is useful* is destined to sacrifice” (Bataille 1997: 218). In stark contrast to this interpretation of the sacred, in modernity “the meaning of the term ‘sacred’ continues the semantic history of *homo sacer* and not that of sacrifice. ... What confronts us today is a life that as such is exposed to a violence without precedent precisely in the most profane and banal ways” (Agamben 1998: 114).

Homo sacer can be treated violently but not in the form of religious sacrifice; he “can be killed but not sacrificed” (Agamben 1998: 18, 111-5). The bare life of the homo sacer, in other words, belongs to the domain of (bio)politics, not religion, and “from the point of view of sovereignty only bare life is authentically political” (Agamben 1998: 106). Which, in fact, illuminates the situation of the asylum seeker, too; as homo sacer, the asylum seeker is a political figure par excellence.

Contrary to our habit of considering the refugee as an outsider to the usual drill of politics, from the point of power he is an authentically political figure. Yet, the very organizations such as Red Cross, which to a decisive extent govern refugees’ lives in the West, take “human rights” as their main referent and represent themselves outside or above politics. This seemingly paradoxical situation becomes meaningful only in the context of bio-politics, and only when the refugee is considered as homo sacer, the privileged negative referent of biopolitics.

Indeed, it is time to displace the misunderstanding that rights of the refugee are eternal, metajuridical values in line with some eternal ethical principles and to focus on how they represent the originary figure of the inscription of bare life in relations of power (Agamben 1998: 127). Breaking the continuity between man and citizen, as homo sacer, the refugee brings to light the real condition of sovereignty and the contradictory character of the attempts by committees and organizations dealing with the refugee’s “human rights” and insist that their actions are only humanitarian and not political:

The separation between humanitarianism and politics that we are experiencing today is the extreme phase of the separation of the rights of man from the rights of the citizen. In the final analysis, however, humanitarian organizations – which today are more and more supported by international commissions – can only grasp human life in the figure of bare or sacred life, and therefore, despite themselves, maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight. (Agamben 1998: 133)

The life of the refugee is made into an object of consideration, help or protection solely as homo sacer, and the “humanitarianism” needs the same bare life which power feeds upon. Thus Žižek is fully justified when he introduces the argument that:

Today’s homo sacer is the privileged object of the humanitarian biopolitics – it is the one who is deprived of his full humanity through the very patronizing way of being taken care of. One should therefore assume the paradox that concentration camps and refugee camps for the delivery of humanitarian aid are the two faces, ‘human’ and ‘inhuman,’ of the same socio-logical formal matrix. In both cases, the cruel joke from Lubitch’s To Be Or Not To Be applies: when asked about the German concentration camps in the occupied Poland, the “concentration camp Erhardt” snaps back “We do the concentrating, and the Poles do the camping.” In both cases, the population is reduced to an object of biopolitics. It is thus not enough to enumerate the list of the figures of today’s homo sacer: les sans papiers in France, the inhabitants of the favelas in Brasil, the African-American ghettos in the US, etc.etc. It is absolutely crucial to supplement this list with the humanitarian side. (Žižek 2002: 91-92)

In as much as political events are doubled-sided, what the moral call of the organizations dealing with refugees – what is at stake is life itself – leads to is the transformation of “politics into a question of generic life, life in all its generality”

(Hardt & Negri 2000: 313). Yet, once the fundamental referent becomes bare life, political distinctions (Right/Left, private/public, liberalism/totalitarianism etc.) disappear in a zone of indistinction (Agamben 1998: 122). The growth of this gray zone is, in fact, the mechanism behind what Rancière has called “post-politics” (Žižek 1999: 198).

Contemporary politics of asylum is post-political in the sense that it is based on a disavowal and foreclosure of real political issues surrounding the phenomenon. The “society” depicted by post-politics of asylum is global but not universal. Post-politics of asylum often acknowledges the exclusionary outcome of false universality (e.g. “the rights of man” are not universal, look at the situation of the refugees) and even seeks to identify specific problems of refugees with a view to rectifying the wrongs. What it precludes, however, is the gesture of politicization proper, which requires nothing less than the metaphoric universalization of particular demands, aiming at the restructuring of the social space rather than negotiation of particular interests (Žižek 1999: 204-208). The paradox is that without the process of political litigation of a particular that stands in for the universal, there is no universal proper (Žižek 1999: 201). And this paradox can be comprehended only if the inherently antagonistic character of universality itself is fully assumed.

