Makeshift camp geographies and informal migration corridors

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Abstract

Makeshift camps have increasingly become a permanent presence along border areas and in cities around Europe and elsewhere, constituting a 'hidden geography' that is crucial to overland mobilities of thousands of migrants each year and essential to understanding contemporary informal migration. While there is rich and burgeoning scholarship on makeshift camps, substantial gaps remain in the understanding of these informal geographies which have not yet been conceptualized in terms of the key roles they play in the production of informal migration corridors nor the unique forms of daily life en route that they support, as this paper intends to do.

Keywords

camp geographies, camp methodologies, informal migration corridors, makeshift camps, migrant mobilities

I Introduction

In abandoned fields and houses, railway tracks and bus stations, open lots and wastelands, partially constructed or disused factories and buildings, in the woods or at the side of the road, migrant-generated squats and settlements have become a constant presence along border areas and in cities around Europe over the past several years. These *makeshift camps* are informal, unauthorized settlements, generated by the migrants who occupy them, where they may temporarily reside and make arrangements for onward transit towards desired destinations, often in the complete absence of state-sponsored support. As clandestine journeys become increasingly protracted and dangerous,

makeshift camps have become 'rites de passage' along informal migration corridors around the continent, serving as ephemeral shelters, nodes of services and information, as meeting points for smugglers and new arrivals, where migrants may stay for extended periods of time. Makeshift camps emerge in transit hubs and bottlenecks, where informal mobilities are blocked, severed or interrupted by enhanced borders and illegal 'push-backs',[1] but also negotiated and facilitated by transport options, smugglers and aid from volunteers and NGOs (Davies et al., 2019; Katz, 2016; Martin et al., 2019). These sites display important variations in material structure, size, density, demographics, ethnicities of residents, the presence or absence of local aid organizations or international volunteers, but also the degree to which they

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are tolerated by authorities, the role they play in migrants' daily lives, and even the names used to refer to them. They may come and go over the course of years, months or even days – through evictions and raids or changes in routes – relocating, shifting, disappearing, reappearing or being razed and built over, sometimes leaving no visible trace of their existence. Yet, despite their diversity and ephemerality, makeshift camps nonetheless share key characteristics and have come to constitute a 'hidden geography' of Europe (Squire, 2020), crucial to the overland mobilities of thousands of migrants each year and essential to understanding contemporary informal mobilities and migration corridors.

There have been moments of acute media attention to certain high-profile informal migrant encampments in and around Europe over the past several years – particularly in cases of specific site-events such as fires, mass evictions or extreme weather and the associated humanitarian 'crises'. Yet, what is known about makeshift camps that are smaller and less visible, or the moments between these events, or the sites that no longer exist? While there has been a relatively rich and burgeoning body of scholarship on makeshift camps in the last few years, there remain substantial 'blank spaces' in the knowledge and mappings of these specific migrant-organized informal geographies, which have not yet been conceptualized in terms of their relationship to one another, the crucial roles they play in the production and reproduction of informal migration corridors, nor the unique forms of daily life *en route* that they are host to.

In addressing these gaps, this article brings together the existing literature on makeshift camp geographies to reflect on what is distinct about these spaces and to advance broader conceptualizations of these informal geographies as *key to the production of migration corridors* in the context of Europe. Challenging existing framings of makeshift camps as marginal or residual spaces, we conceptualize them, rather, as geographical formations through which to examine how informal migration corridors emerge, function, are produced and reproduced by the migrants that move along them, as well as the diverse actors (smugglers, volunteers, local residents, authorities) that contribute to and are present across these spaces. In the sections that follow, we present a critical review of the literature on makeshift camps within and beyond geography, including how they have been studied and understood to date, as well as the forms of violence and resilience that have been emphasized within this scholarship. We then highlight some limitations and gaps in this body of work, proposing three potential avenues for approaching further research on makeshift camp geographies focused on (1) camp archipelagos and corridor-formation; (2) diverse subjectivities and life in the camp; and (3) camp temporalities and afterlives.

Though makeshift camps share characteristics with other informal migrant gatherings and squats, the ones we are foregrounding in this article are those that have been distinctively shaped by borders and bordering practices and their residents' objective of onward transit (via smuggling and informal border-crossing attempts). We recognize that there exist different forms of informal settlements generated and occupied by migrants in circumstances where onward transit is *not* the main focus of residents, such as those that emerge in cities in which migrants would like to remain, work or apply for asylum. We also recognize that, while makeshift camps are sites in which migrant mobility is often negotiated and facilitated, they are also often sites of state-enforced *immobility*, which migrants are compelled to remain in or return to as a result of the varied policing mechanisms that disrupt their journeys, keeping them 'cramped' and 'choked' in a state of 'hyper-mobility' but without 'letting pass' to the next country (Tazzioli, 2020a; Tazzioli 2021 in Minca et al., 2022). Sometimes makeshift camps may also resemble (or overlap with) other informal, temporary, precarious dwellings like slums, shantytowns, favelas, Roma camps, homeless encampments or other settlements in and around cities. Nonetheless, in order to begin a broader conceptualization of these specific migrant-organized informal geographies, in this article we deliberately concentrate on a narrower understanding of makeshift camps – as *informal, migrant-generated encampments along migration corridors that are oriented towards onward transit for their residents*. Another important qualification to articulate here is that this article has been based

primarily upon literature and analysis from Europe and the passages and corridors that lead towards it. The first reason for this is that, although there is undoubtedly other key scholarship on informal migrant geographies in other contexts, the wealth of new literature on the kinds of makeshift camps that we are focusing on here has been based mostly on sites in and around Europe. The second reason is that our own respective field research on makeshift camps over the past years has been situated along the so-called Balkan Route – the overland migrant corridor between Turkey and Western Europe, passing through Greece or Bulgaria and non-EU states of Northern Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo and Albania – resulting in observations and findings regarding makeshift camps and corridor-formation that we draw upon. While recognizing the important limitations of an approach largely based on a European focus here, we nonetheless believe that this article may be productive in conceptualizing contemporary informal mobilities and migration corridors and informing further research beyond Europe as well.

