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# Bare Shelter

## The Layered Spatial Politics of Inhabiting Displacement

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### Introduction

It could be a sleeping bag hung around a bunk bed, forming a more intimate space in a shipping container shared by a group of refugees in a state-created camp. It could also be an improvised kitchen added by a family of forced migrants to their prefabricated timber emergency shelter, so they could cook their own meals. It might be an ad hoc business, such as a grocery shop opened in a shack previously used only for accommodation in a makeshift refugee camp. Or it could be a mural which was carefully drawn to decorate the external walls of a shared ephemeral shelter. These, and many other forms of spatial adaptations which change prefabricated or makeshift shelters, are part of the variety of ways in which displaced people shape and alter their intimate spaces in institutional and makeshift camps around the world. These shelters are often created as temporary structures of protection in transitory and often precarious sites which are expected eventually to disappear. Their inhabitants, however, who have already experienced losing their homes at least once in their country of origin, invest time, effort and sometimes capital in transforming their shelters into more habitable spaces, even if their spatial endeavours will exist for only a short period of time.

While displaced people live in a wide range of shelters from squats in abandoned buildings to rented apartments, emergency shelters are often created as part of designated and in many cases temporary institutional or makeshift 'sites'. Whether they are called 'refugee camps', 'hospitality centres', 'hotspots' or 'humanitarian facilities', such confined sites are connected to the world around them only through particular and often strictly controlled human and material infrastructures. They supply the basic necessities for their residents, such as food and basic shelter, while at the same time disconnecting their residents

from the everyday environments, economies and forms of living around them. These sites and the shelters within them form dehumanising spaces in which the residents are seen as objects of control and conditioned care (Katz, 2019). In many cases, however, the inhabitants of these sites and shelters immediately and substantially act to change their anonymising and dehumanising environments through various forms of spatial adjustment and re-appropriation.

In camps in Northern France, created primarily during the so-called migration 'crisis' between 2015 and 2017, either for or by those attempting to cross the Channel to the UK, residents began to improve their temporary homes as soon as they moved in (Katz, 2019). In the La Linier camp in Grande-Synthe near Dunkirk the repetitive prefabricated timber shelters created for the refugees by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) were significantly expanded upon on the first day they were occupied (Katz, 2017, 2020; Gueguen-Tiel & Katz, 2018). Not far from there, in the makeshift Calais 'Jungle' camp, shelters were carefully built, repurposed and decorated inside and out by their inhabitants. In both camps, importantly, shelters were re-appropriated to create ad hoc businesses such as barbers' shops, grocers' shops and restaurants, while they were also used for habitation (Turner, 2016; Guguen, 2017). With the alterations of these shelters, their sites were transformed too, turning from camps composed of identical prefabricated units, or from camps of scattered tents and shacks, into more defined spaces of human living.

What is the meaning of these and other spatial actions conducted by displaced people to re-appropriate their emergency shelters? Should they be dismissed as a collection of random material and spatial adaptations born out of bare necessities, or could they be considered as a set of actions which together accumulate a profound political meaning? This chapter critically engages with the work of the political theorist, Hannah Arendt, to examine the possible political meaning of the spatial alterations of emergency shelters by the forced migrants who inhabit them. Arendt's work is for a number of reasons particularly relevant for questions on the political meaning of spaces of displacement. First, Arendt is deeply engaged with critical studies on refugees, related to her own personal experience of refuge. In addition, her work imaginatively rethinks the meaning of the political sphere in the modern world while also conceptualising politics spatially. Her work is also concerned with the relationship between the private and public realms in the creation of the political sphere, a topic which is especially relevant for understanding spaces of displacement. Arendt's work had a substantial influence on thinkers who are concerned with displacement, including its political and spatial meanings, amongst whom are the philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1998) and others (e.g. Rancière, 2004; Krause, 2008;

Staeheli et al. 2009; Schaap, 2011; Dikeç, 2013; Katz, 2015; Bialasiewicz 2017; Beeckmans 2019; Singh, 2020), and this chapter aims to add to these interventions.