The leftist political gesture par excellence ... is ... thus to question the concrete existing universal order in behalf of its symptom, of the part which, although inherent to the existing universal order, has no ‘proper place’ within it (say, illegal immigrants or the homeless in our societies). This procedure of identifying with the symptom is the exact and necessary obverse of the standard critico-ideological move of recognizing a particular content behind some abstract universal notion, that is, denouncing neutral universality as false (‘the “man” of human rights is actually the white male property-owner...’): one ... identifies with the point of inherent exception/ exclusion, the ‘abject,’ of the concrete positive order, as the only point of true universality (Žižek 1999: 224)

In our case, one says: “we are all refugees”, a political gesture that necessitates identifying universality with the point of exception, with the “extimate” element (the refugee), produced by the dominant ideology itself.

Any political event, as Badiou has shown, fits the structure of exception. If an event is an undecidable element of a situation (both inside and outside), it cannot but appear as an excrescence from the point of view of the situation, which means that there will always be a lack of communication between membership and inclusion in a situation. “The exception expresses precisely this impossibility of a system’s making inclusion coincide with membership, its reducing all its parts to unity (Agamben 1998: 25). Similarly in our case, what cannot be included in the situation (the refugee) is included in the form of exception. Thus exception introduces a threshold of indistinction between singularity (presentation without representation, which, in Badiou’s theory, occurs when a term is a member of a set without being included) and excrescence (representation without presentation, which occurs when a term is included in a situation without being its member). The exception cannot be included in the whole of which it is a member but also cannot be a member of the group in which it is included (Agamben 1998: 24-5).

The Refugee Camp as a Non-place

On the other hand, most refugee spaces, both more “open” ones (e.g. interchangeably called refugee camps, accommodation centers, or, reception centers) and “closed”, prison-like structures (e.g. detention centers) are instantiations of what Augé called “non-places”: they do not integrate other places, meanings, traditions and sacrificial, ritual moments but remain, due to a lack of characterization, non-symbolized and abstract spaces (see Augé 1995: 82). As non-places, most refugee spaces are spaces of indistinction: “a person entering the space of non-place is relieved of his usual determinants” (Augé 1995: 103).

Refugee camps are often located outside cities, in suburbia or in rural areas, as a rule in demonstratively peripheral sites, the contemporary strategy behind which is the dispersal of the asylum seekers. As a Home Office press release (14 May 2002) tells, for instance, the new British asylum accommodation centers are all planned on former military sites in rural areas isolated from amenities and cultural facilities concentrated in cities. Needless to say, because it will be difficult for asylum seekers to afford transport on their small support payments, it is most likely that they will spend most of their time confined to the centers, and, coupled with the size of each center (750 places each), this might become a “recipe for frustration and tension within the centers and between asylum seekers and the existing local communities” (Cambridgeshire Against Refugee Detention 2002: 2). Yet the trouble is, the refugees do not have a choice. For instance in Newton, a local community in the UK in which a new accommodation center is planned:

Local residents are fuming. ‘The site is entirely unsuitable for this type of development because the infrastructure in the area couldn’t cope with it,’ says Geary, chair of the Newton Action Group which is leading opposition to the plans. Those who accuse the protesters of being nimbys (not in my backyard) have a point. Asylum seekers, after all, must live somewhere.... [But local residents of Newton] have every right to be annoyed at the proposals ... [which] will have a huge impact on their lives. And while they have been invited to Home Office presentations explaining how the centre will work, none of the consultation initially promised by the home secretary has materialized. None the less the far greater outrage has been committed against asylum seekers. After all, refugees should be able to live wherever they wish – including Newton. The truth is, given the choice, few would want to. The trouble is they won’t be given the choice. (Younge 2002)

Basic to the strategy of dispersal are economic considerations (e.g. cheaper ground) and social concerns against the formation of “refugee ghettos” in metropolitan and urban centers. However, the practice of dispersal itself leads to ghetto formations in isolated locations. In such locations they come to look like islands, or, like “neutral cities” (Sennett 1990), characterized by a sterilized, mono-functional enclosure: contact with the outer world is physically minimized behind the fences, which yield no permission to touch the outer world, resulting in the complete isolation of the refugee from public life.

