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## Reconnecting public space and housing research through affective practice

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### ABSTRACT

In autumn 2015, activists and refugees in Vienna appropriated train stations for shelter. This paper explores their affective practices in order to reflect on their agency to transform predominant ways of understanding and inhabiting public space. At the place of arrival they made their private domain of everyday struggles a part of public space. In so doing they have produced a powerful means for confronting socio-spatial inequalities. Affective practice can therefore be interpreted as the spatialized critique of alienated conditions of everyday life.

### Situating affect into lived (urban) space

#### *Affect and negotiating difference*

In autumn 2015, Vienna experienced mass migration of thousands of refugees who used their bodies to challenge national borders in Europe. Within a matter of weeks, 300,000 refugees passed through Vienna, with 21,600 refugees registering in Vienna for welfare support (Henley 2016). Private helpers and self-organized collectives, among them planners, designers and students, provided support at places where the institutional provision of care appeared absent or scarce. At Vienna's *Westbahnhof* (Vienna West) they joined institutional players in assisting incoming refugees. As the numbers peaked, a group of activists and volunteers without previous experience working with refugees self-organized at *Hauptbahnhof* (Vienna Main Station) to coordinate and provide assistance. Routinized regulatory practices of urban space's political administration have been primarily concerned with the city's image and economic competitiveness, hence giving primacy to efficiency and productivity over solidarity; however, individual and self-organized collective engagement has nurtured a new dimension of public space. Through shared moments of lived experience of solidarity, not only have refugees, activists and design professionals counteracted outbursts of fearful bias towards the other, but have also motivated more reluctant institutional players to act in support of inclusive public space. Their agency to assemble and mobilize positive synergies has created lived space of differences at Vienna's train stations. According to Ash Amin (2008, 18) such experiences can be understood as an 'everyday virtue of living with difference based on the direct experience of multicultural, getting around the

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mainstream instinct to deny minorities the right to be different or to require sameness or conformity from them’.

This paper explores affective practices of providing care and support to refugees at *Wien Hauptbahnhof* (Vienna Main Station) and *Wien Westbahnhof* (Vienna West Station), and reflects on the agency of activists, urban dwellers and refugees to transform predominant ways of understanding and inhabiting public space. The analytical framework draws from Lefebvre’s ([1946] 2014) ‘Critique of Everyday Life’ to understand how engaged groups and individuals create a lived space of capacity building through the plurality of spatialized struggles and bodily encounters. Embodied dimensions of such a space stand in contrast to alienated conditions of everyday life shaped by a tendency of capitalist urbanization to perpetuate societal inequalities. The implications of such a conceptual framework in urban design are manifold and extend beyond ethical concerns of reaching out to refugees’ communities and individuals. First, the paper establishes public space and housing research as interconnected and inseparable domains of knowledge production. Everyday struggles of activists and refugees at the place of arrival have drawn attention to and enhanced the use of public spaces for the making of home, while extending the (transitional) space of housing into an open, welcoming space. This concerns both the appropriations of public spaces for housing and the making of the private domain of intimate struggles a part of public space (cf. Agier 2002). Second, the paper examines how knowledge from bodily encounters and affective experiences can enhance urban policy in providing for urban dwellers’ needs. Social ties that newcomers create through planned and unplanned encounters in public space are central for learning about innovative practices of inhabiting public space (cf. Watson 2006). Through these encounters people create protected places of belonging where they feel safe and can relate values and memories from the past to present experiences and hope. From an ethical perspective these encounters include a greater degree of sensitivity towards ethnic, class and gendered structures of oppression and exploitation (cf. Federici 2011; Mokre 2015), which often go unrecognized in rationally conceived design practices.

To develop the argument, the paper situates the question of affective practices within broader debates on the critique of everyday life, suggesting that the making of home entails an everyday struggle centred on affect and bodily encounters. It further expands on the hypothesis that affective practices, which articulate the socio-cultural dimensions of home in public space, counteract socio-spatial divides in the city. The hypothesis is supported by an inquiry into counter spaces of activists providing assistance and care to refugees at Vienna’s train stations. The analyzed cases are put in a socio-historical context of Vienna’s public spaces of arrival. The paper concludes with a reflection on how affective practices transgress disciplinary and cultural boundaries and articulate a productive public critique of socio-spatial inequalities.