II On refugee camps and makeshift camps

Scholarship on makeshift camps builds upon research on other camp geographies that has emerged over the last few decades. Early scholarship within the subfield of *camp studies* was concerned primarily with concentration camps, largely influenced by the path-breaking work of Italian political philosopher Giorgio Agamben on the biopolitical dimension of the Nazi archipelago of camps (Agamben, 1998, 2002, 2005; Ek, 2006; Giaccaria and Minca, 2011; Gregory, 2006; Minca, 2006, 2007; see, also, for a different take on concentration camps: Arendt, 1951; Hyslop, 2011; Smith and Stucki, 2011; Sofsky, 1993; Wachsmann, 2016). Scholars have since studied diverse camp formations like detention, transit, colonial, training, even tourist camps and gated communities, or sites of sex tourism (Diken, 2004; Diken and Laustsen, 2005, 2006; Katz et al., 2018; Minca, 2005). Despite the vastly different modes of protection, deprivation, inclusion and exclusion displayed by camps, they all seem to be characterized 'by a variable mix of custody, care and control' (Minca, 2015a: 75) and the exceptional status of a space that may be destroyed, removed, relocated or evicted by authorities at any point (Martin et al., 2019; Ramadan, 2009a, 2013; Sanyal, 2011, 2014). In more recent years, the focus of camp studies has turned towards *refugee camps* in particular, leading to a vibrant array of books and review essays which, alongside a massive increase in media and popular interest, has explored how these spaces have become a permanent presence in today's global political geographies.

This body of work has placed a particular emphasis on large and long-term camps in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, such as Kakuma in Kenya (Brankamp, 2020; Jansen, 2018), Cox Bazar in Bangladesh (Khan and Minca, 2022), Shatila in Lebanon (Martin, 2015; Ramadan and Fregonese, 2017), with specific sites like Moria on the Greek island of Lesbos gaining more attention in recent years as well (Pallister-Wilkins, 2016; Tazzioli and Garelli, 2020). Large and semi-permanent camps such as these may be established in response to cases of protracted conflict, instability, the impossibility or unwillingness to integrate and accept refugees and asylum seekers into the host country and can sometimes accommodate up to several thousand residents, living for years, decades or even multiple generations within the camp. Across diverse institutional refugee camp contexts, scholars have highlighted the increasingly significant and permanent role of these geographies in the management of 'undesirable' populations (Agier, 2011b). The research on institutional refugee camps has addressed diverse questions such as the governance of camps and residents, the role of humanitarian aid agencies, state actors and police, the informal economies, social relations, politics and violence among residents, as well as the ways in which material shelters are developed, modified and occupied (Agier, 2002, 2011b; Brankamp, 2020; Katz et al., 2018; Lecadet, 2016; McConnachie, 2018; Turner, 2006, 2009). A series of important interventions has also shown that institutional refugee camps should no longer be read as merely 'spaces of exception where violence is perpetrated and violence is produced' (Martin et al.,

2019: 11–12) but, rather, that they should be considered as potential sites for 'articulating new politics' (Sanyal, 2014: 258), where residents may exercise forms of resistance, subversion, nationalist identity-formation and citizenship (Oesch, 2017; Puggioni, 2014; Ramadan, 2009a; Ramadan and Fregonese, 2017; Redclift, 2013; Sanyal, 2017; Stel, 2016; Woronieska-Krzyzanowska, 2013).

In recent years, scholars have highlighted how refugee and migrant settlements have become increasingly diverse and dynamic formations that often do not conform to 'neat and bounded geographies' but display messy 'transgressions' between the camp and the host territory (Sanyal, 2014: 560). In some cases, camps established close to cities and towns have physical, social and economic overlap and exchange between them, with mobilities of camp residents and non-residents who establish relationships, find work or make use of infrastructures and services such as schools, hospitals, places of worship, shops and restaurants inside and outside the camp (Sanyal, 2014: 560; see also Agier, 2002, 2011b; Bakewell, 2014; Darling, 2017; Grabska, 2006; Isin and Rygiel, 2007; Katz et al., 2018; Knudsen, 2016; Martin, 2015; Ramadan, 2013; Ramadan and Fregonese, 2017; Sanyal, 2011, 2014; Woronieska-Krzyzanowska, 2017). The informal spatialities resulting from these 'transgressions' have been referred to as 'shantytowns', 'provisional shelters', 'hiding places' or other informal encampments that may be compared to ghettoes, slums, the French 'banlieue' or Roma encampments (Agier, 2011a; Davies et al., 2017; Maestri, 2017a, 2017b; Mould, 2017a, 2017b; Sanyal, 2017). Martin (2015) has proposed the 'campscape' as a 'new spatial model of analysis' to represent the varied geographies of refugee camps and the fluid and elastic boundaries which generate a 'threshold where the refugee, the citizen and other outcasts meet' (9). Scholars have highlighted how the emerging 'gray spaces' (Yiftachel, 2009) of contemporary migration and encampment necessitate new concepts, vocabularies and analytical tools that permit new ways of thinking about refugee camps and move beyond the demarcated lines, fences and existing definitions (Sanyal, 2014: 124).

1 Makeshift camp geographies 1: spatial formations

Among these 'messy' new geographical formations is the makeshift camp. There is now a wealth of academic and 'gray' literature on makeshift camps, which recognizes their proliferation at crucial border-crossing zones in and around Europe, and their increasingly central role in the onward transit of migrants seeking to reach destinations (Agier et al., 2018; Davies et al., 2017, 2019; Minca et al., 2018; Mould, 2017a, 2017b; Squire, 2018). Makeshift camps are created literally as 'makeshift' spaces (Vasudevan, 2015: 340), that is, 'temporary and ephemeral sites generated by people "on the move"' based on their precarious condition and their need for shelter in transit (Martin et al., 2019: 745). 'Unlike the concrete fixity of formal encampments that emerge through slower processes of regulation, planning and active biopolitical governance, [makeshift camps] are constantly shifting disappearing and re-emerging' (Davies et al., 2019: 220), lacking the 'formal legitimacy granted to them either through the state or humanitarian organizations' (Sanyal, 2017: 118). These informal, bottom-up, migrant-organized sites emerge along migratory corridors (Katz, 2017a), serving as temporary shelters, as nodes of services or 'infrastructures of livability' (Tazzioli, 2021), where migrants meet smugglers, stop and wait, organize their next move, access key resources and information. It is from and through these makeshift camps that onward 'irregular' migrant mobility is often negotiated and facilitated, but also where blocked mobilities are made visible due to the difficulty of certain border crossings. These spaces may include spontaneous encampments in fields and forests or at the side of the road, in visible or highly marginal sites, in old factories, warehouses, farm-houses, empty apartments, under bridges, around railways stations at ports, along highways, or other sites where squatting may be tolerated or unnoticed for extended periods of time. There are important variations in size, demographics, the presence of volunteers or NGOs and services provided between the different makeshift camps – they can range from 'a few improvised shelters […] to a

sprawling campopolis' (Davies et al., 2019: 22; Jordan and Moser, 2020).