“There is nothing human beings fear more than being touched by something unknown. ... Everywhere human beings draw back from the touching of the stranger” (Canetti 1996: 1; our translation). In contemporary politics of asylum, the refugee invokes this fear and the related feeling of uncertainty, and the refugee camps are perfect

materializations of a “fear of touching” made obvious by their very architectural design, their anti-urban ideal and their idealization of the sterile as an image of order. Indeed, the refugee camp can be considered as, to use Sennett’s (1994) apt metaphor, an “urban condom”.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the strategies of dispersion directly aim at not integrating asylum seekers, neither in local context, labor market, nor in schools, and keeping them in a waiting position in sites of confinement until they acquire the status of the refugee and thus it is clarified whether they are going to be sent “home” or not. Indeed, from the systemic point of view refugees embody those people who are excluded from several function systems at once and thus whose lives are reduced to bare life; in a Luhmann’s words: “bodies which have to survive somehow by their own, and not so much as a kind of parts, or kind of persons used for whatever purpose in function systems” (Luhmann 1994: 4). Thus, the most basic four characteristics of camp life consists of: living on small amounts of support payments or even food vouchers with no cash allowance, which pushes the asylum seeker out of the normal functioning of the economic system; not to be allowed to work; living according to governments’ choice of residency; and minimum geographical mobility.

In short, the life of the asylum seeker is marked by an extreme isolation; not only physically but also socio-economically and culturally. His social contacts often depend on the good will of (especially the voluntary) staff in the camps. An important factor in this context is of course the barrier of language, reducing the asylum seeker’s capacity to participate in civic activities, including educational and recreational activities, to the limited extent they exist. Further, there is the economic barrier: transportation to the closest cities, for instance, or all other civic activities cost more than the asylum can afford, which reduces the mobility of the asylum seeker to short-distance movements. For those who do not have own means there is no possibility of work except “black work”, which, apart from the inequalities related to it and difficulties of finding it in isolated or “dispersed” sites, can simply be a cause to be sent from the refugee center to the detention center. Not surprisingly, therefore, as a combination of such factors the most popular refugee camps among refugees themselves are those located in or near metropolitan areas, even in case they are often in considerably worse off physical condition.

The only possibility for the asylum seeker to avoid forced residency in a refugee center, and it is a possibility that emerges only in some countries once the reception period is over, is to apply for permission to reside outside. In Sweden, the UK, France, the Netherlands, for instance, asylum seekers are entitled to keep a minimum amount of their support payments if they can find a residence outside the camps themselves, and they can use the activation and educational offers. In countries such as Denmark and Austria they loose their rights to receive support payments, to participate in activation schemes and to use the health system, if they choose not to live in the camps. Germany is even more restrictive: here, refugees have to live in the refugee camps chosen for them by the authorities, and have to ask for written permission when

they wish to travel more than a few kilometers away from the centers (ECRE 2002: 33). One step further is Australia, where all asylum seekers are detained.

As mobility today is fast becoming a determining factor of social change and social stratification, and as the distinction between *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* consequently tends to be displaced onto a new distinction between the mobile and the sedentary (see for example Bauman 2000), the asylum seeker is held in a condition of immobility. Distances disappear and the globe shrinks for the mobile, but, as Bhabha says, “for the displaced or the dispossessed, the migrant or the refugee, no distance is more awesome than the few feet across borders” (quoted in Graham & Marvin 2001: 219).

Across the borders, the immobility persists in the camps. Not only in the geographical sense but also in terms of sociality and objects that hold it together. The regulation of the support payments and residencies, for instance, fix refugees geographically in a world of flows, the paradox being that, whereas network mobility is reshaping the relationship between physical and social proximity today, the refugee’s lives remain indexed to an image of sociality that demands both physical and social proximity, despite the fact that they are people on the move.

It is significant in this context that the refugee camps are an integral part, a product and manifestation of processes of contemporary globalization as is Augé’s non-places. In terms of global mobility, refugee non-places have in common several significant characteristics. First, they are places in which exception becomes the rule. Thus the German “Durchgangslager” or “Aufganglager”, for instance, can grant admittance or rejection to refugees without the intervention of the ordinary citizenship rights. Second, and akin to the mobile character of the refugee identity itself, such spaces are in general close to central transportation nodes and borders and thus directly involve mobility in their regulatory matrix (see Verstrate 2001). Thus, most often, the police can immediately send refugees back, transportation companies are obliged to check if people have visas, and so on.

It is therefore not a coincidence that refugee camps mirror the contemporary technologies of *speed* (that make it possible to get rid of the refugee as soon as possible), *escape* (from political publicity) and *passivity* (neutralizing the refugee as stranger), all of which are concepts Sennett (1994) uses in characterizing modern urban design. And third, such places are organized around a “pre-emptive” logic of risk management, with the police seeking to operate *before* potential problems occur, e.g. before the refugees enter the country. The aim is, in a sense, to control eventualities, before the “event” takes place, turning the “exclusion” of the refugee into a pre-emptive action.

