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From Camp to Commons

Infrastructures of Decolonial Solidarity in Europe

Charalampos Tsavdaroglou and Maria Kaika

Introduction

This chapter unveils housing solidarity practices that both confront and challenge the colonial aspects of state-run camps. Focusing on newcomers' self-organized housing projects in Greece, we argue that these practices constitute decolonial solidarity infrastructures against the European Union's and the Greek state's racialized migration housing practices and policies.[1]

Since the Syrian refugee crisis of 2014–15, the image of long rows of white containers lined up in the midst of rudimentary infrastructures in periurban areas in Greece has become the symbol of Europe's housing policies for newcomers (see figure 7.1). In the past seven years, more than 2.3 million newcomers from the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa entered the EU (UNHCR n.d. b). More than 1.3 million entered via Greece, and many among them remained "trapped" in Greece for long periods, unable to move onward to their final destinations in northern Europe (UNHCR n.d. a). In line with state and EU policies, they have been offered accommodation in camps run by the Greek state, most of which are located in abandoned factories or on military bases in the periphery of the country's two main cities, Athens and Thessaloniki. Most of the camps'

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FIGURE 7.1 Containers in Skaramagas refugee camp in Athens. Credit: Charalampos Tsavdaroglou and Maria Kaika.

residents dwell in white containers under living arrangements that provide newly arrived populations with only the bare necessities to stay alive. The life expected to be lived there is a standardized, anonymous life that cannot accommodate cultural, ethnic, religious, or other social needs. The current European institutional arrangements allow for a kind of living that is close to bare life, stripped of meaning other than the struggle for survival.

However, despite living under these conditions, newcomers build relations and interactions with each other and with local support groups; these relations and interactions often shape the conditions for forming new material and social infrastructures of decolonial solidarity in the form of self-organized community centers and often even lead to alternative housing projects. Many of these alternative social and material infrastructures are self-managed as forms of urban commons where locals and newcomers make decisions together and engage with and learn from each other's culturally informed practices. We argue that these solidarity practices can provide inspiration and form the basis for revising migrant housing policies and practices. Based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2017 and 2022 in state-run camps and migrant squats in Athens and

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Thessaloniki, this chapter juxtaposes the colonial aspects of official European Union institutional arrangements to migrant housing with the decolonizing and commoning practices of grassroots newcomers' housing projects. The fieldwork involved sixty semistructured interviews (thirty interviews per city) and informal discussions. Some of the interviews were conducted with the help of interpreters, and all names of research participants are anonymized. The newcomers who participated in the research are from Syria, Algeria, Morocco, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iran.

Colonial Aspects of Refugee Camps and Decolonial Solidarity of Common Spaces

Several scholars depict refugee camps as regimes of control and as a state of exception, marginality, and invisibilization of displaced people (Agier 2011; Turner 2016; Wacquant 2007). For Petti (2013), a refugee camp is an "anticity"; for Sharma (2009), it is a "non-place"; and for Bauman (2000), the twentieth century was "the century of camps." In 2021, six million people were living in camps, a number that is expected to increase further in the coming years (UNHCR 2021). In "camp studies," several scholars (Diken and Laustsen 2004; Edkins 2000; Pasquetti 2015), inspired by Foucault's "panopticon" theory and by Agamben's notion of "bare life," conceptualize camps as biopolitical structures of confinement, securitization, and control over newcomers. However, in recent years, a conceptual shift emerged, as many scholars (Christidis 2023; Katz 2017; Martin, Minca, and Katz 2020; Sanyal 2010; Sigona 2015; Tsavdaroglou and Kaika 2022a; Turner and Whyte 2022) focused on and highlighted the potentialities for agency-building and subjectification of newcomers inside the camps. In light of this turn, many scholars propose that the camps constitute "hybrid," "contested," and "ambiguous" spaces (Kreichauf 2018; Maestri 2017; Oesch 2017; Ramadan 2013).

