

CHAPTER 5

Somewhere: Rethinking Liminality in Border Regimes

In this chapter, I theoretically explore how the concepts of liminality and inbetweenness contribute to understanding the social-urban transformation of the Dzjangan, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales from spaces labeled as non-places and places of exception into places of conviviality. I reflect on the inbetweenness of migratory experiences as the uncertainties shaped by contemporary border regimes, as well as the driving force of the creation of alternative placemaking in today's urban spaces.

5.1 Rethinking Non-Places and Places of Exception

Back in the years between 2015 and 2018, during my volunteer artistic work across various “refugee camps” in Germany, France, Italy, Turkey, and Chile, I repeatedly encountered a familiar term used by outsiders to describe these spaces: “non-places.” Visitors, volunteers, artists, architects, urban planners, and academics often portrayed these camps as transit zones—uninhabitable spaces suspended between departure and arrival (see Brugiatelli, 2016; Gregory, 2011; Sharma, 2009). This perspective led scholars in the arts, architecture, and social sciences to further examine how “refugee camps,” akin to train stations, airports, or hotels, might be understood as non-places. Such locations are seen as extraterritorial, linked to a worldwide network of enclaves, displaced and detached from their immediate surroundings. Their specific location and social context seem of little concern to external observers. Within this narrative, “refugee camps” are described as transit spaces devoid of history, identity, and belonging—places where waiting and the inability to shape one’s environment become defining characteristics.

Repeatedly encountering this notion of non-places from those external to the “refugee camps,” I began to question how these locations—while sharing the transient nature of transit hubs—could still foster belonging and a sense of home. During my days at NUKs (Notunterkunft/Emergency shelter) in Berlin between 2015 and 2016, working as a trainer in art workshops for children and women seeking refuge (see Chapter 3), I observed how these “refugee centers,” set up in former municipal

gyms, hotels, and airports, gradually acquired an atmosphere of home. Originally designated by the German state for short-term stays before relocation to private flats, the NUKs became longer-term residences as the German integration system faltered. People began staying for months or even years, challenging the assumed temporariness of these spaces and developing strategies to create belonging and home. Despite being labeled as “non-places” and categorized as “places of exception” in European academic debates, these sites evolved into lived spaces where such notions were contested by the dynamics of human habitation.

To unpack this tension, I turn to the origins of the term “non-places,” first introduced by anthropologist Marc Augé in *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* (1995). Augé distinguishes between “anthropological places” and “non-places,” examining spatial, urban, and social developments in major metropolises within the framework of rapid modern production, which he termed supermodernity. Augé argues that non-places are a product of supermodernity, providing examples where “refugee camps” fall under this classification. “Anthropological places,” as defined by Augé, serve as a shared ground where ethnologists and culturally rich communities converge, fostering interpersonal interactions and a sense of belonging. Augé describes them as spaces occupied by “indigenous people” who not only inhabit, cultivate, and protect them but also recognize the presence of ancestral or spiritual entities within their private geography (Augé, 1995: 33). In distinguishing between “anthropological place” and “non-place,” Augé draws upon the sociologist Michel de Certeau’s delineation of place and space (1984). De Certeau characterizes “space” as a “frequented place,” where the movements of individuals intersect with urban environments. He illustrates this concept by stating that it is the pedestrians who imbue a street (typically defined as a place by urban planners) with a sense of space (Augé, 1995: 85). Augé underscores that the dichotomy between place and space is not identical to the contrast between place and non-place. Space represents a convergence of diverse elements, fostering a distinct sense of belonging: the relationship between the human and the more-than-human. In contrast, non-places are the physical absence of human belonging in the space. As Augé (1995: 77–78) puts it: “If a place can be defined as relational, historical, and concerned with identity, then a space that cannot be defined as relational, historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place.”

From this perspective, Augé argues that supermodernity produces non-places, which are spaces that are not anthropological places—being without history, culture, or any clear sense of self—setting aside what Charles Baudelaire called “places of memory” (see Nora and Cuesta, 1998), as an element of belonging within space and the urban. Supermodernity has created places within the city that are transitory and temporary, “non-places are then defined based on precisely what place is not” (Joukowsky Institute, n.d.). Augé considers places as spaces with a deep relationship and history, which have an intimate connection and identity with the space

and the human body inhabiting it, from social and individual places highlighted in the landscape and establishing the relationship between humans and the world. He considers non-places contradictory to these attitudes of spatial belonging and its relationship with its environment: hospitals, clinics, hotels, holiday resorts, malls, supermarkets, train stations, airports, bus stops, refugee camps, and shantytowns threatened with demolition, thus remaining within contemporary transport and transit spaces. These spaces fall into the category of places “without history,” “without belonging,” and “disconnect[ed]” from the environment (Augé, 1995).

In his view, non-places—whether luxurious or uninhabitable—occupy the same conceptual level. Rather than examining their socioeconomic dimensions, Augé frames them primarily through the lens of constant flux, noting that they share a degree of external control and technological oversight. Humans are transformed into a number, a code that comes and goes—leaving aside the individual and his belonging. He refers to aspects of non-places and places that intersect and that modern and supermodern places can be characterized by elements of expropriation that non-places have. “Place and non-place are rather opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed” (Augé, 1995: 79). In this sense, non-places have never managed to contemplate and engage the memory and belonging within the space, which can never become a place. Its infrastructure is created from the beginning as a place with no memory, a cold and calculating space in which its creation aims not to create belonging within the city. The collective and the communitarian become individual: “The individual in contact only with another image of himself” (Augé, 1995: 79).