### *Affective practice*

An epistemological commitment to affect across many disciplines, spanning the humanities, social sciences and art, has primarily aimed to introduce ‘body, movement, tactility and the promise of immediacy as key variables’ of urban transformations (Angerer, Bösel, and Ott 2014, 8). These dimensions tend to be neglected in discursive

research based on representations of social space (narratives, discourses), and, accordingly, in a rationally-conceived design and planning practice. Furthermore, affect as a 'non-representational' domain (Thrift 2007) unlocks a potential for 'produc[ing] textured, lively analyses of multiple modes of engagement' and of 'understand[ing] the working of power through patterns of assemblage', beyond 'the limits of what can be readily verbalized' (Wetherell 2013, 350). However, a critical reading of affect does not exclude discursive knowledge about structural forces and conditions that define processes of capitalist urbanization with a tendency to perpetuate societal inequalities, such as historical materialism (cf. Hess et al. 2017). Rather, it seeks to understand the political potential of affect as the power to turn passions into action (Hardt 2007) and as a feature inherent to social relations (Angerer, Bösel, and Ott 2014).

The concept of affective practice puts affect into a mutually formative relationship with the material world, time and the social practice through which lived space of a city materializes. In this understanding, affect is not simply emotion. It extends beyond mere manifestations of individual reactions, involving 'packets of sensations and relations that outlive those who experience them' (Thrift 2007, 116; referring to Deleuze 1995, 137). This means that affect is shaped by situational formations and cultural differences, while simultaneously influencing our routines, actions and cultural expressions (Thrift 2007, referring to Deleuze 1995). Such a relational perspective emphasizes the human body as a key reference point for understanding dynamics of the politics of space (cf. Thrift 2007, referring to Deleuze 1995). While Nigel Thrift (2007, 175) refers to affect as 'a set of embodied practices that produce visible conduct as an outer lining' thus lying at the roots of human motivation and identity (Thrift 2007), Margaret Wetherell (2012, 19) further conceptualizes affective practice as an embodied, situated, dynamic and patterned 'figuration where body possibilities and routines become recruited or entangled together with meaning-making and with other social and material figurations'. Wetherell (2015, 160) explains that 'affective practice is a moment of recruitment, articulation or enlistment when many complicated flows across bodies, subjectivities, relations, histories and contexts entangle and intertwine together to form just this affective moment, episode or atmosphere with its particular possible classifications'. Vik Loveday (2015, 1143) further notes that affects viewed through a lens of social or cultural practices 'acknowledge the way in which individuals might be constrained in their ability to act, yet without completely removing the possibility for agency, or indeed resistance'. Affects therefore not only imbue space with meaning but are also indicative of power relations, which is why they set a productive framework for understanding how bodily encounters and lived experience influence larger planning and design transformations.

By inscribing affect in shared space (encompassing, for example, bodily encounters, oral history and material culture of refugees), engaged publics can develop a productive means to overcome silences and absences of those whose voices are not heard. In a similar manner the affective dimensions of the professional practice, which to some extent have been neglected following the modernist fragmentation and compartmentalization of planning and design disciplines, could help planners and designers more robustly adopt social responsibility in negotiating difference in public space.

The paper draws upon qualitative social research that was carried out between September 2015 and March 2016, consisting of a qualitative content analysis of social media postings, daily and weekly newspapers, and online journals, as well as

ethnographic interviewing and observation. Due to a sudden and unforeseeable course of events at the two train stations during the initial research phase, the ability to develop traditionally sound and reflected upon research methods was limited. Considering the sensitive nature of places predominantly shaped by migration practices, with regard to marginalization, stigmatization, exclusion and daily struggle, the research sought to avoid intruding into everyday lives of research subjects faced with traumatic conditions. Unstructured observation at the train stations was supplemented by open narrative interviews with activists and involved professionals outside of the train stations. As some of these conversations were conducted while the interviewed subjects were doing their regular work, it also allowed for gaining insight into the evolving nature of this type of voluntary labour.

An important part of research was an educational project 'Refugees and the City' which brought faculty and students into contact with refugees as well as the members of civil society working with refugees (see Knierbein and Kränzle 2016). The project was designed as a workshop for the annual 'Urbanize!' festival ([www.urbanize.at/2015/events](http://www.urbanize.at/2015/events)), an urban research festival intended to take place in October 2015 in the vacant building of the financial department in *Vordere Zollamtstraße* in Vienna. In light of a sudden increase of incoming refugees, this building, along with other vacant buildings in Vienna, was converted into an emergency aid shelter for refugees. An NGO that organizes the festival was encouraged by the Red Cross to nonetheless keep the festival, including this project, in the building. The organizers turned their festival into a Do-It-Yourself week, during which refugees, architects and designers as well as interested publics built furniture and set up a café for refugees to meet within the emergency shelter, which at times hosted 800 people. In the same shelter, a self-organized group of students collaborated with the Red Cross to create drawings and obtain building permits for temporary showers and to equip meeting rooms for language courses. This educational project provided an opportunity to researchers to engage in an open dialogue and productive exchange with refugees while jointly investing effort into improving living quality in the nineteenth century office building.