However, with very few exceptions (Davies and Isakjee 2019; Gilroy 2004; Minca 2015), scholars fall short of examining state-run camps as a (neo)colonial apparatus. This is somewhat surprising, given that the very origins of the camps can be found in colonial practices enacted by the Spaniards at the end of the nineteenth century in Cuba, followed by the British in South Africa, the US Army in the Philippines, and the Germans in South-West Africa (now Namibia) in the early twentieth century, in the concentration camps of the First World War, and later in the Soviet gulag and the Nazi death camps (Diken and Laustsen 2004; Pitzer 2017). Embedding the

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contemporary practices of camps in Europe within the Western colonial legacy of running camps is particularly important for understanding some of the practices that are normalized in contemporary state-run camps across Europe. According to Minca (2015, 78), "In the colonies, the future Nazis learned a great deal about not only how to exploit people and resources, but also about race division and the breaking down of the human species into a biological hierarchy that was applied by all colonial powers to the subjugated populations."

Although we certainly do not suggest any parallel between Nazi concentration camps and contemporary state-run camps, we argue here that it is worth exploring the extent to which the colonial legacies of camps are deeply embedded in cultural, political, and material architectural and planning practices. Our main argument is that these legacies of the camp, as a product of colonial history, account to a great extent for the fact that today's camps function primarily as mechanisms of producing totalitarian environments for controlling the "other" (of whatever origin). The fact that the vast majority of residents in camps across Europe do come from former European colonies adds gravity to the need to explore these connections (Mayblin 2017). To put it succinctly, the camp reflects "how the historical reality of colonialism continues to pattern the present" (Danewid 2017, 1680). In general, many contemporary state-run camps across Europe share features of the European colonial camp legacy.

For Athens and Thessaloniki in particular, the cases we examine here, we can document the following characteristics that are shared with Europe's longer colonial legacy of camp-building. First, it is well documented that most camps in Greece are located in nonresidential periurban areas, and often in areas characterized as industrial or military zones (Gemenetzi and Papageorgiou 2017; Pechlidou, Frangopoulos, and Hatziprokopiou 2020; Tsavdaroglou and Lalenis 2020). Second, they are often characterized by low standards of living, lack of democratic processes in decision-making, top-down management policies, technocratic and expert-centric governmentalities, the racial division of newcomers into living sectors according to their ethnicity, and a failure to adhere to urban planning guidelines. Moreover, in most camps the basic housing unit is the container: a product of modernity, once purpose-built to transport cargo, and now used also for the containment of newcomers, as "objects" that are transported from one place to another.

However, if we take seriously Lefebvre (1991), who highlighted that space is not a static container but a social process, and Massey (2005), who

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proposed that space is always under construction and open to the possibilities of multiplicity and heterogeneity, then the crucial question that arises is whether there is the potentiality for newcomers to challenge and contest the camps' confinement, and the colonial relations embedded within that legacy. Indeed, our research shows that newcomers in the camps in Athens and Thessaloniki often develop practices of commoning while living in containers; in some cases they even flee the camps to create self-managed housing commons outside (Tsavdaroglou and Kaika 2022b). We argue that these attempts to turn spaces conceived for cargo transport into lived spaces for human communities could be seen as a kind of anticolonial project, a project that can potentially decolonize the "military humanitarianism" (Tazzioli and Garelli 2020) of "custody and care" (Minca 2015) enacted by state policies and NGOs.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that spaces serving as commons usually involve projects of social groups that are homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, citizenship, language, and cultural and political motives. However, our research on newcomers' housing commons demonstrates the potential to create forms of decolonial commons that go beyond those fault lines; these include real, existing places where people from different countries of origin and with a multitude of cultural and social identities coexist. Thus, the newcomers' commons raise the question of "decolonial otherwise" (Mignolo and Walsh 2018) and open new conceptual avenues to extend the Lefebvrian concept of "the right to the city" (Lefebvre 1996) to rethinking the newcomers' right to the city.