The chapter discusses the political meaning of inhabiting emergency shelters in three main parts. The first discusses the political meaning of the emergency shelter as a 'bare shelter', i.e., a minimal space created either for or by forced migrants only for their basic and temporary protection. The next part examines the meaning of 'bare shelter' in relation to Arendt's work, with particular emphasis on her reflections on the private and public realms, the modern state and stateless people. The last part critically discusses Arendt's thought to gain a political understanding of the spatial transformations of emergency shelters by their inhabitants. The chapter argues that spatial actions of building and re-appropriation conducted by displaced people on their emergency shelters may be considered as political actions even if they were not initially conducted as such and are visible only to those inside the camp. These actions, in which forced migrants add layers to their bare shelters, actively transform their dehumanising environment into places that are more suitable for human habitation. These spatial actions, through which forced migrants take control over their exposed spaces of refuge by actively transforming them according to their particular needs, preferences and habits, including enhancing the distinction between the private and public realms, also enable them to re-establish their agency together with their political subjectivities.

## **Bare shelter**

A house or a home is usually considered to be a permanent dwelling which is connected to broader everyday human environments. Both are also inherently linked to dwelling as a human activity associated with inhabiting a place which we feel belongs to us and to which we feel we belong. The geographer Maria Kaika (2004), in her investigation of 'the modern western home', argues that bourgeois dwellings "became constructed not only as a line separating the inside from the outside (a house), but also as the epitome, the spatial inscription of the idea of individual freedom, a place liberated from fear and anxiety, a place supposedly untouched by social, political and natural processes, a place enjoying an autonomous and independent existence: a home" (p. 266). While this is only a naïve image of home, which is quite different from many actual homes across the globe where people suffer from many kinds of insecurities such as domestic violence and precarious living conditions, this ideal image is

still important in the cultural, symbolic, emotional, social and political economies of 'the home' and its meaning. Dwelling could be acknowledged, as Ingold (2005) argues, as the Heideggerian "way of being at home in the world", but at the same time "home is not necessarily comfortable or pleasant place to be, nor are we alone there" (p. 503). Not only should the actual home therefore be considered in relation to the idealised home, exposing the inherent gap between the two, but, as we always live among other people, the home should also be considered in relation to the material worlds, histories and power relations in which it is embedded and should be perceived as part of a broader political milieu. Creating a home within often complex associations and environments, especially in contested and exclusionary contexts such as refugee camps and other spaces of displacement, could be a substantial act of world-making, and such an act, as Brickell (2012) argues, could have deep political meanings.

Forced displacement could be considered as one of the most complex contexts for home-making. In situations of displacement the feeling of home is further compromised by the often precarious and temporary shelters displaced people inhabit while they are on the move or are provisionally settled as temporary guests by often reluctant host countries. These shelters are often erected in designated 'sites' or camps which have become, as noted by Arendt and later by Agamben (1998) and many other scholars, "the routine solution for the problem of domicile" (Arendt, 1962, p. 279). If the excluding space of the camp, depicted by Agamben as the paradigmatic space of modern (bio)politics, is the inadequate replacement of the abandoned homeland, we can say that the emergency shelter is the inadequate replacement of the lost home. In the precarious and uncertain realities of displacement the role of the home as a place of belonging is often stripped down in favour of the thinner space of the mere functional minimal shelter, defined here as 'bare shelter'.

'Bare shelters' could be created in different forms and materials, whether as repetitive mass-produced prefabricated units or as makeshift shacks. What is common to these forms is that they provide only the basic protective envelop, a 'shell' that shields their residents from the elements and provides only minimal and compromised privacy from the outside world (Katz, 2020). In the container camp near the Calais Jungle (Fig. 1.) each unit was shared by twelve people who were often strangers to one another yet did not have a private space of their own and suffered as a result of what were described as "impossible living conditions" (Gueguen-Tiel & Katz, 2018). In the makeshift Jungle camp, minimal shelters were also mostly shared by inhabitants, while they were sometimes further developed to be used for additional functions such as grocers' shops (Fig. 2.). In the MSF camp near Dunkirk each of the small identical prefabricated shelters was shared by a family or by a group of people, providing no more than basic protection.