Makeshift camps have also been referred to as informal transit camps, squats, jungles, ephemeral encampments, 'contingent camps' (Hagan, 2021) and other such terms – terminology that is dependent on who is discussing them and in what context (migrants, activists, NGOs, news media). Scholars have sought to define and demarcate what can be considered as a makeshift camp and have questioned to what extent various 'ephemeral dwellings' may even be seen as camps at all, given that they are 'called something different by the [migrants] themselves, and frequently not considered as camps by the authorities' (Minca, 2015b: 91). Makeshift camps have also been studied as a distinct yet closely related spatiality to institutional camps – which may even 'incorporate spatial features and governmental practices similar to other forms of "camps"' (Sanyal, 2020: 118), including state-enforced forms of both immobility (containment) and mobility ('governing migration through mobility', see: Tazzioli 2020b). Attempts to define or categorize makeshift camps are challenged by the fact that these spaces are constantly changing, merging and overlapping with other spaces, settlements, cities and institutional refugee camps, producing a whole array of 'gray' areas. Nonetheless, work such as the typology proposed by Davies et al. (2019) have provided very helpful points of departure for discussing and conceptualizing makeshift camps through three primary forms, namely *jungles, urban squats* and *adjunct camps.*

1.1 Jungles. Jungles are 'improvised encampments often found on waste ground in more rural or semi-urban settings'– they are inherently 'heterogeneous assemblages', built from gathered and repurposed or donated materials, where refugees can take temporary shelter 'whilst trapped at pinch-points on migration routes' (Davies et al., 2019: 224). They generally resemble an 'unofficial group of temporary residential structures' (Sanyal, 2017: 118), made up of 'basic tents and flimsy shelters built out of simple materials available on site such as cardboard sheets, blankets and sleeping bags, and/or nylon and tarpaulin sheets stretched over a frame made of timber studs or branches collected locally' (Martin et al., 2019: 745). In Pashto, Farsi and Dari, the word *dzhangal* refers to the wilderness, the forest, to spaces that are non-urban and undeveloped. As such, among migrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran (although also spreading in colloquial use among others migrants as well), the term 'jungle' frequently refers to both the non-populated natural environments traversed as part of border-crossing attempts, as well as the informal encampments situated beyond institutional camp spaces (Agier et al., 2018). Even though the term has been developed by migrants themselves and then integrated into the language of activists, journalists and scholars, Davies et al. (2019: 224–5) have highlighted how the term 'jungle' has 'troubling, racialized connotations' which, alongside the 'neocolonial spectacle' of contemporary border regimes, should be considered critically.[2]

The vast majority of scholarship on jungles in Europe has focused on the now infamous 'Jungle(s)' of Calais, which has been highly represented due to its enduring role and importance as a transit node and crossing point for migrants seeking to reach the UK over the last twenty years (Agier et al., 2018; Davies et al., 2017; Davies and Isakjee, 2015; Gueguen-Teil and Katz, 2018; Ibrahim and Howarth, 2018; Mould, 2017a, 2017b; Rygiel, 2011; Sandri, 2018; Tyerman, 2019, 2021; Van Isacker, 2020). 'Jungles' have also proliferated along the so-called Balkan Route corridor – around border zones, at the outskirts of cities and in various transit zones and bottleneck sites where refugee mobility has become more difficult, dangerous and protracted (Arsenijevic´ et al., 2017; Border Violence Monitoring Network et al., 2020; Isakjee et al., 2020; Minca and Collins, 2021). They have emerged particularly in the northern border zones of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Augustova´, 2020; Augustova´ et al., 2021; Jordan and Minca, 2022; Jordan and Moser, 2020; Minca and Umek, 2020; No Name Kitchen; Rigardu; SOS Velika Kladusˇa; Balkan Info Van, 2018); in northern Greece (Anastasiadou et al., 2017; Moving Europe, 2017; Pelliccia, 2019), as well as in many other micro-sites across the corridor that have received very little academic attention to date.

1.2 Urban squats. Urban squats are generally 'not built from scratch' (Tazzioli, 2021: 4) but are established, rather, through occupied, converted and

repurposed buildings and infrastructure in and around cities. They have highly varied materiality, emerging in disused apartments and hotels, factories, under bridges, in public parks, train stations or brownfield zones in proximity to urban centres. Cities and towns can be attractive to migrants along corridors for a host of reasons – as places through which to access important resources, as transportation options for onward journeys, information, work, links to home countries through money transfer shops and Internet, as well as the possibility to temporarily escape 'the stigma of refugeeness' (Sanyal, 2014: 560) that comes with smaller, more remote locations. Urban squats have emerged across European capitals (Dadusc et al., 2019) such as Paris (Boyer, 2021; Carretero, 2022; Katz et al., 2018; MT/AFP, 2019; Pascual, 2020; Terraz, 2021), Rome (ANSA, 2017, 2021; Bertelli, 2020; Bock, 2018; Busby and Dotto, 2018; Scherer, 2016); Brussels (Rönsberg, 2015; Schreuer, 2018), Budapest (BBC, 2015; Hartocollis, 2015; Kallius et al., 2016), Belgrade (Obradovic-Wochnik, 2018; Rapisardi, 2015; Specia, 2017), Athens (Hilton, 2016; Kantor, 2016; King and Manoussaki-Adamopoulou, 2019; Mavrommatis, 2018; Squire, 2018) and in port cities and border towns where blocked refugees make repeated attempts at border crossing, such as Calais and Dunkirk in northwest France (Agier et al., 2018; BBC, 2021, RFI, 2019, Katz, 2016, 2017b), Patras in Greece (Arkouli, 2013; Tagaris, 2018) and Trieste in Italy (Altin, 2020), but also in cities in northern Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Augustova´, 2020; Hromadzic, 2019; Jordan and Moser, 2020; Minca et al., 2018; Minca and Umek, 2020).