## Affective practices in Vienna

### *March of Hope*

In late August and September 2015 Vienna's two main train stations were transformed into places of both affective aid and resistance against the increasingly loud politics of fear (Knierbein and Gabauer 2017). The arrival of refugees from Hungary to Vienna captured international attention on 27 August when the bodies of 71 refugee children, men and women were found in an abandoned truck on a motorway close to Austria's border with Hungary (*Al Jazeera*, 29 August 2015). Refugees' struggles to cross from Hungary to Austria culminated on 4 September, when refugees, who were camping at Budapest's Keleti railway station, organized in response to the decision of Hungary's government to prevent them from boarding trains to Western Europe, and set off on foot towards Vienna. This embodied act of a struggle for free movement spread over the media under the name *March of Hope*.

As refugees were using their bodies to challenge the construct of national borders, Austria's then chancellor, Werner Faymann, and the state administration embarked upon diplomatic negotiations with Germany and Hungary to alleviate tensions in European politics and secure a peaceful and smooth passage through Austrian borders, thus setting conditions for the national railway company, Vienna's municipal administration, NGOs and private helpers to organize and provide support to refugees on their journey. In an almost dramatic manner, Blume et al. (2016) documented events, negotiations and dilemmas of key political figures and refugees alike during the first weekend of the mass movement across borders within the European Union, while concluding: 'If the refugees had not decided on the morning of September 4 to start marching on foot from Budapest's Keleti station to Vienna, European history that weekend would have turned out differently' (Blume et al. 2016). Blume et al. also attributed a decisive significance to the swift reaction of the head of Austria's national railway company ÖBB, Christian Kern, who sent buses and special trains to the border crossing with Hungary to transport the refugees to Vienna, and assist them in the continuation of their journey. Kern, who less than a year later became Austria's chancellor for a short-term, rationalized this decision by naming two elements: 'On the one hand was the humanitarian act. On the other, we had extremely pragmatic concerns: The people would have walked in along the tracks anyway' (Kern, quoted in Blume et al. 2016).

While institutional actors, such as ÖBB, received substantial media coverage because of the sheer size of their acts, a number of refugees were aided by many private helpers, who mobilized to organize a transfer from the border to Vienna in private cars. Moreover, some people decided to drive into Hungary, sometimes all the way to Budapest, to pick up refugees and help them reach Vienna and Germany, risking serious people trafficking charges. Many helpers opened their homes to refugees and provided accommodation and sustenance, turning their domestic sphere into a certain form of a transitory space. In search of family members, relatives and friends who had gone lost during the arduous journey, private helpers and NGOs supported refugees to establish contacts with activists at different places along the refugees' route through the Balkans, and developed a series of coordinated actions of bringing people across borders. This hard labour, which many helpers engaged in on top of their regular work and family obligations, created affective and productive transnational bonds. These bonds continue to challenge the construct of the fortress of Europe, which links the ideals of well-being and the freedom of movement to the making of the European Union's external borders impenetrable through extensive surveillance, (military) safeguards and deterrence policies (cf. Geddes and Taylor 2013; Leggeri 2018).

### *Institutional help at Vienna West Station*

As Vienna's *Westbahnhof* (Vienna West) was a designated point of arrival for refugees transported by the buses and trains of the national railway company, this was where humanitarian aid was offered. Aid was organized by institutional actors united under the banner 'Refugees welcome!', including the staff of the national railway company ÖBB, Caritas, the Red Cross, the Vienna Police, activists from left and centre-left parties as well

as members of emerging publics who joined in solidarity. The City of Vienna distributed a welcoming note on leaflets and through social media stating:

Welcome. We have prepared for supporting you during your stay and as *you continue your journey* [emphasis added]. Members of the Austrian Federal Railways (OEBB), the Vienna paramedics and the police are here at the railway station to meet you. ... Many Viennese are supporting us as we distribute food and water to you. ... We are doing our very best to organize assistance. You are safe. The City of Vienna (for the photograph of a leaflet and an experience of a Vienna based product designer, see Radford 2015)

Caritas was the main humanitarian player at *Westbahnhof*. Caritas is a confederation of Roman Catholic relief, development and social service organizations with international experience in organizing and providing humanitarian aid and shelter. Technical, managerial and social expertise is, however, collected and utilized through locally embedded work. Caritas carries out its work both in cooperation with other humanitarian aid alliances, such as the Red Cross, and independently, depending on a variety of aspects of institutional resource distribution and reputational politics. While Caritas workers in coordinating roles are paid, the confederation relies heavily on volunteers to do 'work on the ground'. The employed staff are trained to quickly and pragmatically instruct volunteers thus channelling the confederations' expertise into local places where help is needed.