The book *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* (Augé, 1995) provides a new outlook in the 1990s on understanding spatial experience under conditions of supermodernity. However, dealing with places as “anthropological places” and “non-places,” as Augé describes them, is a challenging scenario debated by the academy today. We have to deal with a postcolonial approach criticizing “ethnographic illusions” (Joukowsky Institute, n.d.). In a postcolonial era, identity and the sense of belonging to a place are constantly rewritten and modified. Although some places no longer exist, some of them remain in the local collective memory and history in the face of rapid modernity—considering the places’ deep histories, memories, and belongings, even if they are places of transit with technological control, violence, and deterritorialization from state power. Today it is possible to find traces of belonging, sociability, conviviality, and a sense of “home,” countering Augé’s definition of non-places within the city (I will come back to this point in later paragraphs).

Today’s “Non-places”

While everyday life and local dynamics challenge Augé’s definition of non-places, his framework continues to be applied by scholars exploring urban fear, mobility, and

exclusion today. As the urbanists Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin (2022) have analyzed in their paper “Splintering Urbanism at 20 and the ‘Infrastructural Turn,’” non-places are a response to fear in large postmodern cities. They are negatively represented and characterized by crime, economic instability, “migrant” mobility and post-migrant societies. Non-places are today being considered as the container for the “others” of society—vagrants, criminals, and “migrants”—who, by not belonging to a place, do not enter the dynamics of the city. Some debates in urban studies, anthropology, political economy, and postmodernism consider contemporary non-places as a false civic and democratic life, where the “political man” vanishes in the speed of the city and the constant flux (Sharma, 2009). They are centralized in contrast to the ideal public spaces designed for the everyday life of the “citizen with the city,” opposing what the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (2004: 72) refers to as “citizens without a city.”

Contemporary non-places are considered to lack culture, identity, and community, as well as the idea of the citizen as an active and political entity (Sharma, 2009). The fear of municipalities and “privileged citizens” of having their public spaces transformed into “non-places” has led them to take different strategies to “reclaim” these spaces as “public” but simultaneously accessible only to a distinct group in society. I noticed in my walks through squares and parks in Antofagasta, Chile an example of this reclamation. Currently, some Venezuelan and Colombian communities have taken over public spaces due to the lack of help from the Chilean government in providing shelters. These communities have transformed public spaces into social places and homes. Using the public arena, they have managed to install tents and mobile kitchens (see Soychile newspaper, 2021¹). The response of the Antofagasta city council, in the form of political propaganda and police action, was that public spaces must be “reclaimed and protected” from these “other” members of society. The mayor of Antofagasta, Jonhatan Velasquez, states: “we will continue working to recover our public spaces so that Antofagasta families can enjoy them” (official Instagram, antofagastamuni, May 2022, my English translation).

Nowadays, in the city of Calais on the coast between France and the UK, the situation is similar. People-in-transit, mainly from Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq, arrive at the Calais train station from Paris or Lille without having prior information on the city’s dynamics. Usually, they do not know where the settlements are (mostly outside the center) or if they know their location, they cannot be part of the community because they are “newcomers” and have to wait to join it.² These groups are staying in

1 See more at <https://www.soychile.cl/Antofagasta/Sociedad/2021/08/29/720762/extranjeros-migracion-terminal-antofagasta.aspx>

2 In my second fieldwork trip (in 2022), I observed this social dynamic. The spatial organization set up in the settlement reaffirmed a degree of waiting, where the last to arrive in Calais had to wait for one of his compatriots to cross to England, leaving his place (and tent) free for a

parks, at bus stops, and under bridges, transforming public spaces into their temporary homes. To counter this, French and English police and the Calais municipality carry out daily evictions in these public places. What is particularly intriguing here is that the strategies of eviction paradoxically play an essential role in establishing and sustaining these temporal homemaking in Calais' center. In general, there is a shared knowledge of normalization on the part of volunteers and people-in-transit of when there will be daily evictions and weekly large-scale evictions (usually dismantling settlements outside the center). Often, they estimate the time and day of the eviction. This violence of daily deterritorialization does not prevent the creation and the permanence of these places since, after the evictions, the communities return to the exact location and collect (from the volunteers) new tents, meals, and coats. Volunteers and NGOs in Calais are essential to ensure these locations do not disappear. The art of resistance and activist strategies of volunteers and people-in-transit working together make these places sustainable, lasting, and with a degree of belonging and conviviality, counteracting Augé's definition of non-places.

Another slightly different example was Calais municipality's announcement concerning the 2016 eviction of the Dzjanganl, written on public signs that are currently installed in the *L'ex Lande* zone.³ This zone is where the Dzjanganl was located nine years ago and is currently a natural protected area housing a bird observatory for the Calais region. A fragment of the sign says: "Travaux de renaturation des terrains de L'ex-Lande de Calais" (Renaturation works on the lands of the former Lande region de Calais). Before the Dzjanganl appeared, this area, part of the industrial sector of the Calais coast, was deserted. What is interesting here is how the Calais municipality used "nature" as a weapon for the mass eviction in 2016 and how this moment in the city's history is visualized today as a process of renaturation of the area. "Renaturation" as a "bringing back the nature of the place" is how Calais municipality describes the recovery of this public space as part of city's development (see Chapter 1).