**Figure 1.** The container camp within the Jungle camp; photo taken by author in April 2016.



**Figure 2.** A grocers' shop in the Jungle camp; photo taken by author in April 2016.

All the other basic necessities of the residents of these bare shelters are usually located in other facilities in the camp (e.g. shared toilets and showers, shared kitchens or dining halls), which often lack privacy or are not provided at all. In the case of mass-produced prefabricated shelters, these are often designed for a categorical and anonymous universal place and user, with standardised and rationalised features which enable their production process to be industrialised, yet do not answer the needs of particular people in specific environments (Katz, 2020). However, when these shelters are inhabited in a particular space and by actual users with specific needs, resources and capabilities, they may be re-appropriated by their residents who change their 'bare shelter' into a temporary home.

Spatial actions related to homemaking happen very differently in camps around the world. In some contexts, such as in camps for Syrian refugees in Jordan and Iraq, prefabricated and makeshift bare shelters have been transformed into homelier spaces in environments which are sometimes deliberately created to be uninhabitable (The Refugee Republic, 2012; Doraï & Piraud-Fournet, 2018). A counter-example could be found in some Palestinian refugee camps, where inhabitants sometimes object to the improvement of their dwellings to underline their refusal to accept them as potential permanent homes, while inhabiting these spaces nevertheless with the use of particular spatial articulations (Abourahme, 2015). These actions of dwelling and the refusal to dwell, in some of these contexts, could mean a symbolic political gesture that goes well beyond the arena of the shelters in these camps, while they could also be understood as everyday spatial actions that "spill over" (ibid.) to the political in a variety of ways.

Actions of habitation often not only influence the more intimate personal spaces in the camp, but also reform the subjectivities of their inhabitants from dependant recipients of help to people who can act and change their physical and sometimes also their social and economic realities. The timber MSF shelters near Dunkirk, nicknamed 'chicken houses' by their residents to indicate their dehumanising nature and appearance, were quickly given additional ad hoc extensions and layers, some almost doubling their size. Porches and decorations were added, kitchens were constructed, storage spaces were created to support the small retail stalls placed outside, and symbols, graffiti and flags indicating the countries of origin or destination of their dwellers were drawn and attached to the shelters (Fig. 3.).



**Figure 3.** The prefabricated shelters in the MSF camp near Dunkirk where the reappropriation could already be seen; photo taken by author in April 2016.

How can we interpret these spatial processes of habitation as actions which are meaningful beyond the personal adaptations of private spaces? Could we account for them as political actions that not only functionally and aesthetically change the specific space of the shelters but also recreate the political subjectivities of their dwellers? In order to answer these questions I will examine the meaning of the relationship between space, displacement and the political sphere through Arendt's work. In particular, I will examine the relations between the private space and the political sphere in order to understand how the often-depoliticised meaning of the home can be politicised in precarious situations of forced displacement.

### **The political sphere and the private/public realms**

Politics, for Arendt, are the realisation of freedom and of a fully human life. While the *raison d'être* of politics is freedom, without which "political life as such would be meaningless" (2006, p. 145), freedom itself is inherently related to the ability to begin anew. In strict contrast to Heidegger's significance of human *mortality*, Arendt focuses on *natality* as an emphasis on the human capacity for new initiatives and beginnings, a capacity that is the essence of politics and freedom, as it emphasises the distinctiveness of each human being and the ability of people to change the world accordingly. Arendt's actors are reborn when they act, and political action, like every birth, is about the unknown. The ability to begin anew is "unexpected, unpredictable, and ultimately causally inexplicable" (Arendt, 2005, pp. 111–112) and is possible "only because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the

world” (Arendt, 1998, p. 178). Political action is about the gathering together of individuals who create a new human world for themselves by radically changing the old one through acting together in performative and agonistic manners (Honig, 1992), while recreating themselves through this action.