Caritas was able to provide humanitarian aid to thousands of refugees arriving at *Westbahnhof* in only a couple of days and served as a central coordinator between those who provide short-term shelters and those involved in creating long-term housing solutions for refugees. On a wider discursive level, Caritas' president in Austria, Michael Landau, has called for a politics of welcoming in Europe and advocated a secure and legal access to procedures for granting asylum (*Die Presse*, 1 September 2015).

### ***Train of Hope: compassion and aid at Vienna Main Train Station***

At *Hauptbahnhof* (Vienna Main Station) no organized aid was provided. However, refugees who were aided by private helpers or travelling on their own were arriving at this station. Recognizing that there was no formal assistance offered, a group of young voluntary helpers spontaneously organized to provide support. The main station emerged as a particular place of care where private helpers gathered under the label *Train of Hope* (<http://www.trainofhope.at>). They established an NGO a month later. The initiative, which started with a couple of tables offering food in the terminal's east wing and 130 beds in the then uncompleted bike garage, grew fast and was soon serving meals to up to 3000 people daily, offering medical care, childcare, electricity, translation services, legal advice, internet access and even SIM cards, expanding its space to the square in front of the station by erecting temporary structures, such as tents and mobile toilets. In terms of urban design, a significant quality of this initiative lies in establishing non-exclusionary and productive linkages with institutions as well as major actors on the NGO scene in order to provide shelter, housing and homes.

What initially might have seemed to be an informal action by young people dedicating their free time to political engagement and human rights, within just two weeks developed into a horizontal and networked group of approximately 1000 volunteers,

former refugees and those willing to offer assistance, financial and material support or shelter for refugees. They were organized in more than 20 'departments', each focusing on a certain functional operations, such as provision of food, clothes, medical care and travel assistance. They professionalized their action over an extremely short period of time and quickly achieved high and timely operational standards in providing support. However, their action was imbued with social critique, which was reflected on by one of the involved activists: 'the question is whether it should actually be the State's responsibility to cope and to deal with refugees in a useful and humanitarian way'. Seeing how this is 'obviously not happening', he continued, 'doing nothing is not a solution', and for this reason *Train of Hope* was initiated (*ORF Online*, 11 September 2015, translated by Laura Bruce).

*Train of Hope* was not only a socially active NGO, but also a form of political protest whose lived space was mirrored in helpers' various social and cultural backgrounds. One of the volunteers summarized an affective dimension of their action in a statement: 'It does not matter what language you speak, I tell volunteers. You have to be kind and loving to these people who have been through so much' (Surk 2015). *Train of Hope* soon became a central location for donations and a connecting point for different activist groups and organizations that has assisted refugees in moving from temporary shelters to more decent housing conditions. A group of urban design students from TU Wien, for example, turned their studio and workshop space in the vicinity of *Hauptbahnhof* into a temporary shelter offering to refugees a place for recovery and sleep. The City of Vienna's agency *Fonds Soziales Wien* (<http://www.fsw.at/>) was entrusted with the task of finding buildings in the city's direct ownership or in the ownership of other institutional actors which could serve as refugee shelters.

In addition to the city's administration, a vibrant network of NGOs and informal groups, including major organizations such as Caritas, Volkshilfe and the Red Cross, continue providing assistance to persons who were granted asylum and are required to leave shelters after a certain time period. These organizations have developed schemes to rent apartments for people whom property owners would initially tend to distrust and be unlikely to rent to.

Following a concerted diplomatic offensive of European governments against porous borders, in 2016 refugees' arrivals significantly decreased. By December 2015 *Train of Hope* had reorganized and relocated from Vienna's *Hauptbahnhof* to other spaces and domains of social work. During the peak time of refugees' arrival in Vienna, however, *Train of Hope* provided support, shelter and a decent atmosphere of rest and peace for bodies shattered by a hazardous and exhausting journey and traumas from war and repression.