However, it is ironic, if not tragic, that although the refugee is seen an insignia of displacement, and although his routes are densely controlled by infrastructures of mobility, his own life in the camp can only be described as immobility. The camp is officially a transitory, so to say, an “exceptional” space, in which the refugee is

supposed to spend only a limited amount of time. Yet, everywhere the refugee camp has today become a permanent location in which the asylum seekers can easily spend years. Often, the transient condition of the refugee extends indefinitely, becoming an irrevocable and permanent situation, freezing into non-negotiable, rigid structures:

Refugee camps boast a new quality: a ‘frozen transience’, an on-going, lasting state of temporariness, a duration patched together of moments none of which is lived through as an element of, and a contribution to, perpetuity. For the inmates of a refugee camp, the prospect of long-term sequels and consequences is not part of the experience. The inmates of refugee camps live, literally, from day to day – and the contents of life are unaffected by the knowledge that days combine into months and years. Like in prisons and ‘hyper-ghettos’ scrutinized by Loïc Wacquant [2001], camped refugees ‘learn to live, or rather survive [(sur)vivre] from day to day in the immediacy of the moment, bathing in... the despair brewing inside the walls’. (Bauman 2002b: 4)

This “transient permanency” of the camp is not merely a matter of coincidence but has to do with the very logic of the camp, which emerges when the exception becomes the rule. The extreme form of such immobility that can materialize for the asylum seeker is the detention center. Asylum seekers are sent to detention centers in three different situations. First, for clarification of their identities and travel routes but especially when asylum applications are refused. In French international airports, for example, this is the case “during the four days foreigners may be kept in the zone d’attente before the intervention of French judicial authorities” (Agamben 2000: 42).

Second, Australia, for instance, have a policy of mandatory detention and, assuming that they are all “bogus” until proven genuine, that is, until they “deserve” the status refugee, detains every asylum seeker, in a system also called the “pacific solution”: dumping about 400 people in dying desert settlements such as Woomera, in which about 20 inmates a week attempt suicide (see Campbell 2002), and, doing everything to even deter them from attempting to claim asylum.

And third, the refugees who have committed crimes (e.g. by working in “black” jobs, or by being violent or threatening against the camp staff) can be “imprisoned” until their applications are processed. It is significant that in most Western countries theft around £50 by an asylum seeker can result in detention. And regarding what counts as “threatening” behavior, the evaluation of what is threatening often depends on the personal and arbitrary tolerance threshold of the staff. Many refugee centers operate with “zero-tolerance” policies so that asylum seekers can be sent to detention centers even for relatively small crimes.

As a whole, the atmosphere of the detention center is characterized by daily in and out moving, latent threats of violence, which in periods take the form of violence and in some case causes deaths, and considerably frequent episodes than in ordinary refugee camps. Besides the constant presence of the police strengthens the image of prison that

characterizes the detention centers. Also, the degree to which the detention center is gated and prohibited as a place is part of this image.⁴

As a consequence, the violations of human rights abound. In one of the many cases, for example, “the detainee was handcuffed, shackled, placed in a windowless room for six days, denied medical treatment and held in detention for more than twelve months in 1996 and 1997” (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2002: 2). Indefinite imprisonment, not being told of one’s rights properly, delays in responses to requests for legal assistance, being held in isolation from other parts of the detention center, the use of force, and poor general conditions regarding food, medical services, privacy, sleeping arrangements, the level of personal security, and education and recreation facilities: these are the most common characteristics of life in most detention center all over the world.

What is most significant in this respect is the increased use of forced detention in relation to people who are not suspects of any crime, and held without trial, sometimes for very long periods, in which normality is suspended and in which naked life and political life, the private and the public, enter a zone of indeterminacy. When Blair’s government came to power in 1997, for instance, around 700 people were imprisoned in detention centers at any one time in the UK; the figure is today around 1800; and the government promises to increase the numbers to 4000 with the new detention centers called “removals centres”:

The government claims that they are for ‘failed’ asylum seekers who will be held for a few days prior to deportation. On past experience this seems unlikely – according to recent government statistics only 4% of detainees were awaiting imminent removal action, with some 60% not even having received an initial decision on their asylum applications, and most of the rest awaiting the results of appeals – and many detainees have been held for months or even years. (Cambridgeshire Against Refugee Detention 2002: 5)

Denmark: Sandholmslejren, or, the camp Sandholm. In number 17 two women reside: N. Jamshidi and H. Elmess, respectively from Iran and Libanon. They are there not because they have committed crimes but because their asylum applications are rejected and they are waiting to be sent home. Jamshidi says she is “getting crazy of sitting here” – she is afraid of going back and eventually risking her life in a country she has escaped from. And the same frustration again:

I feel nothing any more. No hope. No hunger. I just want some peace. Formerly I cried all the time, I missed my freedom, I missed my children, now I am just unconcerned ... Eating time, shout the personnel at 12. Eating time, they shout again at 17. At 22 we go to bed. It is the same every single day. I can just as well go back to Lebanon and get killed. Inside I am already dead ... I am nothing.