Acting in concert is fundamental to freedom and to the creation of a political sphere, as freedom and the political sphere exist only in the presence of others. “We first become aware of freedom or its opposite in our intercourse with others, not in the intercourse with ourselves”, writes Arendt (2006, p. 147), emphasising that the condition of acting politically is *plurality*, and politics could happen only through action and speech in the public realm. ‘Public’ for Arendt signifies the enduring human world; whatever appears in public can be seen and heard by everyone and therefore constitutes a human reality. Political action “corresponds to the human condition of plurality” as it is established on our equality as unique humans: “[p]lurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live” (Arendt, 1998, p. 8). Plurality, here, is not only a numerical matter; it means that who we are is distinct, while at the same time we are always more than one. When people act politically, they act in concert as unique and free individuals and create what Arendt defines as the ‘space of appearance’ in which they reveal themselves to one another in their distinctness. The political space of appearance is the temporary actuality of the movement of distinct people coming together in the public realm, and it disappears when the political activities cease to exist. It is through the performative production of action in the public realm that people together create who they are, and at the same time it includes their distinctiveness and togetherness.

While for Arendt the appearance of the political sphere is dependant in the existence of the public realm, the public realm and its political potential are dependent on the existence of a separate private realm where the political has no place. This separation between the public and the private has been grounded in political thought since antiquity, as it can be seen in Aristotle who already excluded the private realm of the household from the political sphere. The household or *oikos* – the family or the home and its *oikonomia*, in which our word ‘economics’ as the proper place for the activities related to the maintenance of life is rooted – is established “for the supply of men’s everyday wants”, and was put forward in direct opposition to the *polis*, that is “the state or political community” created “for the sake of good life” (Aristotle, ca. 350 B.C.E./1999, pp. 3-6). Arendt reinforces the Aristotelian-based division between the domestic and the political, while also uncovering their actual interdependencies. Only if the household is a separate site where people live together based on

their “[biological] wants and needs”, can the *polis*, as the public sphere which is based on “the mastering of the necessities of life in the household” (Arendt, 1998, pp. 30-32) and where people could engage in political action as unique and equal individuals who are free from these necessities and needs, thus be created.

While the separation between the private and public political realms was, according to Arendt, fundamental to the existence of the latter, further interdependencies reveal the public realm as the ‘proper’ place for politics as conditioned by certain attributes of the private realm. These attributes include the household as a place with a *fixed location* of familial belonging recognised by others; “Without owning a house”, writes Arendt (1998), “a man could not participate in the affairs of the world because he had no location in it which was properly his own” (pp. 29-30). Having land, property, a stable location, a privately-owned ‘home base’ was a means to facilitate freedom. The ability to move in the world as a free and equal individual was conditioned by the domestic realm, with *domestic* referring to one of the senses of the term *demos* in Greek, that of the *deme*, meaning a location. These separations and interdependencies between the private and public realms were reinforced both legally and spatially. The *wall* which surrounded the household was seen as vital to the *law* of the city, “which originally was identified with this boundary line” (ibid., p. 63). The separation between the private and the public also had a profound meaning for our complex existence as humans who inhabit both realms. “Privacy was like the other, the dark and hidden side of the public realm”, notes Arendt, “and while to be political meant to attain the highest possibility of human existence, to have no private place of one’s own (like a slave) meant to be no longer human” (ibid., p. 64).

We can identify four attributes that establish the separations but also interdependencies of the public realm and the political sphere in the private realm of the household: the provision of one’s bare necessities through the economy of the household; the existence of the household as a permanent location; the household as a wall that physically and legally creates the public realm, and the existence of a private place as an intimate ‘place of one’s own’ as a basic human need. But what happens to the private/public division and to the related political sphere when these spatial and social separations and interdependencies collapse, such as in exposed situations of forced displacement?