The implications of activists and refugees inhabiting Vienna's *Hauptbahnhof* extend beyond political concerns of care and protest into social and symbolic dimensions of space. They have deeply changed the prevailing understanding of the newly constructed train station as a commodified transitory space.

Vienna's newly constructed *Hauptbahnhof* has been one of the key urban development projects through which Vienna's governance structures have sought to enhance the city's competitive position in the global service economy. It lies at the heart of a large development scheme which has been materializing since the early 2000s via a broad consensus of governing and business elites on the site of *Südbahnhof* (Vienna

South Station) and adjacent abandoned railway grounds. However, *Südbahnhof*, as well as the row of parking for intercity buses along its east side, hold an important place in the memory of a large number of Vienna's residents. This space acted as a place of arrival for immigrants, refugees and guest workers from East and Southeast Europe. For some people it was a symbolic place of longing, hope, fear and violence connected to the lived experiences of coming to the unknown (cf. Kellermann 2009). Others continued to appropriate it as part of everyday life's routines and encounters (Kellermann 2009). As the new urban design project has removed the somewhat deprived materiality of the *Südbahnhof* and pushed the bus terminal further away to the city's periphery, it has also endeavoured to replace the symbolically and politically charged place with an aestheticized space of consumption. The ambitious architecture aims to create an iconic entry into the city. Glass and steel high-rise buildings accommodating headquarters of national corporations and international hotel chains loom over the station which is a curated mix of retail spaces with an integrated minimum of ancillary services and non-commercial space for sitting. As foreseen in the development concept, people have been mainly invited to participate in this space as consumers, an objective pursued already during the construction. A temporary tower with promotional spaces and an observation deck 40 metres above the ground engaged the public in the consumption and communication of images.

For a short period in autumn 2015 the materiality of the train station stunningly changed; bodies and clothes of people who suffered long exhausting journeys, often not being able to disguise their distress upon arrival, agile volunteers who were pushing their bodies to the limit, people in sleeping bags or sitting on blankets spread on the floor, all surrounded by fragile temporary structures of which many were created through small design acts and improvisation. This insurgent materiality stood in stark contrast with a glossy architecture of a newly erected train station dominated by polished green stone, glass and metal. *Train of Hope* created political moments of spatial appropriation and inscribed in this space symbolic counter meanings even before the station entered full operation. Their action has shed light on the basic qualities that any public space design should provide, including open access to basic amenities (such as water or electricity) as well as complex provisions such as recovery and communication among other salient issues. Fresh memories of arrival have marked this location as not only a spectacle of a transitory space of consumption, but as a meaningful place filled with hopes, uncertainty, desires and affect.

### *Refugees' struggles preceding 'Train of Hope'*

The movement at Vienna's *Hauptbahnhof* as well as institutionally organized aid at Vienna's *Westbahnhof* built on the tradition of refugees' struggles in Vienna. According to Gržinić and Tatlić (2014), embodied space of the Refugee Protest Camp erected in November 2012 played a key role in refugees' emancipation as political subjects who have power to '[perform and act] out political equality in the space of the EU's pre-established political, social, and economic inequality' (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014, 104). Refugees marched from the reception centre in Traiskirchen, 25 km south of Vienna, to create a protest camp in front of the *Votivkirche*, a church on Vienna's famed Ringstrasse. By articulating demands for better living conditions (adequate food, right

to mobility, social life and information), and the right to stay and work, Gržinić and Tatlić (2014, 105) argue, refugees repoliticized space 'not by simply asking to be included' but by 'appropriating the space that was seen as inaccessible to them'. Refugees' appropriation of central public space can be seen as both spatialized questioning of the relations between centre and periphery and a collective act of subverting the space of traditional politics by challenging capitalist structures of power, such as race, class and gender, beyond the immediate questions of humanitarian rights (Mokre 2015).

The living conditions in the reception centre in Traiskirchen continued to mobilize parts of Vienna's civil society, fuelling wider public debates on Austria's reception of refugees. As the number of refugees coming to Austria grew, the conditions in Traiskirchen have continued to deteriorate, particularly due to a lack of provision from responsible national bodies. Instead of responding to calls to organize more first-aid refugee camps across the country, Austria's then Minister of the Interior, Johanna Mikl-Leitner (OEVP, Austria's Christian-democratic and conservative party), ordered for more tents to be erected on the camp grounds, thus increasing the stress factor and precariousness of living conditions in the already overcrowded reception centre. Following increasingly negative media coverage of deteriorating living conditions in Traiskirchen reception centre, in late July 2015, Amnesty International (AI), Médecines sans Frontières, the Red Cross and Caritas jointly denounced inhumane living conditions of the most vulnerable, traumatized and marginalized groups in a wealthy European country. Subsequent measures undertaken by the state administration saw the relocation of some of the displaced people to other pop-up shelters, such as the Vienna Airport Hangar. However, only a few weeks later, the Ministry of the Interior issued a freeze on further admissions, thus effectively leaving many people locked inside the camps while ousting the newly arrived to living as homeless people on the streets around the shelters.