Urban squats may resemble other forms of squatting yet, while there have been 'interesting alliances between squatter-activists and people on the move' (Davies et al., 2019: 223) – as in No Border hostel in Belgrade (Obradovic-Wochnik, 2018) or City Plaza in Athens (Squire, 2018) – it must be noted that squatter-activists generally squat in places in order to 'oppose oppression, injustice, and lack of autonomy' (Mudu and Chattopadhyay, 2017 (1)), whereas migrants are more likely to occupy urban squats out of a need for temporary shelter and proximity to services rather than a specific ideological impulse related to the occupation of these spaces.

1.3 Adjunct camps. Adjunct camps are the informal encampments that emerge at the periphery of institutional refugee camps, acting as an 'unofficial add-on' to pre-existing camps and forming a symbiotic relationship with them, blurring the distinctions between formal and informal, and occupying 'gray spaces' of liminality and uncertain legitimacy (Davies et al., 2019: 223; Sanyal, 2017). Migrants may be forced to reside in adjunct camps due to limited capacity in institutional camps, or restrictions of gender and age or they may choose to stay in these spaces because the lack of bureaucratic controls and surveillance offer more possibilities and freedoms to continue their journey. The proximity of an institutional camp may provide migrants with strategic access to NGO's, activists and volunteers, as well as essential services and facilities like showers, drinking water, non-food-item distributions and Wi-Fi. Examples of adjunct camps include those surrounding the semi-carceral Gradisca camp in northern Italy (Altin and Minca, 2017), the official reception centre of Moria on the Greek island of Lesbos (Human Rights Watch, 2018) or near the urban institutional camps in Paris (Katz et al., 2018), among others. The materiality and spatial organization of the 'prefabricated' and often more permanent spaces of the institutional camps (container camps, barracks, etc.) may be acutely contrasted to the highly temporary and chaotic self-built dwellings of adjunct camps established at the peripheries (tarpaulin, donated tents, plastic sheets) (Gueguen-Teil and Katz, 2018). In the context of the Balkan Route, a whole array of adjunct camps have emerged around institutional camps in northern Serbia such as Adaševci, Šid and Sombor (KlikAktiv, 2021; Palmeri, 2022), or in northwest Bosnia-Herzegovina, around Borići, Lipa or Sedra, although there has been only 'gray literature' and no scholarship on these sites to date. Adjunct camps may emerge when migrants seek to move towards the borders and wish to access and organize with smugglers living in institutional camps, or when conditions within the camp are so low (or repressive) that migrants may choose to create their own encampments in close proximity of the services or social life accessible in the camp. Adjunct camps provide insights into the relationships, overlaps in form and function and

interchange that take place between different institutional camps (reception, detention, transit centres) and makeshift camps, and the ways in which migrants, smugglers, NGOs, activists and other subjects move between and across these informal and formal sites.

2 Makeshift camp geographies 2: violence, displacement and daily life

Such typologies and classifications of makeshift camps are very helpful in discussing and conceptualizing these diverse spaces. However, it must also be recognized that there are other forms of informal migrant settlements along corridors that do not fit within these categories, and that a single makeshift camp may also resemble one or more of these categories at a time, or may shift from one to another over the course of changing seasons. Makeshift camps are never fixed, marked as they are by constant shifting of populations, changing structures and materialities, degrees of abandonment or intervention by state authorities. Despite the diversity and changeability of these spaces, scholarship on makeshift camps has emphasized a few key aspects, namely, the complex iterations of violence that take place in and through makeshift camps, as well as some of the resilient and creative forms of social and political life that emerge.

2.1 Violence and 'orchestrated abandonment'. Much of the literature on makeshift camps has focussed on the forms of indirect and direct violence that produce these informal geographies or are enacted within them. Violent bordering regimes, including massive enhancements and militarization of border infrastructures, surveillance capacities (Isakjee et al., 2020; Jones, 2016; Vaughan-Williams, 2015), and illegal push-backs (Al Jazeera, 2019, No Name Kitchen; Rigardu; SOS Velika Kladuša; Balkan Info Van, 2018; Augustová, 2020; Barker and Milena, 2020) have rendered informal mobilities along corridors more protracted and dangerous, compelling migrants to reside for extended periods of time in a variety of settlements in transit between their risky attempts at crossing the borders.[3] Yet, scholars have also pointed to the ways in which the very material conditions of makeshift camps in which migrants reside should be understood as a form of violence inflicted upon them. Scholars, activists and advocacy groups have highlighted how makeshift camps often do not provide sufficient shelter from the elements, nor adequate sanitation facilities like running water, the possibility to shower, wash food and clothes. In some cases, makeshift camps have even been located on or near toxic sites like landfills (Davies and Isakjee, 2019; Dhesi et al., 2015; Minca, 2022). These material and environmental conditions may lead to gastrointestinal illnesses, parasites, respiratory infections and other avoidable health issues that can be understood as 'slow' violence or 'choking' of migrant residents (Bathke, 2021; Medecins Sans Frontiers, 2017; Tazzioli, 2021).