If we consider the ‘bare shelter’ of the camp, we can see the absence of all four aspects noted by Arendt as distinguishing the private realm from the public which are important for the creation of a political sphere and for human existence. Firstly, the bare shelter does not provide for the necessities of its residents, but only for their minimal physical protection from the elements, with

other necessities such as food and hygienic facilities provided elsewhere in the camp. Secondly, as a temporary and anonymised space, the shelter in the camp does not provide a permanent location (*demos/deme*) but only a provisional one. Thirdly, as the shelters functioning more as scattered ‘rooms’ in the ‘household’ of the camp rather than as distinguished private realms firmly separated from the public, they do not together constitute the real or symbolic ‘wall’ that creates the public space outside them. Lastly, because the bare shelter is often shared by family members or individuals and its complementary units (e.g. toilets, showers, dining halls) are also shared by other people in the camp, they do not create proper private spaces ‘hidden’ from the public.

In these spaces of displacement and refuge the distinction between the household and the public space that Aristotle and Arendt describe as fundamental for political life is replaced by what Agamben (1998) describes as a “zone of indistinction”, where “city and house became indistinguishable” (p. 188). With the camp itself produced as a major ‘household’ with no outside, where only mere biological life is maintained while the possibility for external political life is taken away, and the ‘bare shelter’ itself is perceived not as a home but only as a ‘room’ in the space of the camp, in which other bodily needs are being provided by ‘rooms’ placed separately (for hygiene and dining), this detached ‘camp-household’ often does not even create its own *oikonomia*, but is dependent on the humanitarian economy provided by international aid organisations supported by donor states. This ‘camp-household’ is also based not on freedom and equality but on confinement and hierarchy, with the displaced being produced as dependant people relying on the goodwill of the main ‘provider’, taking away their possibility of becoming autonomous, free and equal political actors.

What, then, is the meaning of the reappropriation of shelters in the camp? If these ‘rooms’ are further developed by the displaced to create ‘homely’ spaces, which sometimes encompass their own minor informal economies in the camp (such as grocer’s and the barber’s shops), how could we relate these actions in the private realm to the creation of a political sphere?

The refugee is a central figure in Arendt’s thought, and her reflections on the legal and political situation of statelessness and the lived experience of the uprootedness of refugees from everyday reality followed her own experience as a Jewish refugee escaping Nazi Germany, her home country; “We lost our home, which means the familiarity of daily life”, writes Arendt in ‘We Refugees’ (1994 [1943], p. 110). Yet, the modern situation of statelessness also means being banished from the tightly-knit political world of “the trinity of state-people-territory”, which for Arendt means exclusion from the human world. “Only with a completely organized humanity”, Arendt (1962) states, “could the loss of home

and political status become identical with expulsion from humanity altogether” (p. 297). In such a global order, those who are displaced outside not only suffer from ‘the loss of their homes’, which is “the loss of the entire social texture into which they were born and in which they established for themselves a distinct place in the world” (ibid., p. 293). More significantly, for Arendt, people who are displaced from their homeland lose their “place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective”, a world acknowledged by a political community of citizenship which guarantees their “right to have rights” (ibid., p. 296). This dual loss of *home* and *homeland*, together with the state’s protective political sphere of citizenship rights, is what for Arendt altogether disconnects refugees from the human world. It is indeed the camp, according to her, that has become “the only practical substitute for a nonexistent homeland”, and “the only ‘country’ the world had to offer the stateless” (ibid., p. 284).

The camp, then, is not only where private and public realms dissolve into one another, cancelling a division needed for the political sphere to appear. The camp, for Arendt, is where the figure of the refugee, who is ejected from the political realm of national citizenship, is stored; a ‘country’ which is in itself detached from enabling political frameworks, where people are deprived of the ability to be part of a political community that will ensure their basic rights and freedom.

## Where politics reside

Arendt’s understanding of the political, especially in relation to the private/public realms and to stateless people, is important to the analysis of the meaning of the spatial changes made by refugees to their shelters in the camp as it relates to their specific position both as outsiders in the world of nation states and in relation to the spatial realm of the shelter in which they act. Yet, we can identify two ontological assumptions in her work on certain conditions that are required for the political sphere to appear and that might limit the ability to analyse the possibility of the bare shelter to become a space of political action. The first is Arendt’s insistence on public/private separation as a condition for the appearance of the political in the public realm, while the second is the rendering of stateless people incapable to act politically. Both these limitations to the political posed by Arendt might support the assumption that people who are appropriating their shelters in the camp are doing so solely as individuals in need, rather than expressing a political call by doing so.