Is it, one wonders, so difficult for the authorities to recognize the voice of the *Muselman* here. European Council Torture Committee visited the camp Sandholm in 2002 and expressed its concern regarding people held in the camp without trial, which

⁴ Thus, in the entrance of a detention center in Britain it reads: “This is a prohibited place within the meaning of the official secrets act. Unauthorised persons entering the area may be arrested and prosecuted” (see www.srcf.ucam.org/card/photos).

is in conflict with UN’s principles of human rights. Yet, the Danish authorities explained the situation by emphasizing that the problem is one of capacity, adding that they “predict” that “tightening the immigration rules will in future deter many foreigners from coming to Denmark” so that this problem will be solved by itself!

In the camp, eighteen men and six women share a living room, a bathroom and a toilet. The women residents complain that they are victimized also by the men in the camp: not only that the sexual division of labor regarding cleaning and so on does not favor the women in the camp; also “especially women with no money will do anything to earn some money”. None the less, the women are quick to add that the worst is the “uncertainty” they constantly feel, especially regarding their freedom: they have absolutely no idea how long time they will be going to bed to dream the same dreams only to wake up to the same mornings. The staff can accept in the interview that “it is crazy, you know, to jail people who have not committed crimes”. And they append: “luckily it is not us who is to decide whether they are going to get asylum” (all the quotation above are from Sørensen 2002; our translations).

It is interesting to observe here how distanced the staff are in relation to something going on in front of their eyes, fully externalizing their own responsibility to heteronomous “authorities” as if, reminiscent of Hegel’s “beautiful souls”, they were themselves not part and parcel of the situation. It seems that, as a modern social engineering design, a modern bureaucratic structure is needed, and the staff do not, indeed, need to consist of sadistic personalities alone; they might be good citizens who go to “work” and perform their duties in the camps without feeling a considerable sense of disorder in face of the “exception”. Just as the law applies to the refugee in suspension and in longer applying, so the refugee belongs to the codes of morality in the form of moral indifference, which is the essence of being at the mercy of anybody and everybody, including the staff.

A situation, which is worsened by what Boltanski (1999) calls “the crisis of pity”: the loss of confidence in the effectiveness of speech in the contemporary society. Even if others observe how the asylum seekers and refugees are reduced to homo sacer in the form of a media spectacle (e.g. refugee ship wrecks, frozen bodies of refugees in lorries, and so on), this knowledge often materializes in no action. The refugee is alone. It is often said that with globalization global interdependencies have increased, however, this is not followed by democratic debate and action. Indeed, it seems that “the growth of individual freedom may coincide with the growth of collective impotence” for our age is increasingly witnessing a growing gap between knowledge and action, between *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* (Bauman 1999: 2, 43). There is an awareness that we are responsible for things happening elsewhere, that risks refugees bring with them and face themselves are globally interconnected, every action is networked and so on. Yet, a lot of such knowledge, which is morally pregnant, has no access to action.

As we discuss in the following, this development has much to do with what we want to call “technologies of the camp”, the technological infrastructures that at once hollow

out the “city” and replace it with a fragments of “camps” held together by technologies of mobility. To do this we first discuss how the logic of the camp is generalized today.

Generalization of the Camp

A world where people are born in the clinic and die in hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious and inhuman conditions (hotel chains and squats, holiday clubs and refugee camps, shantytowns threatened with demolition and doomed to festering longevity); where a dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing; where the habitué of supermarkets, slot machines and credit card communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce; a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral, offers the anthropologist (and others) a new object (Augé 1995: 78)

This new object is non-places, or, as we would rather call it, the camp. Refugee camps and other camps are an integral part of processes of contemporary globalization as is Augé’s non-places. What they have in common is exterritoriality – they are “in” but not “of” the contexts in which they are located exceptionally – disposability of meanings, fluidity of identities and the permanence of transience; they share the constitutive tendencies of what Bauman called “liquid modernity” (see Bauman 2000; 2002b: 3). What is the mechanism, then, behind the formation of such spaces? We return, to answer this, to the concept of the camp as the hidden matrix of the modern (Agamben 1998: 166).