Makeshift camps are often established in marginal or 'invisible' sites. Yet, even when they are *entirely* visible, centrally located or 'hidden in plain sight' (Hromadzic, 2019; Obradovic-Wochnik, 2018), there seems to be a 'tacit agreement' between migrants and authorities, in which makeshift camps and their residents are tolerated, as long as they 'disappear as soon as possible' through onward clandestine journeys (Minca and Umek, 2019a: 3; Mandić, 2018). According to Davies et al. (2019), 'it is in the state's interest not to formally recognize [makeshift camps'] existence, for to do so would be to acknowledge a responsibility for their vulnerable inhabitants' (222). The intentional absence of state authorities and aid, renders makeshift camps as 'orchestrated space [s] of abandonment' (Minca and Umek, 2020: 12), which depend on local charities, grassroots volunteer organizations or, at times, international humanitarian agencies to provide basic amenities such as food and water, clothes and sanitation services (Agier et al., 2018; Jordan and Moser, 2020; Martin et al., 2019; Obradovic-Wochnik, 2018; Sandri, 2018). While NGOs and 'solidarians' may crucially step in to respond to the gaps left by state services, makeshift camps nonetheless often display entirely inadequate living conditions which are harmful to the health of their migrant residents. Scholars have emphasized how the intentional absence of authorities and institutionalized

aid, as well as the criminalization of solidarity and grassroots volunteer organizations (Amnesty International, 2019a) has made the makeshift camp into a site through which the 'hidden violence of abandonment' is silently perpetrated by authorities who 'keep the power to control and abandon' the camp and its residents at the margins of society (Agier, 2011b; Aru, 2021; Minca et al., 2022; Minca and Umek, 2020). In their work on the Calais (ex)'Jungle', Davies et al. (2017) employed Mbembe's (2019) notion of necropolitics and 'letting die' to highlight how the deliberate withholding of provisions in the squalid health and material conditions of makeshift camps in and around Europe keeps migrants 'alive but in a state of injury', permanently physically and psychologically wounded (Davies et al., 2019: 228). This 'willingness of contemporary governments to abandon their marginalized inhabitants marks makeshift camps as preeminent sites of biopolitical exclusion and structural racism', displaying a level of inaction so stark as to be considered a form of violence existing at 'the sharp end of geopolitics' (Davies et al., 2019: 229).

2.2 Evictions, displacement and 'spatial harassment'. Crucial to the 'management' of makeshift camps, however, is that the general absence of authorities is often accompanied by selective moments of intervention, raids and evictions – forms of 'spatial harassment' (See: Tazzioli 2020b in Minca et al., 2022: (9) and 'campicide' (Ramadan, 2009b) that (increasingly) become defining characteristics of these spaces and their specific forms of violence. Makeshift camps are 'fleeting spaces, suspended in constant cycles of demolition and construction' (Sanyal, 2020:118), that are periodically dismantled, with their residents relocated to institutional camps or merely removed from their dwelling with no alternative offered, left to fend for themselves in highly precarious and often hostile conditions. The extreme precariousness and material ephemerality and fragility of makeshift camps is actually enforced by authorities (Agier et al., 2018; Mould, 2017a) who weaponize the threat of eviction against migrants as part of an assemblage of 'microscopic strategies' (Hagan, 2019) and governing tactics that 'choke' residents and make migrants' lives unbearable by also impeding and removing the fragile social life and solidarities that exist in these spaces (Tazzioli, 2021). Taking away belongings, destroying shelters and homes, criminalizing the occupation of spaces constitutes, beyond any security necessity, a relentless infliction of physical and psychological violence, and the displacement of migrants 'within their displacement' (Hagan, 2019, 2021, 2022; Mould, 2017a; Ramadan, 2009b). The bulldozing, removal, or dismantling of these spaces is, 'especially when performed in public space, [a] key element of anti-migrant politics' (Minca and Umek, 2019b) which targets the makeshift camp and its 'spectacle' (Bock, 2018), but offers no real alternative to residents, merely forcing them into further invisibility and marginality, or just to reoccupy the evicted sites again and again (Weima and Minca, 2021). These conditions keep migrants poised between visibility and invisibility and between repressive intervention and neglect – a feature that serves as part of the specific forms of violence that migrants are exposed to in and through these spaces (Sanyal, 2017).

2.3 Life en route: micro-politics and solidarity. Though much of the research on makeshift camps in Europe has emphasized how these sites operate and emerge out of survival and chaotic responses to violence, victimization and state abandonment, scholars have also explored the daily 'ordinary life of people on the move' (Ansaloni, 2020; Minca and Umek, 2019a) as well as the forms of agency and creativity in and of these sites. Makeshift camps have been framed as a self-managed and 'experimental society' of migrants, smugglers, volunteers, of informal economies, solidarity, activism, with social organization and the creation of communities and public spaces, 'prophetic and catastrophic in character, marvelous and wretched, utopian and dystopian' (Agier et al., 2018: 71). Particularly in the context of the Calais 'Jungle', important work has revealed elements of agency and resilience, entrepreneurship and creativity displayed by residents. As opposed to the sterile and architecturally uniform spaces of institutional camps (Gueguen-Teil and Katz, 2018), the bottom-up, self-generated spatialities of makeshift camps are seen as key in generating a 'radical sociality and "communing"' (Mould, 2017b: 401),

where refugees organize 'neighborhoods', build their own 'human environments' such as restaurants, hair salons, video shops or even institutions like schools and places of worship where residents can live together, and carve out a 'reassuring cocoon, a place of solidarities' despite the violence, disastrous material conditions, exclusion and dehumanizing nature of these spaces (Agier et al., 2018; Gueguen-Teil and Katz, 2018). In addition to their function as shelters and the tactical coordination of onward transit, makeshift camps have been examined as 'infrastructures of livability' and 'lieux de vie'– as sites of hospitality, meeting points, spaces of sociality and solidarity for their residents (Tazzioli, 2021; Van Isacker, 2019, 2020). Makeshift camps have also been framed as sites of political possibility (Gueguen-Teil and Katz, 2018; Mould, 2017b; Rygiel, 2011, 2012), where new forms of 'political subjectivities are being created and where spatial resistance to political action increasingly takes place' (Martin et al., 2019: 754), as well as the development of micro-politics and social hierarchies among the camp's diverse actors (Jordan and Minca, 2022). Recent research has examined the potentially ambiguous role of volunteers and activists in camps (Bock, 2018; Millner, 2011), their political activities and presence (Rigby and Schlembach, 2013; Rygiel, 2011), aspects of solidarity and friendship (Doidge and Sandri, 2019; Gueguen-Teil and Katz, 2018), as well as ethical and methodological questions of 'volunteer humanitarianism' (Sandri, 2018; see also: Augustova´, 2020; Jordan and Moser, 2020).