Following these examples, today's "non-places" are understood as apolitical spaces of transit, encompassed by hyper-consumerism, the rapid movement of bodies, supermodernity, and technology. "Non-places" have been considered spaces where politics has been lost, where transaction and economic or technological exchange predominate over sociability and politics—romanticizing and categorizing the consumer, traveler, "refugee," and citizen as a tragedy of supermodernity, lost in these spaces of consumption and transit (Sharma, 2009). As mentioned before, Augé does not distinguish between luxurious and uninhabitable spaces and conditions,

new person. I noticed that the settlement tents were in rows side by side, so it was clear who was the next to cross the Channel and also who had just arrived (see further Chapter 1).

3 Northern sector outside central Calais, neighboring the French coast where the Dzjanganl settlement was established between 2015 and 2016.

leaving aside biopolitics and the different dynamics that occur between these bodies in transit and their environment, mainly when referring to “refugee camps” and shantytowns threatened with demolition as “non-places”. The media theorist Sarah Sharma, in her paper “Baring Life and Lifestyle in the Non-Place” (2009), argues that contemporary “non-places” need to be seen not as mere “spectacles” or “camps” that are a product of modernity. Instead, they are to be understood in terms of their own politics and the logic of the space in which they are located. Sharma does not see the “camps” as spaces hidden from modernity but as spaces that manage to find strategies to be, in their own right, part of the city (see Epilogue). She refers to how today’s cities have found ways to “optimize” relations between the invested (lifestyle) and reduced (bare life) spaces. It is a recognition that cities today have devised strategies to navigate the interplay between spaces that promote investment, such as lifestyle hubs, and those that embody bare existence. This optimization of relations between lifestyle-driven spaces and those characterized by basic survival is emblematic of the complex dynamics inherent within migratory contemporary urban environments (Sharma, 2009).

Today’s “Places of Exception”

In this context, especially in “refugee camps,” human identity often recedes, reinforcing the notion of spaces of exception in the urban “periphery”, where the symbolic death of the human—the bare life—can occur. The philosopher Giorgio Agamben, in his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), argues that camps, particularly concentration camps and “refugee camps,” have become “places of exception,” excluded in the face of modernity, politics, and the right to citizenship in the city. Agamben discusses the ontological differences between Zoe, Bios, and *Homo sacer* in relation to people inhabiting these camps: *Homo sacer* is defined as a human, but once belonging to the realm of Bios (human political life), who is reduced to Zoe, an entity belonging to the animal realm, thereby entering a state of exception. Agamben’s philosophy relates directly to today’s description of “refugee camps” and their inherent dehumanization. However, while its outward appearance remains unchanged, its essence and significance are shifting, reshaping human rights and creating growing ambiguity: the state of exception is redefining the very understanding of contemporary democracy (Agamben, 1998).

Agamben’s theory links the concept of people in exile with “refugee camps” organized and controlled by governments and policymakers by establishing rules and codes of conduct. Drawing on Foucault’s ideas, Agamben describes these camps as places created for the control of individuals, exploiting their connection to sovereignty and extraordinary circumstances. He examines the evolution of power and proposes a new interpretation of sovereignty and territory, arguing that these abstract legal principles require tangible places to function, such as the “camp”

in this case. Here, exceptional rules can be effectively applied (Panagiotidis and Tsianos, 2007).

Building on Agamben's analysis, the sociologists Efthimia Panagiotidis and Vasilis Tsianos further conceptualize the "camp" as a tangible space where sovereignty and exceptional regulations materialize. In their work *Denaturalizing "Camps"* (2007), they define "camp" as a fixed site originally intended for temporary occupancy. These camps exist outside the law, where the biopolitical aspect of sovereign power is activated. People-in-transit, such as those in "refugee camps," are reduced to mere physical entities—what Agamben calls "bare life." Critics of Agamben's concept of "bare life," such as Panagiotidis and Tsianos (2007), Luciano Ferrari (2001), and Sandro Mezzadra and Enrica Rigo (2003), argue that this concept overlooks elements of the workforce, resistance, and the dynamic relationship with border regimes. Specifically, Panagiotidis and Tsianos analyze how "refugee camps" temporarily immobilize migratory movements, which constitutes a crucial aspect of current border regimes, while also encapsulating the complexities between sovereignty, citizenship, and biopolitics, as highlighted by Agamben. For Panagiotidis and Tsianos, the dynamics between the mobility and immobility of people-in-transit within these camps do not lead to a complete loss of humanity, as depicted by Agamben. They argue that Agamben's notion is rooted in existential arguments, stripping individuals in transit of power. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of philosopher Paul Virilio, they inquire whether it is feasible to examine the concept of the camp "from below," focusing on the transition from "exclusion" to "decelerated circulation of mobility" (Panagiotidis and Tsianos, 2007).

Building on this critique, Panagiotidis and Tsianos suggest that camps are not spaces of total immobilization, but rather they are various points of encounter of governmental and state migration policy operations, making a specific relation with border policies within the European Union. Although at first these "refugee camps" look like rigid authoritarian governmental fortresses of mobility control, Panagiotidis and Tsianos argue that it is a particular space of temporarily controlling movements: that is, of managing the pathways of circulation, the routes, in order to make regulated mobility productive. Permeability is thus the expression of an institutionalized border porosity that is created by power relations, in which the roles of people-in-transit, their smugglers, and EU policies are key to delay, control, and regulate mobility at large (Panagiotidis and Tsianos, 2007). From this perspective, their argumentation leaves an open window to explore the different strategies of subjectification within the notion of "refugee camp" today. Rather than seeing people within these camps as only an "bare life," it shows that the dynamism to delay, control, and regulate mobility becomes productive and not as existential as Agamben proposes. However, in the context of self-built, autonomous settlements, run by people-in-transit without any control by governmental authorities, as analyzed in this book, the scenario is entirely different from the formal, legally defined concept of "refugee

camps.” By operating through the informality and uncertainties of existence, self-built settlements still manage to do placemaking and facilitate alternative forms of urban life. Even though they are generally described as “camps” and looked at through the same lens as “official refugee camps,” they present diverse autonomous strategies for the regulation of their own mobility and inclusion into the urban scenario.