Camp-Based State Accommodation Policies in Athens and Thessaloniki

After the declaration-agreement between the European Union and Turkey in March 2016 (European Council 2016) and the closure of the borders in the Balkan corridor, the Greek state was faced with the necessity of accommodating an ever-increasing number of newcomers who crossed the country's borders looking for a way to move toward the European North. To manage the situation, the Greek state organized thirteen accommodation centers (camps) in the periphery of Athens and another thirteen in the periphery of Thessaloniki (see map 7.1). These campsites were abandoned former military training camps, abandoned factories and other industrial sites, shipyard piers, and abandoned former airport facilities. The number of people who stayed in these accommodation centers (camps) in the summer

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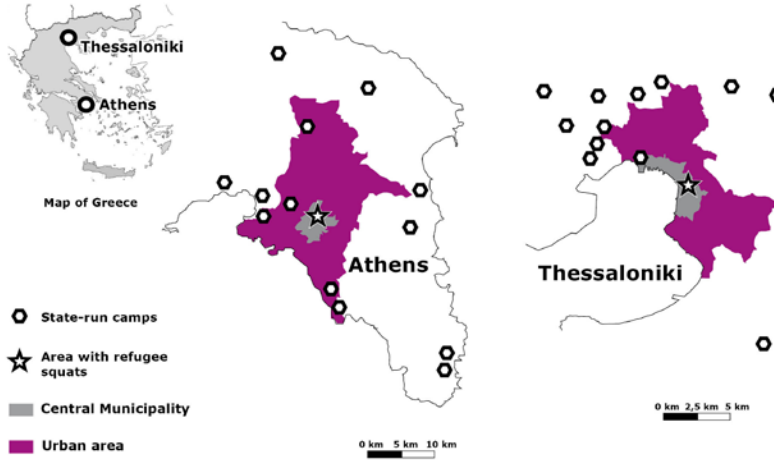

MAP 7.1 Locations of state-run camps and housing squats in Athens and Thessaloniki. Credit: Charalampos Tsavdaroglou and Maria Kaika.

of 2016 in the metropolitan region of Athens was 15,192; those who stayed in Thessaloniki numbered 19,859 (Coordination Centre for the Management of Refugee Crisis in Greece n.d.). In the following years, several of the state-run camps were closed down, while those remaining operational after the summer of 2021 were walled in and fenced off with three-meter-high concrete walls, thus preventing any visual contact with the areas outside the camps, and reinforcing the feeling of isolation for residents. Although materially people were free to move in and out of the camps, symbolically these spatial interventions turned camps from open-type accommodation structures into closed-type camps.

According to several scholars (Gemenetzi and Papageorgiou 2017; Papatzani et al. 2022; Pechlidou, Frangopoulos, and Hatziprokopiou 2020; Tsavdaroglou and Lalenis 2020) who have examined the social-spatial features of state-run camps and the living conditions of newcomers there, these camps violate Greek spatial planning regulations. They are located in areas that according to local urban planning guidelines do not allow residential uses, they are places of exclusion (as there is significant difficulty in accessing places of education, healthcare, and employment), and there are few possibilities of interaction with local communities. Also, the administration and management of the camps follow a top-down and expert-centric model in which the Ministry of Migration, the army, and police authorities,

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alongside international NGOs (such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] and the International Organization for Migration [IOM]), exert control and make decisions. As a consequence, there is a significant lack of participatory processes involving camp residents in decision-making and an absence of democratic processes such as freedom of speech, voting, or assembly. Finally, newcomers are very often confronted with xenophobic reactions from local communities that demand the removal of the camps.