On 31 August 2015, the inhumane conditions surrounding Traiskirchen reception centre again mobilized the public in Vienna. Nadia Rida, a youth worker, filed a request with Vienna's municipality to organize a public demonstration which brought 20,000 people to the streets of Vienna marching with and for refugees, calling for a radical change in national politics to guarantee basic human rights, a welcoming culture and the immediate improvement of the conditions in Traiskirchen (reported by *The Guardian*, 1 September 2015). This gathering, however, was overshadowed by the finding of the 71 dead refugees in a truck abandoned on a motorway a few days earlier.

## Politics and spaces of affect

### *Affective practice resonating with 'Critique of Everyday Life'*

An article written in the wake of the World War II by Erika Mann and Eric Estorick (1939, 142) reminds, neither the 'refugee problem', nor the pleas to the scientific community to preserve democracy are 'by any means ... new one'. In Mann and Estorick's contribution, the rationality of scientific analysis is contrasted with the retreat of the totalitarian states to irrationality and intolerance. Discussions on the 'refugee crisis', as it is labelled in current discourses, are manifold and generally participate in the endeavour to situate an

increased movement of people into both global and localized political and social space (Hess et al. 2017). A plurality of methodologies across multiple disciplines have sought to channel individual's affects into research and spatial practice built on rationality and reason (cf. Brun 2001). Due to primacy given to rationality, however, the support to refugees has been established as a quantifiable measure, subject to sectoral research and application. Even though governance structures offering support to refugees have been expanding in both the size and number, such an approach has not produced sufficient knowledge about experiential topographies of refugees' everyday lives that trigger insurgency and action (cf. Malkki 2002). Furthermore, critical perspectives are concerned with the tendency of Western scientific production and humanitarian agencies to mould diverse experiences and narratives into a 'de-politicized and de-historicized image of refugees' as a mute and helpless 'physical mass' which is denied the right to produce institutional and political change (Rajaram 2002, 247).

This paper argues that affective practices at train stations have produced a means for refugees to speak for themselves. In this sense, it evokes Butler's conceptualization of bodies that care and are cared for as central in creating support to act. In her view:

action is always supported and ... is invariably bodily .... The material supports for action are not only part of action, but they are also what is being fought about, especially in those cases when the political struggle is about food, employment, mobility, and access to institutions. (Butler 2012, 119)

The work bodies have done to appropriate space and to rupture routinized political and economic flows has been central to conceiving affective practice not as a mere solitary action, but as a strategic action against national(ist) politics hesitant to provide adequate shelter and home to people in crisis and transition (Knierbein and Gabauer 2017). By offering to people in crisis a protected place of belonging to recuperate, to live and become part of a collective effort, these insurgent actions rendered private everyday struggles of refugees a matter of public concern. At the same time, through the sharing of intimate experiences within public space, refugees have rationally formulated a structural critique and a strategic action calling for legal interventions and policy change.

In terms of spatial development, affective practices carry the potential of contesting and reframing the modernist tradition of drawing boundaries between public and private spaces in the city (Madanipour 2003). These boundaries have been embedded in spaces of everyday life alongside other socio-spatial divisions as a manifestation of power relations and social hierarchies (Lefebvre [1946] 2014). Routinized practices of administering, planning and designing urban space may carry the risk of preserving these socio-spatial relations, without reflecting on them or actively challenging them. Humanitarian governance structures consisting of state actors, humanitarian agencies and private corporations often replicate similar ambivalences in regard to their involvement in spaces of refugees' everyday life struggles. Their support is provided as part of sectoral management chiefly concerned with efficiency, often failing to address silences and absences of those whose voices are not heard. The critique from the refugee studies raises concern that humanitarian aid thus also tends to normalize the precarious lived everyday realities of refugees as given and ordinary (Agier 2002). Reluctant to sincerely

address political dimensions of migrations, the technocratic governance regimes have often not prevented the rise of an intolerant and xenophobic sentiment in public space (Knierbein and Gabauer 2017).