Therefore, from this complex comparison, the core motivation of this research emerges. By examining self-managed places run by people-in-transit inside and outside Europe, I have identified significant distinctions between the notion of “places of exception” associated with formal “refugee camps” and self-governed settlements, such as the Dzjantal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales, the case studies in this research. Although both settings involve communities navigating border regimes while seeking refuge, they represent different forms of order and cannot be directly equated. During my research, I observed distinctions between “official camps” and “self-organized settlements”—which I will not unfold here, as such comparisons fall outside the scope of this research. What particularly drew my attention was the “autonomous” and “self-built” aspect of these settlements, which helps illuminate the alternative placemaking of communities that occupy abandoned zones or buildings, resisting placement in “official camps” governed by state laws and regulations (see Chapter 6). In contrast, these autonomous places allow individuals to cultivate a sense of belonging, community, and camaraderie, creating ecosystems that diverge from the conventional norms of “official camps”. Despite their informal character, these communities embody elements of collective memory, agency, and governance.

This self-determination aligns closely with Appadurai’s (2001) concept of “deep democracy,” which illuminates how “marginalized” individuals navigate exclusion at both local and global levels, asserting agency even within the shadows of the broader system (Appadurai, 2001: 27). The urban poor are often reduced to “citizens without a city.” But in today’s cities, places such as the Dzjantal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales have demonstrated their capacity to work together, self-organize, and empower themselves, redefining the concept of governability and local democracy (Appadurai, 2001: 23). This serves as a small-scale example of “grassroots globalization” or “globalization from below,” which, according to Appadurai (2001), is essential for considering the possibility of a future international civil society. As part of “globalization from below,” Appadurai describes the “politics of patience” in response to the “tyranny of emergency”—in this case, the daily instability suffered by “poor,” “migrants,” and “refugees” in their living spaces. Every day becomes a struggle to survive the difficult circumstances imposed by external factors (society, labor, border regime, state, governments), which threaten or destroy their capacity to self-organize. The politics of patience is a long-term strategy of survival and self-empowerment, creating new ways to resist tyranny.

Viewed through this perspective, the Dzjantal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales demonstrate the limitations of the concepts of “non-places” and “places of exception.” Augé’s idea of non-places from a decade ago leaves gaps and ambiguities in the face of the current crisis of the border regime. He argues that “refugee camps” as non-places are the product of the dynamics of supermodernity. This argument is threaded through the self-built settlement of people-in-transit, which are the outcome of contemporary border regimes and constitute an important aspect of the postcolonial era and resistance against the border regime. Here, these self-built settlements are transformed into places of belonging and sociability, as they clearly have a strong sense of attachment and history, even if born out of informality. Moreover, Agamben’s theory of exception and its spatial dimension is also disputed by these places. The inhabitants of these communities begin to appropriate the urban space and create their own sociopolitical structure, reestablishing a sense of citizenship (Bios) in their own term within the city (see Epilogue).

Therefore, through a variety of survival strategies, these communities strive to create a sense of “normalcy” (Agier, 2018). While still temporary settlements, people-in-transit regard them as home. Places like the Dzjantal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales shift from a transient status toward a form of enduring permanence, sometimes offering lasting solutions that foster belonging and identity. Because inhabitants are not fully subjected to imposed territorial rules, they retain autonomy to create, transform, and adapt regulations, developing a space of self-governance with their own norms. The political and social ecosystem is fluid, roles and mandates shift, and hierarchies are constantly evolving, allowing inhabitants to return to a Bios world. These self-built settlements illustrate that not all “refugee and migrant camps” can be reduced to “non-places” or “places of exception,” challenging prevailing notions of today’s border regimes.

5.2 Rethinking Liminality

Drawing upon the concept of “non-places” and its contrast with locations such as the Dzjantal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales, my thoughts turned to the notions of “space” and “threshold,” and to experiences characterized by “waiting” and “time.” Conversations with some inhabitants and volunteers at these places often returned to the term “limbo” to describe the atmosphere within them. Some residents made religious connections, likening the experience to a purgatory situated between “heaven” and “hell,” while others expressed a sense of being trapped “between temporal borders” of the past and present of migratory experiences. My first reflections, as will be explored in this section, were toward the “liminal” and its character of inbetweenness.

In these settlements, people may wait for months or years, and time spent waiting becomes predominant: people-in-transit must pause along their journey. In this sense, time emerges as a key unit for understanding the migratory experience. The relationship between migration and mobility is not necessarily only tied to a specific territory—from one place to another—as in Augé’s concept of the “non-place,” which is grounded primarily in territory and space—something physical that dismisses the possibility of history, culture, and the construction of social structures, leaving the sense of temporariness within these places as secondary. In contrast, in migratory contexts, time spent waiting becomes central to understanding the migratory experience.