At the same time, around the end of 2015, accommodation programs were set up within the urban fabric. Under the management of the UNHCR in collaboration with NGOs and municipalities, and in the form of the ESTIA program (Emergency Support Program for Integration and Housing), private apartments were rented and assigned first to asylum seekers eligible for family reunification and then to vulnerable asylum seekers. However, the ESTIA program ended in 2022, and several thousand asylum seekers were evicted and became homeless. According to several scholars, living conditions in the rented apartments prolong precariousness because the rental contracts are temporary (Kourachanis 2019a; Papatzani et al. 2022) and because these kinds of policies are limited to "residual type interventions with philanthropic features" (Kourachanis 2019b, 70). These arrangements favor welfare dependency for asylum seekers, as they are not coupled with labor training or opportunities for work. Asylum seekers are referred to as "beneficiaries" and reduced to depending on relationships of charity while at the same time their livelihoods become auxiliaries for the expansion of "philanthrocapitalism," which offers revenues to housing companies and landlords (Chuang 2015; Mitchell and Sparke 2016; Webber, Leitner, and Sheppard 2020).

Still, the ESTIA rental programs offered the opportunity for newcomers to live outside camps, to claim their right to the city, and to produce new relationships and commoning practices within and beyond their own communities. However, the Greek state's decision, without any sufficient justification (Refugee Support Aegean 2022), to end the accommodation program in rental apartments inside the urban fabric and to maintain only the state-run camps outside the cities cut off these possibilities abruptly. Most newcomers were left with limited options. Only a few among them had the choice to even return to camps. The changes in Greek policies correspond to the broader European Union restrictive migration policies, which carry explicit colonial legacies (Spijkerboer et al. 2021). In reality, in Greece,

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due to its geographical position on the perimeter of the European Union, the externalization of the EU immigration policy is applied (Bousiou 2020; Cobarrubias et al. 2023). For instance, the Dublin Regulation III (European Union 2013), which permits newcomers to apply for asylum only in the first arrival country, like Greece and other southern European countries, aims to prevent the movement of newcomers to countries in central and northern Europe. Thus, newcomers remain in the category of the unwanted foreigner, for whom a kind of "military humanitarianism" is foreseen (Tazzioli and Garelli 2020), which in the case of Greece manifests itself through marginalization, deprivation, and invisibility of newcomers in the precarious conditions of state-run camps and living in cargo containers.

Turning White Containers into Living Space

In the words of Fatima, a woman from Syria who lived in the state-run camp Diavata, outside of Thessaloniki: "People who leave the camps have psychological problems and traumas because they spent most of the time inside the container looking out through the little windows, like prisoners, desperate, disappointed, without having anything to do to keep themselves busy and distracted" (interview, September 5, 2020).

As we noted in the beginning, the white container has become a distinctive feature of state-run camps in Europe. The container was standardized by the US Army Transportation Corps in the late 1940s and was used during the Korean War and later on in the Vietnam War (Levinson 2016) for freight transport on ships, by rail, or on trucks. Today, in the format of the so-called isobox, it is widely used to accommodate newcomers in state-run camps. The initial idea behind the container was to move "goods from anywhere, to anywhere, with a minimum of cost and complication on the way" (Levinson 2016, 2). In a similar way, to achieve minimum cost—and at the same time reflecting the colonial legacies of camps—the isobox is a white container and, regardless of the cultural and social background of the newcomers, is used to house all newcomers.

Living in containers, newcomers are treated as a homogenized group, and the uniqueness, culture, customs, and desires of each individual mobile subject are erased and silenced. According to Dalal (2017, 1), these arrangements "generate an assumption that all refugees are the same." Thus, the newcomer is dehumanized and objectified; just like an object in transfer, she is placed in a container in so-called accommodation centers (camps).