Carl Schmitt had shown that it is the link between localization (Ortung) and order (Ordnung) that constitutes the “nomos of the earth”, that social order is conceptualized in spatial terms, as homes, towns and nations, as against an “outside” where disorder reigns. Through this link, the biological (*zoē*) and the social/political (*bios*) are separated, and bare life is excluded from the polis. There is an ambiguity in this, though: since the ancient Greece, in the state of exception this link breaks down. When the unlocalizable (the state of exception) is granted a permanent localization, what emerges is precisely the camp as a zone of indistinction, in which law and chaos, inside and outside become indistinguishable (Agamben 1998: 20). The camp is a space included in the realm of law by virtue of its exclusion. “To an order without localization (the state of exception, in which the law is suspended) there now corresponds a localization without order (the camp as a permanent state of exception)” (Agamben 1998: 175).

The camp is a “hybrid”, the essence of which is the materialization of the state of exception, constituting a space different from that of panoptic entrenchment (Agamben 1998: 169). It is, in fact, the camp, not the panopticon, that is the *nomos* of the modern: the camp is what illustrates how sovereignty functions and how the political space is constructed in modernity. In Schmitt’s allusion to Kierkegaard, the camp is the exception that “explains the general and itself” (Schmitt; quoted in Agamben 1998: 16, 166).

It was first the Nazi concentration camp that constituted a space in which the inmates were stripped of every political right and reduced to *homo sacer*, whose life is situated

in a zone of indiscernibility between the *zoē* and the *bios*. The concentration camp as a state of nature reduced the life of inmates who had no other concerns than survival to that of *homo sacer* (see Agamben 1999 on the Nazi camps). The camp was outside the rule of law in the sense that punishment was totally random, and thus the acts against the inmates, including killing, had no legal consequences, a situation similar to the murder of the werewolf that was not considered homicide (Agamben 1998: 31). In Arendt’s words, “everything was possible” in the camp (quoted in Agamben 1998: 170). However, the concentration camp itself did not emerge randomly but out of the legalization of the exception based on protective custody, *Schutzhaft*, followed with the denaturalization of the inhabitants according to the law (Agamben 1998: 132, 167). The camp was, in other words, a space of inclusive exclusion. The bare life of the camp’s inmates was not extrapolitical but, rather, constituted a biopolitical threshold in which law and fact pass over into each other, becoming indistinguishable (Agamben 1998: 171). For all that, however, the concentration camp is not a historical anomaly at all. On the contrary:

We find ourselves virtually in the presence of a camp every time such a structure is created, independent of the kinds of crime that are committed there and whatever its denomination and specific topography. The stadium in Bari into which the Italian police in 1991 provisionally herded all illegal Albanian immigrants before sending them back into their country, the winter cycle-racing track in which the Vichy authorities gathered the Jews before consigning them to the Germans, the Konzentrationslager für Ausländer in Cottbus-Sielow in which the Weimar government gathered Jewish refugees from the East, or the zones d’attentes in French international airports in which foreigners asking for refugee status are detained will then all equally be camps. In all these cases, an apparently innocuous space (for example, the Hôtel Arcades in Roissy) actually delimits a space in which the normal order is de facto suspended (Agamben 1998: 174)

Let us, at this point, consider “gated” urban structures of New Urbanism. What is typically marketed in them is not only property as such but access to a certain life-style based on technologies of mobility and security. Most of them have literally no public spaces; indeed, they are spaces in which some basic citizenship rights such as freedom of movement are denied outright (see Rifkin 2000: 114-133). Eroding social capital and threatening social cohesion, disturbing ideals of equal access to the public good, and violating rights of the citizen, such communities often “act *in opposition* to the interests of the wider community” (Daniell Bell; quoted in Amin & Thrift 2002: 139). Indeed, of all spaces of the network society, the risk of common interest developments, e.g. gated communities, “prompting the collapse of the overarching municipal tax system is perhaps strongest” (Graham & Marvin 2001: 275).

With their pricing entry that works as a device of social filtering, proactive surveillance policies against those who do not belong, inward-looking architectural design that wards off the rest of the city, biased premium infrastructure links (e.g. special transportation and virtual networks excluding others) that allow them withdraw from the public city, privatized governance regimes that regulate their streets, transport services, customized utilities and telecommunications, gated communities constitute a new type of localization miles away from what is traditionally understood by “urban”.