Despite their temporary nature, inhabitants shape these settlements into places with identity and history, marked by a normalized sense of home. In a seeming contradiction, they consciously and unconsciously engage with their surroundings in ways that help them endure both the waiting and the passage of time, while still regarding the settlement as a place of transit. That is why my initial thoughts on timespace as existing within “limbo,” as described by residents of these places, were tied to the concept of liminality—not only as a subjective, temporal ritual process, as explored by ethnologist Arnold Van Gennep ([1961] 2019), but also through a contemporary lens that views liminality in spatial terms: a space shaped by liminal materiality and urban liminality. In this sense, approaching these settlements through the lens of liminality offered my first point of orientation in understanding the in-betweenness people-in-transit embody while confronting the daily border regime in European and South American urban spaces.

After my second fieldwork trip and discussions with professors and colleagues, I realized that liminality poses a significant challenge when examining the experiences of migratory subjectivities confronted with daily violence under border regimes. Liminality, as a vast and complex anthropological concept, encompasses a wide range of states, from global phenomena like pandemics to ritualistic processes observed in indigenous communities (see Van Gennep, [1961] 2019). This makes it hard to fully grasp the unique aspects of each experience. Often, attention remains fixed on the liminal experience itself, overlooking the broader social, economic, and political contexts in which these states of inbetweenness unfold. Today, within social science circles, liminality faces criticism for being somewhat outdated in interpreting contemporary postcolonial and postmigrant societies. The apoliticization of the term results in a superficial understanding that fails to capture the profound and perilous experiences of communities-in-transit as they resist and confront contemporary border regimes. In other words, the generalization and apoliticization of liminality tend to homogenize different experiences of inbetween states, overlooking the specificities of each positionality and subjectivity.

Throughout this book, I critically engage with liminality from various perspectives. For example, in Chapter 3 I explored its artistic manifestations, questioning

the emergence of liminality in the arts, performance, and theater, and the growing interest in creating liminal experiences in a performative context. In Chapter 6 and the Epilogue, I turn to border regimes and urban studies, examining how the temporal disorientation triggered by liminality contributes to the process of “othering” (Spivak, 1985) in migratory contexts. While people-in-transit often describe themselves as being in liminal or limbo states, these terms imply an “othering” that distinguishes them from “ordinary citizens” integrated into the temporal framework of today’s society.

Nonetheless, I consider it crucial for this research to unfold liminality through the lens of urban and spatial settings, shifting away from its usual focus on subjectivity. In this chapter, I recontextualize liminality within spatiality, exploring its potential to politicize the term, particularly in relation to urban and social resistance within migratory processes. In the following paragraphs, I discuss various aspects of liminality that have enriched my understanding of inbetweenness within contemporary border regimes in Europe and South America. These insights have helped me better grasp the ongoing transitions and inbetween states experienced by the communities of the Dzijangal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales, as they aspire to become part of today’s cities in their own right.

Liminality and Mobility

Text fragments from the essay: “The Jungle de Calais: Entre liminalidad, espacio fronterizo y lugar de posibilidades” (Garland, 2021b)

In the current debate on “refugee camps”, liminality has been rethought, problematized, and criticized in relation to contemporary developments in the study of place, space, and mobility (Andrews and Roberts, 2012). Social sciences, architects, and urbanist scholars have further explored the concept of liminality through the relationship between resort towns and spaces of migration, mobility, and marginality. This new perspective is essential when considering the urban areas of Calais, Rome, and Antofagasta—cities with landscapes defined simultaneously by tourism, mobility and migration.

Liminal is defined as “of or pertaining to the threshold or initial stage of a process” (Buchanan, 2018; Oxford English Dictionary). It could, therefore, describe the beginning of a state—or the state itself. The cultural anthropologists Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts (2012) further expand the definition of liminal-as-threshold to connote the spatial: a boundary, border, a transitional landscape, or a doorway, in Simmel and Leggewie’s (1908) sense, of a physical and psychic space of potentiality. The word liminal originates from the Latin word *limen*, for threshold—“any point or place of entering or beginning. A liminal space is, therefore, the time be-

tween what was and what's next. It is a place of transition, waiting, not knowing. (Buchanan, 2018; Oxford English Dictionary, in Garland, 2021b: 88)

Liminal spaces are places we go in search of reprieve from the “normal.” Liminal landscapes are inbetween spaces, with seashores and beaches as archetypal examples (Thomassen, 2012). The liminal experience of migration is one of suspense, limbo, transit, marginality, and matter out of place (Douglas, 1966). For people-in-transit living in this state of inbetweenness—straddling physical and mental spaces—there is a sense of existing between two worlds: the past memory of their homeland and the place of waiting (the present reality). People-in-transit live between past and present, between old and new homes, blending emotions, times, stories, and realities.

The ethnologist Arnold Van Gennep, with his book *Rites of Passage* ([1961] 2019), was the first to interpret liminality, referring to the rites within societies from a micro perspective. Van Gennep divides the ritualistic process into three states that constitute the complete liminal experience of a person in an internal and external transformation. He also emphasizes the importance of these rites of passage as they mark and celebrate important and historical moments of individuals and collectives in the course of life. The three-stage structure of the liminal process is composed of a first stage: the preliminary rite (or rite of separation), which constitutes a symbolic and metaphorical death. Since the person is obliged to leave and break with their past routine, it comprises a symbolic behavior that means the detachment of the individual from a previously fixed point of the social structure. The second stage: the liminal rite (or rite of passage), implies an effective passage through the threshold that marks the limit between two phases, and here the term “liminality” was introduced to characterize this passage. It has a destructive, transforming, and metamorphic character in which essential changes will occur in the individual. These liminal periods are both “destructive” and “constructive,” meaning that it is the formative experience during liminality. In the last stage: the post-liminal rite (or rite of incorporation), the initiate is reintegrated into society with a new identity as a “new” being already transformed. Van Gennep observed this structural triangle as a pattern within the rituals he observed at the collective and social level, reflecting that ritual passages demarcate the transitions of human events.