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According to Peck et al. (2023, 60), "The notion of accommodation, as opposed to dwelling or housing, is highly problematic as it denies any active designing of one's everyday life by reducing it to the container space where one sleeps, eats and stores his or her things." Moreover, the characteristic white color of the containers, as well as of the famous white tents of the UNHCR, reflects the whiteness of the Western perception of humanity. Critical race theory on whiteness shows that practices and policies of whiteness reproduce racial oppression and colonize every aspect of the social world, including the reception of migrants (Bhambra 2017; De Genova 2017; Owen 2007). In the case of camps, the white color symbolically and visually reflects Western ideas about purity and therefore also expresses the process of purification of the other, the racialized stranger from the East or the South, who is usually perceived with "stereotypes . . . and well-worn cliché[s]" (Roy 2011, 225) as filthy, dirty, and uncivilized. Here, through the containerization of newcomers, the colonial aspect of Western humanitarian policies becomes more evident than ever.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting several counterpractices, which transform the containers according to the needs of their occupants. For example, in many camps in Athens and Thessaloniki, due to the lack of refrigerators, newcomers have hung cages holding fruit right outside the window of the containers to remain cool in the winter. Also, the camps' residents often reuse pieces of tents to create storage spaces outside the container. Many create small gardens in front of the containers to grow vegetables or flowers (see figure 7.2). In addition to these imaginative micromodifications of containers, newcomers often create hidden spaces in the gaps between the containers (see figure 7.3). For instance, during our visit to the Diavata camp, outside of Thessaloniki, newcomers kindly offered us tea and falafel and showed us around the camp. It was precisely 5:00 p.m., when the manager of the camp left, after which the camp changed radically. Until 5:00 there was absolute silence, with most of the residents inside the containers. But after 5:00 the camp came to life, with everyone hanging out outside the containers and with several small shops appearing out of nowhere in between spaces. Newcomers showed us around all the hidden shops. In the gaps between the containers, they created spaces partitioned with pieces of fabric—barbershops, mini markets, and small falafel kitchens. These secret small practices of necessity and contestation that remain hidden during daytime working hours are crucial for the daily life and reproduction of the newcomers in camps. After all, practices of camouflage are a typical

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FIGURE 7.2 Garden in front of a container in Schisto refugee camp in Athens. Credit: Charalampos Tsavdaroglou and Maria Kaika.

decolonial subversive technique, which unveils subaltern resistance activities (Bhabha 1994). However, we should be particularly careful not to romanticize these practices, as they can by no means overthrow the very essence of the camp as an oppressive structure of marginalization. The more radical practices of challenging the camps' regime can be observed in the newcomers' efforts to create housing commons within the urban fabric of Athens and Thessaloniki, which we shall turn to in the next section.

Inventing Housing Commons

Against the aforementioned state accommodation policies, alternative arrival infrastructures (Meeus, Arnaut, and van Heur 2019), such as housing projects, were created in Athens and Thessaloniki, seeking on the one hand

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FIGURE 7.3 Informal market in Vasilika camp in Thessaloniki. Credit: Charalampos Tsavdaroglou and Maria Kaika.

to respond to the immediate needs of newly arrived populations and on the other hand to experiment with forms of coexistence and symbiosis within the urban fabric. These are forms of self-housing that are defined by practices of reciprocity, inventiveness, and solidarity (Agustín and Jørgensen 2019; Lafazani 2018; Tsavdaroglou 2018; Tsavdaroglou and Kaika 2022b). Specifically, in Athens and Thessaloniki, since the fall of 2015 multiple abandoned public and private buildings within the urban fabric have been squatted by groups in solidarity with newcomers and have been transformed into housing commons for the newcomers (see figure 7.4).

At this point it is worth noting that the concept of commons and specifically urban commons has in recent years been linked to the practices of mobile populations. The literature describes a wide variety of self-managed urban commons projects, including urban gardens, housing projects, cooperatives, and self-organized healthcare, education, and work structures (Dellenbaugh et al. 2015; Newton and Rocco 2022; Stavrides 2016). Regarding the commoning practices of mobile populations, Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou, and Tsianos (2015, 19) have introduced the term "mobile commons," which refers to "the shared knowledge, affective cooperation, mutual support and

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FIGURE 7.4 Housing squat for refugees and immigrants, Notara 26, five-year anniversary, 2020. Credit: Charalampos Tsavdaroglou and Maria Kaika.

care between migrants, when they are on the move, when they arrive and/or settle." Those features are unmistakably noticeable in the cases of self-managed housing projects in Athens and Thessaloniki.