The responses to these complexities and contradictions in Arendt’s work are the subject of ongoing academic debate, concerning both the political status of

the refugees and private/public separation. Some scholars adopt Arendt's notion of statelessness in interpreting the situation of displaced people as victims deprived of rights and therefore subject to total domination (Krause, 2008). Yet, it could be argued that such accounts fail to register the refugees' political mobilisation and agency (cf. Dikeç, 2013). Others observe that there is a conceptual difficulty that emerges from Arendt's 'constraints' on the political, including both the understanding of stateless people as deprived of politics and her public/private distinction as the basis for the political (e.g. Schaap, 2011; Dikeç, 2013; Rancière, 2004).

Rancière (2004) sees Arendt's conceptualisation of politics, in which political life is not contaminated by social or private life, as 'pure politics' which is limiting the political to certain ways of life and to particular realms. Schaap (2011) also maintains that Arendt's view of stateless people as deprived of political life separates "those who are qualified to participate in politics and those who are not" (p. 23), limiting politics to only those who are 'authorised' for political action. "If statelessness corresponds not only to a situation of rightlessness but also to a life deprived of public appearance", asks Schaap, "how could those excluded from politics publicly claim the right to have rights, the right to politics?" (ibid., p. 33). Or, as Mustafa Dikeç (2013) puts it, if rightlessness for Arendt "equals deprivation from politics – from speech, action and appearance in the public realm" (p. 86), how do we then account for the actions and political claims of those who are stateless and undocumented?

Arendt's own approach to politics, however, offers ways to untangle these claims. As Bonnie Honig (1992) notes, Arendt's separation between the private and public realms is quite tenuous because, as shown earlier in this chapter, these realms constantly permeate and cross-fertilise one another in her work, and the resources for the politicisation of the private/public distinction could be found in Arendt's own account of politics. Reading Arendt in a way that "grounds itself in the agonistic and performative impulse of her politics", argues Honig, "must, for the sake of that politics, resist the a priori determination of a public/private distinction that is beyond augmentation and amendment" (p. 100). On the other hand, Gündoğdu (2012) answers Rancière's claims regarding Arendt's approach to human rights and the political meaning of statelessness by engaging with her *aporetic* thinking as a way of creating possibilities to rethink key concepts, particularly during a crisis, using her form of critique to show how human rights could be rethought and reinvented.

These approaches enable one to consider the spatial reappropriation of the bare shelter by its inhabitants as potentially political, gradually restoring an intimate and functioning private realm while also gradually reshaping its relationship to what is becoming, following these actions, a better-defined public

realm. By adding kitchens to their units refugees restore their capacity to cater for themselves, and by transforming their shelters into small businesses they also establish a modest *oikonomia*, a way to earn a living. Such actions rebuild the ability of displaced people to have their necessities provided by their own re-created private realms rather than by the camp and its supporting agencies. By spatially transforming their shelters while adding decorations and symbols to them, inhabitants create an individualised place rather than an anonymised one to localise themselves in the world, creating their domestic space as *deme*. By adding these specific layers to their embodied shelters they also reveal themselves as unique individuals who together create articulated public spaces in their once anonymised camp while attentively defining the separation between their public and private realms. By dividing their shelters internally and adding rooms to them they also create their own intimate private places in them, answering a basic human need. By these spatial actions the refugees in the shelters carefully separate a private realm from a public one and localise themselves in the previously abstract space of the camp where these private/public realms were produced as indistinguishable. By creating these spaces the refugees in the camp also actively change their subjectivities as people who can act and change their world rather than being passive and dependant recipients of aid as they were thought of by those creating the camp and shelters for them.