III Approaching the makeshift camp

While there has been a surge in scholarly interest regarding makeshift camps in geography and related disciplines, various limitations remain. Scholarship has, to date, often been concentrated on specific locations (especially the Calais 'Jungle(s)') or on one-off cases examined independently from other informal spatialities or institutional camps. In our arena of research along the Balkan Route, scholarship, 'gray literature' and media coverage on makeshift camps has shown a tendency to focus on specific sites and moments, flash-points and scandals that receive a wave of attention before quickly dissipating – as was the case with the massive 'jungle' of Idomeni, Greece (BBC, 2016), the major urban squat known as the 'Barracks' in Belgrade, Serbia (Nalu, 2017; Specia, 2017), the semi-formal Vučjak camp established by a former industrial garbage dump and surrounded by uncleared minefields near Bihać, Bosnia (Davies and Isakjee, 2019; HRW, 2021; Minca, 2022; Vikic, 2019), or the spontaneous tent city that was erected in the snow following the fire in Lipa camp also near Bihac´ (Al Jazeera, 2020; BBC, 2020). Yet, beyond the brief media attention, there has been limited engagement with these makeshift camps and all that takes place within them – the self-organization, strategies of settlement and onward transit, informal economies and organized crime. Many makeshift camps have never been critically analysed or even documented at all. Importantly, there has been no academic scholarship that considers makeshift camps as distinct yet inter-connected spatialities which play key roles in the production and reproduction of informal migration corridors more broadly.

Makeshift camps are constantly mutating, moving, undergoing dramatic shifts as they are warped and pulled by factors like enhanced bordering practices, police tactics, evictions and forced relocations, as well as the frequent turnover of residents through departures towards the border and new arrivals. In these marginal, transient and ephemeral sites, it is often difficult, contentious and unpredictable to carry out research, to develop, plan and execute methodologies that are possible in other contexts, to foster trust and relationships with ever-changing resident populations or even the activists and NGO workers within them, or to return to the same site for follow-up visits. Scholarship has highlighted some of the key challenges, risks and roadblocks of research in this context and how to approach makeshift camps, honing in on aspects such as ethics, vulnerability, volunteering, reciprocity and solidarity, language and translation, among others (Augustova´, 2020; Jordan, 2020; Jordan and Moser, 2020; Minca, 2021; Sandri, 2018; Van Isacker, 2020). Yet, questions remain regarding how to more effectively approach the study of makeshift camps and to develop nuanced

understandings of these informal geographies and the roles they play in informal migrant mobilities and migrant corridor-formation, in particular.

Building upon the burgeoning literature on makeshift camps in the context of Europe, in this section, we will discuss a few research directions we believe would benefit from further attention. In the following paragraphs, we draw upon findings from our own work along the Balkan Route to highlight and advance upon the ways in which the study of makeshift camps, and the migration corridors they contribute to producing, may be methodologically and conceptually approached in future research. Ultimately, we aim to propose creative analytical perspectives capable of capturing the complexity, mutations, resilience and vastly differentiated experiences that constitute the geographies of informal migrant mobilities *en route*.

1 Makeshift camps and corridor-formation

As previously noted, this article has distinguished *mobility-oriented* makeshift camps from the other diverse forms of informal and temporary migrant encampments. Taking this further, we propose that makeshift camps may be understood as crucial nodes in the broader informal geographies of migration – as *key* to the formation of informal migration corridors. We suggest that makeshift camps do not emerge as one-off or singular sites or simply as reactions to the violence and victimization to which their residents are subjected at the borders but, rather, as part of inter-connected archipelagos or constellations of sites through which the informal journey is also produced by migrants themselves, where plans are negotiated, services accessed, information gathered. While makeshift camps are extremely diverse, we have nonetheless observed important shared characteristics between them, such as the common objective of facilitating onward transit, but also the kinds of terminology used by residents, certain daily practices and strategies, even the presence of the same volunteers, journalists or smugglers that move between different makeshift camps. If we consider makeshift camps as part of broader constellations of mobility-related spaces (along with borders, institutional camps, cities and transit points), key for onward transit and informal border-crossing attempts, new questions and fields of inquiry may arise: How do they emerge? How do they interact and overlap with other informal geographies of migration? What takes place between them? What role do they play in the broader geographies of informal mobilities? How are these sites put to use for migrants' own clandestine journeys?

Scholars have already begun to challenge the binary between informal and institutional migrant and refugee settlements, exploring the variety of 'gray' areas and interactions that take place between and across them (Martin, 2015; Sanyal, 2011, 2017). Conceiving of makeshift camps as part of corridor-forming archipelagos that, through the informal migrant journeys that move across and between them, actually incorporate and interact with diverse spaces like institutional camps but also cities and existing infrastructures, may permit more nuanced perspectives on their demarcations and permeability and some of the more ambiguous makeshift camp formations that exist. Along the Balkan Route, for example, sites that began as migrant-occupied makeshift camps have been converted into institutional camps, others have been erected as institutional camps but have been treated and understood by their residents as makeshift camps, sometimes becoming a kind of *semi-formal* camp (Minca, 2022). In institutional camps like Lipa in northwest Bosnia-Herzegovina or Sombor in Serbia, for example, migrants may reproduce aspects of the makeshift camp *within* or just outside institutional camps – including meeting smugglers, acquiring the necessary equipment, planning and organizing attempts at border crossings. In this way, we are compelled to reconsider the binaries, understandings and contours of what a makeshift camp is at all – if it is *always* and necessarily an informal and bottom-up site or if institutional camps may also be incorporated by migrants into the geographies and the mobility-archipelagos of migration corridors as well.

Considering makeshift camps and their related, inter-connected spatialities as part of corridor-formation may also be a way to examine the 'blank spaces' or that which exists between the better known and documented points along a route. For example, along the Balkan Route, there has been

research, media and NGO attention and coverage on a variety of sites in Greece, as well as in northern Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, yet there is a complete absence of attention towards many other parts of the route. Cities like Zagreb, Tirana, Skopje, Prisˇtina, Tuzla, Podgorica or Timis¸oara, for example, have not received any attention, yet informal channels of communication from activist groups along the route suggest that migrants have been passing through these sites over the past few years and that makeshift migrant arrangements likely exist – linking them to other sites further back and forward along the corridor. Finally, and importantly, examining makeshift camps as part of broader geographies of informal migration and corridor-formation would also help to further recognize the role played by migrants themselves in the production of these interconnected geographies.