In my own research to date, I have sought to enrich my understanding of liminality and landscapes, exploring beyond the somewhat limited definitions of the philosopher Karl Jaspers (2014)—he called it the “Axial Age”; the anthropologists Victor Turner (1967, 1969, 1978, 1982, 1996)—liminality as “ritual” and “communitas”—and John Graburn (1989)—liminality as “sacred journey”; and geographer Rob Shields (1991)—liminality as it relates to marginality. All of them have in common how they correlate liminality to the ludic, consumption, the carnivalesque, and human morale. I am more interested in the work of Andrews and Roberts

(2012), as well the social scientist Bjørn Thomassen (2009, 2012, 2015, 2016), who encourage a reevaluation of the meaning of liminality in migration studies and associate the aspect of liminality not only with spaces of pleasure, such as carnivals and playful rituals, but also with the deterritorialization of places and spaces of danger. The process of transformation, described by Van Gennep as a destructive and constructive process, is not always a pleasurable, positive, and transformative experience (Garland, 2021b: 89).

In turn, I am interested in the meaning described by Thomassen and the anthropologist Guiseppe Grimaldi (2018) of liminality as a place of possibilities, occupying the process of transition between one state to the other as a transformative process open to new possibilities of perceiving the environment. Van Gennep describes how between the pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal states, there is a metaphorical death and rebirth in the body that is contained within the ritual. This mobility through the states helps in the conception of liminality as a productive state.

Scholars like Victor Turner (1969), Agnes Horvath (2013; Horvath and Davison, 2019), and Bjørn Thomassen (2009) provide the additional perspective of liminal vision as a potentiality. The quality of liminality is naturally vague; the identity of the person or collective dissolves, causing confusion but also the possibility of new perspectives. The liminoid provokes a safer and transforming space to open the mind and observe reality from another angle (Turner, 1969). In his book *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (1969), Turner claims that liminality is considered a time and place of retreat from normal forms of social activity. It can potentially be seen as a period of reflection on the central values and social norms of the culture in which it is produced (Turner, 1969: 156). He investigates the idea of *communitas*—feelings of a united community group that experiences the same liminal experience (Turner, 1969). Turner's *communitas* has specific relevance to the experiences of the groups that inhabit these self-organized settlements. The sense of community and group experience is established by being in a shared state of suspense, inbetweenness, and uncertainty about what was (each inhabitant's past before arriving at the settlement) and what is to come (the desire to be able to cross borders). But what also can be experienced is the degree of potentiality that Turner and other scholars describe as a "place of possibilities" (Grimaldi, 2018) within the autonomous governance to generate new ideas and forms of coexistence for the future. By not having an official/governmental structure, these possibilities are enlarged, provoking a sense of hope and aspirations. (Garland, 2021b: 90) [See Epilogue]

Additionally, the sociologist Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt introduces the concept "Comparative Liminality: Liminality and Dynamics of Civilizations" (1985), which refers to how historical moments affecting societies over long periods can also be called liminality. Eisenstadt drew from Turner's work, which has a crucial significance thanks to the first introduction of liminality by Van Gennep. Turner's approach is more

closely linked to the study of small-scale societies, though, developing the term “liminoid” in response to specific characteristics of the modern world (see Chapter 3 on liminality and art). However, Horvath (2013) claims that the term can and should be applied to particular historical events, providing a valuable framework for historical and sociological understanding. For his part, Turner attributed a unique positive connotation to liminal situations as forms of regeneration, when liminal situations can be periods of uncertainty and anguish (Horvath, 2013).

In the case of places such the Dzjanganal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales, it is possible to highlight the duality between liminality (Van Gennep) and liminoid experiences (Turner). Van Gennep’s transformative, dangerous, ritualistic, and deconstructive/constructive approach encompasses the big picture within them. The highly vulnerable, dehumanizing state of emergency and the aspect of terror are latent throughout. An example of this can be found in the Dzjanganal, one of the first and largest “migrant” camps in the history of the EU on the Calais coast, where violent confrontations between “migrants” and the French authorities have produced a state of emergency and terror which goes against all human rights and dignity. However, in parallel, there is the reality of “*communitas*,” community, and solidarity produced between “migrants,” volunteers, NGOs, and neighbors, which have provided the “hope” of a possible future. The peak of the urban development of the Dzjanganal was also characterized by conviviality, solidarity, and resistance, providing a state of potentiality that Turner describes in playful and carnivalesque form. The transformative (deconstructive/constructive) process of liminality is present in this potentiality, providing a “place of possibility” in the face of the contemporary border regime (see Chapter 6 and Epilogue). Regarding this, Thomassen states of liminality: “it served not only to identify the importance of in-between periods, but also to understand human reactions to liminal experiences: the way liminality shaped personality, the sudden prominence of agency, and the sometimes dramatic union of thought and experience” (Thomassen, 2009: 14).