The sharp contrast between the camps and the self-organized housing commons is clear in the words of Salim, a newcomer from Afghanistan who stayed in the City Plaza migrants' squat in the center of Athens, an abandoned hotel that was turned into a migrants' housing project hosting about four hundred people.

> There is no life in the camp; to be precise, I have absolutely nothing to do in the camp, just chat with the other migrants about the unpleasant things that happen inside the camp. The camp is like a strange prison, cut off from the outside world. It is a boring and miserable place, like a cemetery. The security guards and the camp manager want us to be silent, as if we are dying. You have nothing to do in the camp. You talk about the ugly things, you get sad, you go to your container, like you go to your grave, you play on your mobile phone and sleep. This is the life in the camp. An absolute nothing. (Interview, February 12, 2018)

In contrast, he described his experience of the City Plaza migrants' squat, which is located in the very center of Athens:

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> Joy, care, and creativity prevail in City Plaza. It's like a big hug that welcomes everyone regardless of ethnicity, religion, and language. Many times, I talk about the life in City Plaza to the migrants in the Skaramangas camp and many of them have asked me if there is a room available in the City Plaza in order to leave the camp. Everyone wants to leave the camp. They see me every time I go from City Plaza to the camp, they see how I am changing. . . . They [are] always asking me if there will be a party at City Plaza, so they can leave the camp and come to the city. (Interview, February 12, 2018)

In addition, Karima, a refugee woman from Syria who stayed in the occupied Orphanage in Thessaloniki, describes her experience as follows: "It was an important project because it covered the immediate housing needs of many people who had no place to stay, people who had no papers, people who were homeless, who could not find a house in the city to stay. It was a safe place, a safe haven for refugees" (interview, April 29, 2019).

Fatima, an Iraqi woman, describes the daily functions of the Orphanage squat by emphasizing the processes of coexistence and sharing:

> In the shifts, we made sure they were mixed—for example, every day there was a cooking group, and we made sure people from different countries participated in it. This was done both for practical reasons, so that food could be eaten by all the inhabitants of the squat, but also to create bridges of communication between the inhabitants—i.e., to break down social and cultural boundaries in practice. There are big differences in how rice is cooked in India and Pakistan compared to how it is cooked in Africa, so there had to be a variety of flavors every day so that everyone felt familiar and of course to avoid complaints. (Interview, June 18, 2021)

Here, the hybrid and mixed character of the newcomers' housing commons comes into view, framing them as cross-cultural and hybrid spaces (Bhabha 1994) where different cultures do not demarcate borders but bridge diverse subjectivities, create new spaces of in-betweenness, and produce correlations and interconnections in the process of everyday homemaking.

In practice, the residents of housing commons demonstrate that they exceed the Western categorizations of immigrants as either victims or criminals, which is how they have been depicted by humanitarian organizations

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and state policies. Beyond those dichotomies, newcomers demonstrate agency, as they claim social and political rights and tangibly practice the right to the city. Ahmed, a newcomer from Algeria who lived in the Orphanage housing squat in Thessaloniki, emphasizes that the occupation is more than a housing project; it is also a political process of making claims.