2 The social and political life of makeshift camps

Migrants may spend days, months, even years in various makeshift camps *en route*, developing all kinds of complex lives and relationships, daily practices and orderings. Nonetheless, there are substantial gaps in the knowledge and mappings of makeshift camps, how they are lived in and the strategies, experiences and violence enacted within them. We propose that more attention could be paid to the diversity of actors that exist within and co-create makeshift camps – including migrants, smugglers, volunteers, researchers, journalists, authorities, local residents (and their various ethnicities and linguistic backgrounds) – and the ways in which different actor groups impact and contribute to the workings of these informal spaces, how their presence and positionalities may affect the longevity of a certain site's existence, the frequency and intensity of police raids, their marginality, access to resources or representation in news media. The presence or absence of different actors in a makeshift camp may have consequences on the living arrangements and conditions of a site, the social and political dynamics or the level of safety for residents (especially along lines of ethnicity, class or gender). For example, makeshift camps along the Balkan Route are almost always populated solely by single males – an aspect which has not yet been sufficiently examined, despite the enormous implications this has on social practices and daily life.[4] The presence of smugglers is also a key factor, as they often attract (or repel) different migrant residents based on common ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and the related networks of trust and organization. Building upon some existing work on the topic (Bauder, 2020; Bird and Schmid, 2021; Jordan and Moser, 2020; Sandri, 2018), the engagement of activists and volunteers in makeshift camps could also benefit from further critical analysis, particularly regarding the roles they take on, their relationships with migrant residents and 'beneficiaries', as well as the sometimes subtle forms of power and privilege that play out. In addition, the ways in which makeshift camps impact the local residents and their daily lives deserve more attention, also in terms of the economic and social repercussions and reverberations of these informal geographies that emerge in and around existing towns and cities.

We also propose that new approaches are necessary to understanding makeshift camps and their daily life as not only characterized by the oppression and restriction of the EU's border regimes, but also coloured by complex social and political arrangements within and between the camps themselves. Elsewhere (Jordan and Minca, 2022), we claim that there is much more to learn about the social and political lives within makeshift camps which may be populated by diverse individuals occupying different roles and positions within the camp's hierarchy and specific 'micro-politics', whose experiences of solidarity, friendship, abuses and violence in the site are accordingly highly varied, sometimes along aspects like race, gender, age, language or class. There is a need for more in-depth ethnographic fieldwork, which does not glaze over but actually emphasizes the specificities of individual makeshift camps or archipelagos of camps and the profiles and experiences of their migrant residents. By examining the diverse subjectivities across the whole array of formal and informal actors in and around makeshift camps, including migrants, smugglers, the apparatus of humanitarian aid, as well as journalists,

photographers, researchers and authorities, there may be possibilities to further understand how these complex, transient spaces are being organized, occupied or strategically put to use. Perhaps most importantly, we believe that this kind of investigation would lead to much more appreciation of the diverse and often 'hidden' forms of daily violence that emerge out of and are produced within makeshift camps that have not received sufficient attention to date – including forms of inter-ethnic violence, exclusions, exploitation or privileging among migrants, between smuggler groups and organized criminal networks, among volunteer networks and local residents.

3 Makeshift camp temporalities: ephemerality, afterlives

Makeshift camps come and go, are evicted, destroyed and relocated, yet their importance while they were active and even their (physical, imaginative) remnants and afterlives warrant much more investigation. These spaces are inherently temporary, transient, ephemeral – constantly being reinvented and reproduced, changing population, size, shape, function and adapting to the (micro and macro) geopolitical conditions within which they are situated. The disappearance, destruction or upheaval of a site, therefore, is not a rupture, but actually a key characteristic of makeshift camps. As such, we suggest that new methodological approaches are needed to study the *temporalities* of makeshift camps – approaches capable of engaging with adaptation, change and even absence, in order to capture the life cycles and importance of makeshift camps across time, even (or perhaps precisely) following evictions and destruction. Such approaches would consider the rise and fall, the shifting, expanding, contracting and sometimes complete disappearance and erasure of makeshift camps as key to their existence and their role along migratory routes. Foregrounding the experiences, memories and materials produced by those that resided or worked within these former makeshift camps would provide new and innovative readings of these spaces.

Scholars have already examined and emphasized camp closures (Weima and Minca, 2021), as well as evictions, raids and forced relocations and the violence associated with this. We propose to take this further, calling for further investigation of what comes *after* a makeshift camp has been closed, destroyed or simply disappeared. Sometimes there is a new one in its stead, sometimes camp residents move down the road or behind a building or into the woods nearby, while other times the camp is simply razed and built over, leaving no trace of what it had been, the purpose it served or the lives led within it (on temporalities and makeshift camps, see: Hagan, 2021; Jordan and Minca, 2022; Queirolo Palmas, 2021; Tazzioli, 2019; Van Isacker, 2020). Each former makeshift camps served as a historical 'site-event' – often including eviction, police violence, orchestrated abandonment – that can help contribute to an understanding of contemporary informal mobilities and the lives led *en route*. There is burgeoning interest and scholarship on 'counter-mapping' in the context of migration studies (Ellison and Van Isacker, 2021; Tazzioli, 2013, 2019, 2020; Tazzioli and Garelli, 2019; Van Isacker, 2020). As a methodological approach, counter-mapping aims at investigating and uncovering the mobile, invisible and temporary spaces of transit and refuge, highlighting the 'spatial and temporal' traces of these informal geographies that are often not 'apprehensible on the geopolitical map' yet which may continue to live on even after they have been evicted, destroyed or 'disappeared' (Tazzioli and Garelli, 2019: 3). In focusing on temporalities, traces and afterlives of makeshift camps, we position this article alongside other scholarship which shares the political imperative of foregrounding absences and silences, and exposing forms of hidden or obscured violence through a 'disobedient gaze' (Heller and Pezzani, 2017; Pezzani and Heller, 2013; Tazzioli, 2020c).