The way activists channel affects into a collective formation of the organized voicing or bodily expression of care stands in contrast to the technocratic conduct of humanitarian policy. Their actions do not aim at providing only for material needs, but also at producing meaningful places of encounter and (political) passion, where those who seem not to have capital to execute power over space are carefully encouraged to articulate their needs and wants. Such places of care underline that humanitarian aid and support are essentially political and to a great extent dominated by asymmetries in power relations within hierarchically produced space (cf. Lefebvre [1946] 2014).

### *Reconnecting housing and public space research*

Elke Krasny (2015, 17) expands on the feminist critique of the public-private divide to discuss the politics of care which have 'become a public issue, not only on the domestic scale, but on the urban scale'. She draws reference to Ann Cvetkovich (2012) to situate affect and bodily experience at the border of public life, everyday life, domesticity and private life. Her finding calls for reconsidering methodologies of public space and housing research, which usually have been connected to the rule of reason and a rationally conceived public sphere (Brigde 2005).

Away from orchestrated sentiments of strategic place making (Friedmann 2010) and selective (regardless of how inclusive) memories of collective heritage (Russell 2007), affective practices engaging in everyday life struggles carry potential to disrupt the routinized socio-spatial divides in the city. They acknowledge common forms of agency exercised in public and domestic spaces of everyday life, mostly in line with Lefebvre's ([1946] 2014) anticipation of a changing balance between repetitive and inventive praxis. The importance of affect as a key constituent of lived space lies in acknowledging socio-spatial practices of those who are structurally foreclosed and ignored. Through shared spaces of affect, they make their bodies visible and recognized in public space (against structural and practical constraints) (Blum and Nast 1996).

While dialectics drawing on Marxist conceptualizations of relational space (Lefebvre [1974] 1991) have already made a notable contribution in the direction of deconstructing dichotomies between public and private, this paper points to affective practices as central to developing radical dialectics between housing and public space. As opposed to conceptions based entirely on reason and rationality that are prevalent in urban design theory, planning and urban studies, cases discussed in this paper invoke three additional key moments: affect, experience and body. At Vienna's *Hauptbahnhof* affective interactions, lived experiences and the needs to sustain bodies emerged in public space, even though these dimensions had been socially expected to be kept within the private domain. Public space was basically used for domestic purposes and a spatial articulation of refugees' need for a protected place of belonging – home. This endeavour carries a strong political note, as it has brought to the public's attention the traumas of repression and war as well as intimate struggles of finding one's own place at the point of arrival (Knierbein and Gabauer 2017).

Lived spaces have continuously been produced in a tension-filled dynamic between processes of capitalist development replicating socio-spatial boundaries and spatial insurgencies filled with hope of disrupting the existing and grounding a new albeit contingent order (Marchart 2007). Lived space is constituted through bodily encounters involving trust and affective interactions. Those who do not have capital to secure visibility and influence in the media or public sphere mobilize it as resource in making themselves visible to the majority of society. This notion of lived space might therefore provide a fruitful basis for carving a productive response to the growing criticism of liberal modernity. Bayat (2013) articulated this criticism in dialectics between opportunities and exclusionary devastating effects that the same modernity delivers to various groups depending on their identities, class and social condition:

Modern capitalist economy and science, urbanization, education, and the idea of citizenship are closely tied to the flourishing of new social groups such as the bourgeois, professional classes, youth, and public women who foster new social existence and habitus, and engender particular demands. At the same time, on the margins of the modern political economy, ways of life, and institutions, lies a great humanity that is excluded from the modern offerings, in terms of life-chances, respect, equality, and meaningful political participation. (Bayat 2013, 242)

Another perspective concerns a tendency ingrained in capitalist accumulation towards fetishizing complex mosaics of public space as one of the main pillars of symbolic urban economies (Zukin 1995). Urban dwellers have been encouraged to appropriate urban centres, to appropriate spaces left over after the previous wave of capitalism, and recreate them as diversified environments (Madanipour, Knierbein, and Degros 2014). Regardless of whether they were pioneering occupation of abandoned industrial estates, innovating urban economies by contributing free labour in emerging creative sectors, or buying into new housing developments, urban publics were meant to submit to the 'coercive laws of competition' (Harvey 2013, 48), with private struggles of outsiders and those who fall behind meant to be carefully kept hidden behind glossy facades of rejuvenated urban plazas and promenades (Tyler 2015).