> In addition to the daily functions of the squat, we also organized political actions, such as protests in the city center. The Orphanage squat was not just a home in the narrow sense of the term; it was a political project, and perhaps that made it more complete as a home. I left my home, my country, for political reasons, because I felt political oppression, and at the Orphanage I participated in the creation of a political home, where I could express myself freely. I could say my opinion and along with other migrants. We built a political house that spoke, demonstrated, claimed in the center of the city for the rights of refugees. For me the Orphanage was the door or the window to enter the city. (Interview, May 10, 2019)

The above narratives show that the self-organized housing commons have been innovative and inventive thresholds for the entry of newcomers to the city. The residents of housing commons experiment with forms of equality, participation, coexistence, and negotiation of various identities and social borders. It is worth mentioning here that newcomers' housing commons are not utopian locations, as they are constantly faced with a multitude of challenges and difficulties, and several times they have failed to constitute permanent and safe places of residence for the newcomers (Fisher and Jørgensen 2021; Lafazani 2018; Tsavdaroglou and Lalenis 2020). The most important challenge is the confrontation with state policies, such as the violent evictions of dozens of newcomers' squats that took place in the years 2016–21. The newcomers' housing squats were blamed for "degrading" the localities within which they were embedded. The localities were stigmatized as run-down areas by both the central and local governments, and there were arguments that these areas lost their "Greekness." The central government and mayors were in unison when they decided on the eviction of the occupied buildings (Tsavdaroglou and Kaika 2022b). The violent police evacuation operations of the self-organized housing projects in the centers of Athens and Thessaloniki and the relocation of their residents to the state-run camps outside of the cities confirm the colonial aspect of state migration

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policies that aim to recolonize newcomers' homes and neighborhoods and to ostracize them, forcing them to the outskirts of the cities.

Concluding Remarks: Asserting the Newcomers' Right to the City as a Decolonizing Process

Migration is treated by most European states, including Greece, primarily as a matter of security and humanitarian interventions (Darling 2014). In fact, migration policies increasingly take the form of "military humanitarianism" (Tazzioli and Garelli 2018). Newcomers are perceived as passive and helpless beings in need of humanitarian aid. At the same time, they are treated as unwanted foreigners who can only be offered hospitality under military rule—that is, through technologies and mechanisms of control, identification, and discipline—and are placed in state-run camps, which often deviate from official urban planning regulations. These policies for migrants draw on and extend the colonial legacies of camps, which form the basis of today's socio-spatial configurations of European state-run camps as places of exclusion and suspension of the "other," the unwanted stranger who is perceived as a threat to European sovereignty (Davies and Isakjee 2019).

It seems that in the cases of Athens and Thessaloniki, in particular, institutional migration policies are defined by racist practices with little effort at inclusion. Numerous policies marginalize and stigmatize newcomers, while in recent years any acts of solidarity are increasingly demonized and criminalized. Consequently, the management of the so-called refugee crisis is based on the logic of "the further away the better" or at least "out of here" (Papataxiarchis 2020, 22), adopting punitive and xenophobic practices of invisibilization and seclusion of newcomers in state-run camps outside the cities.

Against the policies of exclusion and marginalization and the enclosure of state-run camps, but also beyond the humanitarian actions of compassion and philanthrocapitalism, the self-organized commoning practices of newcomers in self-managed housing projects opened a new decolonial horizon of inventions in coexistence and solidarity. The inhabitants of housing commons undermine the colonial management of state-run camps and explore new transnational modalities and transformative spatialities within the urban fabric. These are socio-spatial inventions of personal and collective empowerment, cohabitation, and claiming the right to the city. Yet it is also clear that newcomers' housing commons are not utopian locations.

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They are better understood as an open dialogue to discover passages of communication between different cultures and identities.

Therefore, the examples of Athens and Thessaloniki highlight the limits of institutional policies when it comes to dealing with newly arrived people. If state migration policies are given meaning in terms of national purity aided by colonial supremacy and xenophobia, then newcomers' urban commons welcome new alterities; modify, decolonize, and disturb that context; and welcome difference by encouraging considerations and active practices of horizontal inclusion, symbiosis, transnational coexistence, and living-in-common. Newcomers' housing commons therefore cast light upon the limits and weaknesses of state policies, serve as a decolonial counterexample, and call for a reorientation of thinking and acting toward a reinvention of the newcomers' right to the city.

NOTE

1 We use the term *newcomers* to avoid institutional taxonomies and categorizations of refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, and displaced persons.

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