However, they are not alone, and, as Graham and Marvin discuss, such development is typical of “splintering urbanism” in our “urban ‘age of extremes’” (Graham & Marvin 2001: 221). The old standardized infrastructures of the Fordist era are today increasingly “unbundled”, privatized and fragmented, and “rebundled” selectively through advanced premium networked infrastructures (broadband telecommunications, enclosed private and quasi-private streets, toll highways and other transportation systems that can bypass the in-between areas, customized utilities, and so on). The reordered fragments establish, however, not a “city”. What we get instead is fragments, and fragments: governmental districts, shopping malls, cultural centers, office parks, gated communities, ghettos, etc., and hybrids such as themed shopping malls, the airport retail area, etc. Significantly, these packaged environments⁵ that produce a splintering, incoherent overall structure

can exist only when they are connected to the networked infrastructures that allow them to sustain their necessary or desired socioeconomic connections with spaces and people in more or less distanced elsewhere.... Thus networked infrastructure becomes directly embroiled in the secessionary process, supporting the material construction of partitioned urban environments. (Graham & Marvin 2001: 228)

We would add that the real background against which this development can take place is exception: the logic of the camp. The concept of the camp can explain the process of splintering urbanism much better than the vague notions such as fragmentation, compartmentalization, and so on. The solipsistic enclaves of the undertheorized unbundled city are, in other words, camps.

And it is no coincidence that, with the generalization of splintered urban structures designed according to the logic of the camp, the obsession with security has become “a zeitgeist of urban restructuring”, even though urban studies by and large remain silent about this “militarization of city life” and the emerging “sadistic”, fortress-like environments (Davis 1990: 223, 232). Today, as the production of security is fast becoming the key factor that is transforming the city through “urban space wars” (see Bauman 1998: 27-54), the city itself is increasingly assuming the status of a chaotic object “beyond control” (see Koolhaas et al. 1995: 969, 971).

There is in this image an aggressive assertion of something beyond human control: a restless, if impersonal hostility, an antagonism whose source cannot be located entirely in the human, in the common antagonisms of social life. It is as if we were suddenly placed on the side of Das Ding and viewing human life ... with respect to the Real. But where lies the inhuman Das Ding, there is always its human agent. Lacan called it ‘Sade’. (MacCannell 2000: 67-8).

As the contemporary city prescribes security as a life style, the image of the “urban” (law) turns into that of a “jungle” (the state of nature): the city “as if it were dissolved”. This image of the “urban” beyond control is something like a state of exception, in which “man is a wolf to men”. The relationship between the city and the forest is, that is, rearranged today. Nicolas Rose’s depiction of British gated

⁵ Gated communities, for instance, “are packaged with security systems, concierge services, exercise facilities, bike trails, etc.” (Knox; quoted in Graham & Marvin 2001: 226).

communities is a case in point. Because psychiatric care is now being reorganized around “community”, he writes, the fate of early asylums in Britain has become a problem for authorities. And the solution has been to sell these sites of enclosure to private developers who then turn them into luxury apartments. Consequently, the early panoptic spaces acquire a new meaning:

In a reversal that would be laughable if it were not so sad, these are no longer promoted as measures to secure the community outside from the inmate. They are advertised in terms of their capacity to secure the residents of these luxury conversions from the risk posed to them by that very community High walls, closed circuit video cameras, security guards and the like can now be reframed and represented as measures that will keep threat out rather than keep it in Outside the walls, danger lurks ... (Rose 1999: 248-9)

Outside the gates is the city turned inside out. The panoptic logic is overturned and through a strategic secession deviant behavior is restrained outside. In the disciplinary society, exception was enclosed inside the panopticon; the “ghetto” of those defined as “other” constituted a “camp” in the form of an island of disorder midst order. Today, the situation is reversed and the city itself is excluded from the “defensible” ghettos of New Urbanism. Such spaces appeal because they are grounded in “the presence of an outside, unbounded, an opposing world against which [they] define the terms of [their] exclusion” (Pope; quoted in Graham & Marvin 2001: 228). Thus, in tandem, the archetypal link between civilization and barbarism is reversed: city life turns into a state of nature characterized by the rule of terror, accompanied by an omnipresent fear. This fear is not, however, the fear of punishment that follows the transgression of the law but stems from knowing that there is no law to transgress; there are no longer distinctions between the city and the jungle, between the realm of law and the realm of transgression. When the city is dissolved, everybody turns into a werewolf.