Thomassen also distinguishes between liminal bodies: the body of the person within liminality also changes (physical/psychological form). Micro-liminality produces liminality within the local community of liminal bodies, an internal transformation based on the personal and specific experience of each person and their interactions. Macro-liminality is a global change in a given period of history, such as wars and pandemics. Thomassen’s approach to the different dimensions of liminality helps us understand how people live, interact, and transform themselves during the liminal state (Garland, 2021b: 91). Additionally, Thomassen offers a perspective on the intellectual history of liminality and a critical analysis of its connection to the ludic and the carnivalesque. He draws attention to the often missed connection between danger and liminality and also explores the idea of “permanent liminality”—originally from the sociologist Árpád Szokolczai (2017). Thomassen argued how “migrants” can become part of a permanent liminal experience as they navi-

gate through borders and regimes. In this case, permanent liminality relates to a “migrant’s consciousness” of being always on the move—in other words, the development of a mindset of permanence in the inbetweenness (see Chapter 6 on the idea of the *borderland*). Such is the case for people living in the Džjantal, as many had the ideal final destination of the UK, but were “stuck” in Calais for months and years. This hope of the place of arrival has caused a possible state of permanent liminality by being “trapped” for a long time in border spaces such as Calais/Dover (Garland, 2021b).

The scholar and dear colleague Karam Yahya (2021), in his paper “Journey and Encampment Observations: Liminality and the ‘Protracted Refugee Situation,’” provides an autoethnography of his own journey crossing borders from Syria to Germany, conceptualizing “bordering as a process” from his own and other border crossers’ perspectives. Yahya recounts his experience of becoming a “border crosser”—as opposed to being labeled as a “migrant” or “refugee”—and how this territorial instability, constant uncertainty, and dehumanization by border regime agents produces a “permanent liminal state” of identity represented by victimization and/or criminalization, none of which was self-defined (Yahya, 2021). Yahya argues that the state of inbetweenness, of having an indeterminate legal status and crossing borders, produces a “processual liminal state.” “You are not what you were, but you are still not yet what you will become” (Yahya, 2021: 58). He connects the concept of permanent liminality with “constant waiting” and “ongoing process.” “The border regime tells you that you have to wait ... this period of waiting can vary substantially. It is sometimes experienced in the process of the migration itself—being told, ‘tomorrow, tomorrow’” (Yahya, 2021: 65).

The waiting on the part of the people-in-transit to reach their ideal destination, obtain asylum, be deported, be reunited with their family, work, and study provokes this state of being inbetween, which Yahya has referred to through a liminal form. I am particularly interested in highlighting Yahya’s perception of liminality as an ongoing process of navigating border regimes, which he calls “Bordering as a *process*.” Drawing from Yahya’s argumentation, Monish Bhatia and Victoria Canning, the editors of *Stealing Time: Migration, Temporalities and State Violence* (2021: xxi), describe it as “a process: not only during a journey, but a temporary engagement bound in social contracts that requires constant negotiation through bureaucratic complexities, lost time and Othering in host countries.” As Bourdieu highlighted, and from which Yahya draws, “the all-powerful is he who does not wait but makes others wait ... waiting implies submission” (Bourdieu 2000: 228, cited in Yahya, 2021). To keep people waiting is an exercise of power over other people’s time (Khosravi, 2021). As described in the book *Waiting and Temporalities of Irregular Migration* (2021), edited by the anthropologists Christine M. Jacobsen, Mary-Anne Karlsen, and Shahram Khosravi, “waiting” is a strategy on the part of the border regime to create instability and delay for the “migrant” when they are crossing borders.

Unlike the formal-state camps, where “waiting” is designed, controlled, and structured at a temporal and spatial level by political agents, in self-built settlements such as the Dzjantal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales, “waiting” is, in many cases, transformed into an act of resistance. Although time has been “stolen” from the border regime, the process of bordering often constitutes an attempt to “regain control of time” (Khosravi, 2021). Staying in these places is becoming a moving act, a way to have more independence to “control their own time” outside the governmental structures and norms perceived in formal-state camps. I remember some inhabitants of the Dzjantal and Tiburtina sharing with me that, apart from not having their passports stamped, another reason for staying in self-organized settlements was that they could control their time, unlike in the formal-state camps where the schedule, routines, meals, etc., were designed, surveilled, and controlled.

Nevertheless, by addressing waiting, liminality, and the state of limbo, I risk reinforcing a logic of “othering” (Spivak, 1985) when I engage these experiences as distinct temporalities related to migratory states. In her work “Time and the Other in Crisis: How Anthropology Makes Its Displaced Object,” the anthropologist Giorgina Ramsay (2019a: 20) argues: “We deny the coevalness of refugees by describing them as ‘stuck’ in the present and ignoring the ways in which they share particular temporal rhythms with other people.” The tendency is to consider “migrant’s” waiting as a condition of exclusion where being “inbetween” becomes a state outside of temporal norms. These periods of waiting are considered a pause and disruption, producing exclusion and victimization. It is complex to relate waiting to the precarious experiences caused by the border regimes, neoliberal configurations, and capitalism in postmodern societies, where time is associated with success, money, efficiency, and productivity (Eriksen, 2001, cited in Ramsay, 2019a). Following this line of argumentation, “waiting” becomes a loss of time, waste, emptiness, and worthlessness. Reinforcing the image of the “migrant” as a non-productive person, a “human waste” (Bauman, 2004).