The case studies here show that affective practices have been generated, shared and mobilized in public space as insurgent means of resistance to strong capitalist forces of commodifying social space of cities and quashing urban solidarity. Embedded in lived counter space as an expression of both anti- and alter-politics, these practices have opened opportunities for emancipation, particularly of excluded groups (Knierbein and Gabauer 2017). They have not only articulated and endorsed the right to shelter, but have also claimed the right to influence public policy. Affect and bodily encounters have thus become powerful means of contesting and disrupting routinized practices of one-sided representation and policy making. By rendering a private domain of embodied experiences a matter of public concern, those who had been under(re)presented, silent and absent in public space, have successfully come into focus of broader debates. For who is usually under(re)presented, silent and absent in public space (such as vulnerable groups and individuals who do not have a strong voice or have been criminalized) can be encountered and researched within the domain of domestic life of private households and homes. Vice versa, practices of marginalization, oppression, exploitation and intimate struggles that belong to the domestic domain of homes and households remain a private problem unless

their bodily presence in public space mobilizes action of broader publics. Only in public space can they be reflected on from a critical perspective and articulated as a structural problem, rather than as a private fate. A struggle of refugees in Vienna to make their home at the place of arrival against structural conditions of criminalization, exclusion and othering was made visible and possible in lived public space.

### The significance of affect for urban research and design

This paper explored an activist engagement in Vienna's public space, which, in the wake of arrival of a large number of people facing forced migration, has made a meaningful difference. Activists' affective practices seemed to be central in challenging a prevalent tendency of humanitarian governance structures and the social majority's tendency to homogenize refugees' plural identities and backgrounds. Institutional approaches to providing assistance concerned with the quantitative and efficient provision of humanitarian aid tended to deal with refugees as abstract and anonymous figures in the state of exception. This approach centred on sheltering people in the reception centre and in some instances resulted in a policy and institutional practice which were almost cruel towards people in a state of crisis and transition. Affective practices involving refugees, activists, urban design students, teachers and professionals, as well as heterogeneous publics, have extended the imperative of giving urgent assistance to the matters of affective engagement with refugees' particular histories, memories, cultures and experiences.

Refugees' inhabiting of public space throughout various migratory phases is coupled with a plurality of spatialized struggles, ranging from the urgency of finding a shelter to making a home at the place of arrival. Depending on the utterly heterogeneous identities and backgrounds of refugees, including their class, religion, family, societal ties and position, partly traumatic and very personal experiences and memories, both public and newly acquired private space can mean protection or risk, emancipation or vulnerability. While some will avoid public space fearing harassment and violence, others will use it as an opportunity to collectively organize and articulate hopes and needs. These ambivalences are negotiated within everyday life that connects both private and public spaces. Planned and unplanned embodied encounters in public space (or lack thereof) to a great extent shape the agency of refugees and engaged publics to influence political changes. Affect channelled into support and care utilizes public space for the making of protected places of belonging where people in transition and crisis can find their own worth in spite of stereotypes deeply embedded in the mainstream. Spatial research and design practices that ethically engage with the everyday life and material cultures at such places contribute to the emancipation of political subjects and their capacity to challenge the practices and discourses of 'othering'.

Routinized regulatory and economic practices tend to commodify urban space as a financial product. With far-right parties, authoritarian discourses and attempts to impose control on public space on the rise around the globe, the type of spaces increasingly being produced tend to favour one's own kind and fear the Other. Spaces of nurturing a critical public response to this utilize an astonishing knowledge of self-organization, rational management and technical proficiency while endorsing affect and bodily encounters as empowering acts for the under(re)presented, silent and absent, thus

making a meaningful contribution to endeavours of reinstating the use value of urban space. Finally, insurgencies articulating and endorsing the right to housing, shelter and partake in setting political agendas have been contesting spatial conceptualizations and practices that were giving primacy to reason and rationality over affect and bodily encounters. Their counter space can thus be interpreted as a means of grounding an abstract political struggle in the lived spaces of cities. In light of this critique, output oriented means centred on providing for urban dwellers' needs in a quantitative manner do not produce sufficient knowledge relevant for analyzing and interpreting lived space. Affective practices and bodily experiences, in combination with rational enquiry into structural conditions, do. This paper has therefore proposed developing a conceptual framework at the interface between housing and public space design that would encompass an exploration into qualities of affect and bodily experiences in addition to consideration of structural processes of people's movements and (re)distribution. Affective urban design practices span both public and private realms, intersect their niches and engage with the blind residues at their interfaces, thus shaping practical urban knowledge that bridges disciplinary and cultural differences and addresses silences and absences of excluded groups and individuals in a productive and ethical manner.

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