Indeed, Honing (1992), as a feminist theorist who engages with Arendt's political theory by looking for the possibility to act in the private realm, maintains that "the distinction between public and private is seen as the performative product of political struggle, hard-won and always temporary" (p. 111). The spatial changes to the camp's shelters by the camp's inhabitants could be seen as their performative action, which transforms a highly compromised private space and at the same time politicises it as an uninhabitable space that must be altered.

The stripped space of the camp and the bare shelters bring people together, but as unified objects of control and provision and not as free, equal and unique subjects. In such spaces they are 'bodies' gathered and managed together because of *what* they are – displaced people who need to be provided for – and not because of *who* they are – distinct people who are inherently different from one another. Arendt (1962) writes on human creativity as "the capacity to add something of one's own to the common world" (p. 475). In their creative spatial actions, which add internal and external layers to their once bare shelter, inhabitants not only add to a common world but significantly recreate it together through their power and spatial agency, together restoring their 'who-ness' as distinct individuals who not only share a space and a situation of displacement, but also creatively influence and change this reality or this 'world' for themselves and for others. Such an "urge to make a home as a way of finding a place

in the world”, as Handel (2019) argues in relation to a different contested and abused reality of the creation of a Palestinian home in the occupied territories, where a home as a place in the world is being denied, “exposes the everyday dwelling as an inherently political experience” (p. 4).

Although, as Arendt notes, forced migrants have lost their political community and their national citizenship that protected their rights, we could argue that the spatial actions of those inhabiting the bare shelters in the camp recreate a different kind of political participation and citizenship. Indeed, as Isin (2000) points out, “globalization have challenged the nation-state as the *sole* source of authority of citizenship” (p. 5), and citizenship increasingly displays a volitional quality as a dynamic political constellation and practice. The adaptation of the bare shelter, and with it the space of the camp, produces new social relations within such spaces that, with the reworked private/public division, might not only create an environment to the political to appear but in themselves, in their accumulated value, be a spatial-political act which adjust a dehumanising space to an environment more proper for human habitation. Nyers’ (2015) concept of ‘migrant citizenship’, entangled with autonomous mobility and the political agency and subjectivity of migrants, could be considered a term which adequately illustrates how the re-appropriation of spaces such as the bare shelter forms “a creative process that is generative of new worlds, identities, and modes of belonging” (p. 34).

As suggested by Singh (2020), spatial actions in the camp could be interpreted as Arendt’s notion of ‘world building’ connected more broadly to all fundamental activities of the human condition that bring about the creation of a habitable human world through which and in which politics could be enacted. For Singh, these actions could be registered as political because of their visibility “to a wider, common world” which ensures that they will be seen by others (through newspaper articles and artwork) and thus appear in public, and therefore will be registered as political actions. However, the world created by the camp’s inhabitants, even if this world appears only to those inhabiting it, should nevertheless be considered political. By their material recreations of their bare shelters the displaced people in the camp reject and resist the place designated to them as anonymous objects of care and control with no real place in the world. By restoring their private realm they create for themselves such a private place in the world in an act which, in the dehumanising environment of the camp, could be seen as inherently political, especially when it is done in concert by many of those inhabiting these shelters.

## Conclusion

By theoretically analysing the meaning of the reappropriations of prefabricated and makeshift emergency shelters by their inhabitants through critically engaging with the work of Hannah Arendt on politics and space, this chapter reflects on the transformations of the stripped 'bare shelter' by its inhabitants as inherently political. Arendt's political and spatial theory is used to comprehend what is lost in a dehumanising situation of displacement located in the anonymising and objectifying camps and emergency shelters, and how these same spaces could be recruited to rebuild anew the world that was lost to their inhabitants, even if temporarily and precariously. With this approach the political action in the camp is created not only when people are acting together in public as unique individuals. Rather, it starts at an earlier stage, when people are beginning physically to reconstruct their private world in a way that will create the conditions for them to live in it as subjects, that is, as distinct human beings rather than as unified objects of care and control. If, in Arendt's thought, one needs a human world to act politically, we could consider these spatial actions of displaced people as ones which create such a world that is deliberately denied to them as already political. They not only together create a world in which they could act in concert, but they also together create a new physical world which they might call their own.

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