We return to the example of the 'jungle' of Idomeni – a site that briefly housed thousands of people and sprung up and sprawled across the train tracks around the Greek border village, or the Belgrade 'Barracks' – which hosted 2000 migrants in and around the central bus station in the dead of winter before its eviction and destruction, as well as countless other makeshift camps that have come and

gone across Europe and beyond (the jungles of Calais and Dunkirk, the squats of Paris at La Chappelle, Rome Tiburtina, the Budapest Keleti train station camp, the various squats at Ventimiglia and many more). What do we know about these sites and what took place there? How were they organized, occupied, lived in by their residents and other actors present? How were they destroyed, relocated, rebuilt and what were the implications of these events? What lives on in terms of physical or symbolic remnants? By foregrounding the experiences, perspectives, visual and narrative materials of those that have resided and worked in makeshift camps that no longer exist, there may be scope for further exploration of the morphing, overlapping, multi-temporal nature of makeshift camps and the precarious but vital life-worlds that form within them – to render visible spaces that have been made invisible, to conserve traces of past sites, to understand how they are produced and experienced, and to conceptualize them as key nodes in the production of informal migration corridors in Europe and elsewhere. We believe that examining informal migrant geographies that no longer exist is also a way to shine light on some of the ongoing and normalized violence of Europe's bordering regimes. As such, we call for more critical investigation (and 'counter-mappings') of evicted or destroyed makeshift camps, of sites and events that have not yet been examined, as part of an exercise of 'archiving' episodes of undocumented police violence but also the resilient counter-geographies of migrants that nonetheless continue to be produced and reproduced to serve informal mobilities.[5]

IV Conclusion

In this article, we have critically reviewed the rich body of literature on makeshift camps from within geography and beyond and identified a few key gaps that we believe would benefit from further examination. Drawing on the existing work and our own respective research along the so-called Balkan Route, we argued that makeshift camps, at least in the European context, are key geographical formations for contemporary informal migratory journeys and crucial in the emergence and (re)production of migration corridors. We have proposed three primary avenues for approaching future research on makeshift camps: (1) to consider makeshift camps as part of inter-connected spatialities or archipelagos along with related formal and informal sites, infrastructures and border-passages which constitute migration corridors; (2) to foreground the social and political life in the makeshift camp, including the diverse actors and subjectivities, complex power relationships, solidarities and forms of hidden violence and (3) to reflect on questions of temporality as key to understanding and documenting of makeshift camps, their life cycles, constant shifting, disappearance, (re)emergence, traces and afterlives.

This article has sought to conceptualize makeshift camp geographies by focusing and demarcating mobility-related informal migrant encampments that emerge and are put to use along migration corridors in and around Europe, in particular. As noted at the outset, the Eurocentric nature of our literature review as well as the examples we cite and draw upon in this article is certainly a limitation. While the majority of literature on this kind of makeshift camp geography has been emerging in Europe over the past few years, we are aware that comparable geographies *do* exist along migration corridors in other parts of the world, such as between Central and South Asia and Turkey, from Central America towards the United States, the Sahel area, among others. In addition, in this article we have deliberately chosen to focus our analysis on the makeshift camps emerging along migration corridors in order to further the existing scholarship on these geographies of informal mobility. We do recognize, however, that in addition to the blurring of boundaries between certain institutional camps and informal migrant settlements (as discussed earlier), there are also important similarities between makeshift migrant camps and the material spaces of other kinds of urban slums, squats, Roma settlements, encampments for homeless people and other such spaces. Further discussions on the overlaps, contours and distinctions of diverse informal settlements and encampments, their materialities, functions, forms of solidarities and

violence would certainly lead to crucial developments in understanding counter-geographies of migrants and non-migrants. Finally, we would like to clarify that, in focusing on diverse aspects and functions of makeshift camps, this article in no way intends to minimize or obscure forms of violence, abandonment or precariousness experienced in or produced through these spaces. We do, however, wish to propose that makeshift camps may also be considered as strategic sites for the mobility of migrants along corridors and to point to the complex and important ways in which these spaces are organized, lived within and how forms of support, connectivity, relationships and aid are developed by the diverse actors present here.

In Europe, makeshift camps and informal corridors have become a permanent presence. Though they are precarious, morphing, constantly disappearing and reappearing, erased or built over, they have become constitutive elements of the new political geographies of the continent, and therefore they need closer investigation – to be studied and conceptualized at different scales both as part of the authorities' 'management of migration by mobility' (Tazzioli, 2020b), and as strategically vital sites for the informal mobilities of migrants moving towards Europe. Overall, despite being fully aware of certain limitations, we hope this article will stimulate further research and the formulation of new conceptualizations and methodologies capable of studying makeshift camps and the formation and (re)production of corridors as they continue to be generated, employed and reinvented by migrants across the globe.

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Notes

1. 'Push-backs' refer to the practice of forced collective expulsions of migrants, carried out by police, from one country to another country, at unofficial border areas, often without accepting or recognizing requests for asylum. This has become a systematic procedure in various border areas along the Balkan Route and elsewhere in recent years. (See: Al Jazeera, 2019, Amnesty International, 2019b; Barker and Milena, 2020).
2. 'The jungle' was also the term used in the United States in the late 19th century and early 20th century to refer to the 'area[s] of disused land immediately adjacent to the railroad tracks' which would act as 'informal hang-out spots' and temporary sleeping sites for the figure of the tramp (See: Cresswell, T (2001). While it appears that the term, 'jungle' in the context of makeshift camps along migration corridors in and around Europe developed independently from such earlier American usage, this nonetheless points to intriguing convergences regarding conceptions and vernaculars surrounding mobility and informality, people on the move, the road, the city, nature and other such themes that would be interesting to explore further.
3. For more on the 'kaleidoscope of violence' that migrants are exposed to in different moments and sites along their journeys, see, among others: Dempsey, KE (2020).
4. We would like to note that while there is indeed a predominance of males in the makeshift camps in which we have worked and spent time along the Balkan Route, this is not always the case. Certain makeshift camps, such as those in the area of Grande-Synthe in northwest France, for example, have displayed high numbers of women and children among their resident populations (See: MSF (2016) https://www.msf.org/france-frequently-asked-questions-about-msfs-work-grande-synthe-camp).
5. For more on 'archiving' of informal and ephemeral migrant spaces, see: Tazzioli and Garelli (2019); Tazzioli (2020c).

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