And herein we have the underlying fantasy behind contemporary urban life: the city is an unpredictable and dangerous site of survival, an “urban jungle”. The urban jungle is, seen from the gated communities, a zone of indistinction, in which terror reigns and the homo sacer engages in a struggle for survival. While the city is transformed from a market place into a marketable object, what is repressed is the fact that there is no longer a city but the camp, which combines the logics of exception, marketing and administrative control. Which is also the link between refugee camps and gated “non-places”.

Refugees camps and the nowhereilles share the intended, in-built, pre-programmed transience. Both installations are conceived and planned as a hole in time as much as in space, a temporary suspension of territorial ascription and the time sequence. But the faces they show to their respective users/inmates sharply differ. The two kinds of extraterritoriality are sedimented, so to speak, on the opposite poles of globalization. The first offers transience as a facility chosen at will; the second makes it permanent and irrevocable, the ineluctable fate; a difference not unlike the one that separates the two outfits of secure permanence – the gated communities of discriminating rich and the ghettos of discriminated poor. And the causes of difference are also similar: closely guarded and watched entries and wide open exits on the one side of the opposition – and largely indiscriminate entry but tightly sealed exits on the other. It is the locking of the exits in particular that perpetuates the state of transience without replacing it with permanence. In refugees camps time is suspended; it is time, but no history. (Bauman 2002b: 3)

The camp is the secret link between two seemingly different spaces produced by “New Urbanism”: cities without a place and places without a city (see Salecl 1998: 94). The former being the electronic cyberspaces of flows, the prototypes of the latter are exemplified by simulated, theme-parked “fantasy cities” such as gated communities, shopping malls, Disneyland, CityWalk, Celebration and so on. Disney’s Celebration, for instance, is designed as a genuine fantasy space with detailed plans for all aspects of city life. Heavily entrenched and controlled, it mimics the 19th century American cities and demonstrates nostalgia for an imaginary time in which antagonisms were not felt and security was not an omnipresent, risky matter. According to Celebration’s prospectus the aim of the city is to give people the chance to feel a city with a tradition and history, and this in spite of the fact that it is new (see MacCannell 1999: 116). Camps planned as an idealized reality that can deliver the unkept promise of the contemporary city by re-fabricating and simulating urban history. It is in this context that the status of the refugee vis-à-vis the citizen is more than telling:

Are we then witnessing a rebirth of the old distinction between human rights and rights of a citizen? Are there rights of all members of human kind (to be respected also in the case of homo sacer), and the more narrow rights of the citizens (those whose status is legally regulated)? What if, however, a more radical conclusion is to be drawn. What if the true problem is not the fragile status of those excluded, but, rather, the fact that, at the most elementary level, we are all “excluded” in the sense that our most elementary, “zero”, position is that of an object of biopolitics and that eventual political and citizenship rights are given to us as a secondary status. (Žižek 2002: 95)

Thus, the idea that the camp is the nomos of the modern calls for further attention. On the one hand, the camp emerges as a spatial distinction between the inside and the outside. Yet, to say that this biopolitical construction is the nomos of modernity implies that *all* subjects are reduced to bare life: they become subjects with reference to a fundamental distinction between the sovereign and his subjects. *This* conceptualization is only indirectly spatial, which is also why codes, rather than spatial enclosure, is fundamental to the biopolitical paradigm (See Dillon & Reid 2001). In this sense, the outside of the camp reflects the inside: sovereign power reigns on both sides of the divide as potentiality and as actuality. Modern biopolitics as a whole reduces the citizen to bare life. Modernity creates a zone of indistinction not so much between inside and outside (of the nation, the town or the home) but by cutting through every subject and the political as such. As a member of the “people” the subject becomes both a legislator and an object of legislation (Agamben 2000: 30). The rights won by individuals in their struggle against state authority pave the way for the inscription of lives within state power, hence laying the foundation of the power from which they wanted to liberate themselves (Agamben 1998: 121).

Today, the possibility of making a distinction between the biological and the political body of “man” has disappeared, and there is “no return from the camps” to politics in the classical sense (Agamben 1988: 188). Most things that take place in today’s cities are biopolitical practices, that is, practices of engineering the senses, the body, and its life, practices through which power penetrates bodies: “life is at the centre of all the calculations made about cities” (Amin & Thrift 2002: 28). What the traditional focus on the “polis” overlooks is the bare life of the *homo sacer* at its center; today “it is not

the city but the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West” (Agamben 1998: 181).

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