During this research, questions were raised as to whether liminality is a sustainable concept for migratory experiences facing violent border regimes. The analysis provided in the above paragraphs alludes to the existing theory of the relationship between liminality and migration, especially on the subjectivity of forced migration and its relation to border regimes. Today it is problematic to look at these “refugee camps” through the lens of liminality, even if they have degrees of inbetweenness, uncertainty, fragility, potentiality, and transformative processes. By considering them liminal, I risk falling into a divisive stance, where “the other” is excluded for occupying a liminal space, emphasizing its state of exception. In the following paragraphs, I engage with the limitations of the concept of liminality and explore alternative ways of understanding the state of inbetweenness from the perspective of the inhabitants. I return to the term “limbo,” which some residents I encountered use to describe a purgatory-like experience when defining what it feels like to live

in these places. This framing provides a perspective that lies between religiosity and cultural interpretation, opening the way to a deeper inquiry into the essence of being in a state of inbetweenness within contemporary migratory contexts.

5.3 Limbo as Terrestrial Purgatory

Returning to the epistemological notion of liminality, my interest lies in deconstructing the liminal state, characterized by its inbetweenness and transformative nature, starting from the threshold—the point of entry, or the inception of a state or process. The threshold serves not as the liminal state itself but rather as the gateway to liminality, which may also intersect with other concepts, such as limbo. The recurring use of the term limbo by residents and volunteers of the Dzjantal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales offers a compelling alternative lens. Limbo, as a concept, has deep roots in Christian theology and medieval cosmology (see Le Goff, 1984), describing a middle ground between heaven and hell—a space of waiting, uncertainty, and judgment. Historically theorized as a purgatorial state, limbo has since been reframed in anthropology through theories of liminality. However, the following analysis does not pursue a theological or doctrinal reading; rather, it remains grounded in residents' own notion of limbo, using it as a critical lens to interpret lived spatial and affective experiences of inbetweenness.

As mentioned in earlier paragraphs, my interest in liminality arises from encountering the term “limbo” repeatedly in the field. This state traverses diverse migratory experiences, ranging from subjective and particular to a collective feeling of being in a constant purgatory when traveling to the intended destination. In the latter, the transformative process in the limbo, in many cases, is considered with a degree of heroism in migratory experiences.

Suppose we consider the initial moment of crossing the threshold. In that case, the person entering the inbetween state goes through different obstacles and barriers to emerge as a “new person” and reach their final destination. This idea is often encapsulated in the metaphor of the “migrant” travelers as the “contemporary migrant Ulysses,” a term used to describe the journeys and obstacles of people-in-transit with a “glorious” formality. Although these communities are crossing obstacles and borders and seeking new strategies to resist the border regime, the journey mostly does not end when they reach their final destination, if they make it at all.

During my travels in Italy, it was commonplace to encounter references to “the migrant hero's journey” or “the contemporary Ulysses” in the news media, literature, and academic conversations, particularly in relation to travelers from African countries to Italy, predominantly young men. These so-called heroes embark on arduous journeys, crossing seas, traversing long distances, confronting border regimes and law enforcement, and navigating asylum bureaucracies. They often endure var-

ious degrees of violence, terror, and dehumanization to reach their intended destination.

The idea of the “migrant hero” draws parallels to the monomyth of the “hero’s journey,” as delineated by the anthropologist Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* ([1949] 2008). Campbell’s argument, inspired by historical epic narratives, describes an inbetween framework that includes stages such as: the call to adventure, supernatural aid, crossing the threshold, the beginning of transformation, experiencing death and rebirth, and, finally, returning to the place of origin or arriving at the final destination. In the context of the migratory journey, these stages resonate in some form. Of particular interest is the importance of crossing the threshold as the starting point in the hero’s transformation during the journey, especially with regard to contemporary “migrant” travelers.

In 2015, the moving scenes of citizens in Germany gathering at borders, train stations, and airports to give a warm welcome to mainly Syrian and Iranian communities remain imprinted in my memory. The avalanche of support and celebration symbolized the culmination of the arduous journey of the “migrants” from their countries of origin, through numerous obstacles, to what seemed to be their “final destination.” However, this perception of contemporary heroes by the media and local communities contrasts sharply with the experiences of those who make the journey. Instead of being celebrated as heroes with a recognized and victorious destiny, many find themselves struggling with the harsh reality of survival upon reaching the “other side.”

A striking example of this contrast is found in the reflections of Dagmawi Yimer, an author and filmmaker from Addis Ababa. After crossing the Lebanese desert and the waters of the Mediterranean, he arrived in Lampedusa in 2006, later settling in Rome, where he established himself as a writer, poet, and filmmaker. Yimer’s reflections, collected in his book *Names and Bodies: Tales from Across the Sea* (2015), challenge the romantic idea of a heroic journey and instead highlight the role of luck in survival. In his own words:

If I am here today to speak about those who didn’t survive, it is only because I am fortunate enough to be alive. There is no glory in reaching this side of the shore. The day I arrived in Lampedusa, I was labeled as “the one who survived”; my duty is to honor the memory of those who perished. (Yimmer, 2015: 1)

Yimer’s narrative paints a vivid picture of the migratory journey as a terrestrial limbo, a purgatory devoid of symbolic rebirth. It’s a journey marked by survival at the cost of leaving comrades behind. Many survivors of these extreme journeys later seek temporary respite in “refugee camps,” self-built settlements, and abandoned buildings around Europe, mirroring the case studies in this book. Amid the

makeshift shelters and palpable transience, one encounters a profound sense of inbetweenness: the limbo and purgatory described by the inhabitants themselves.

During my visit to Rome in 2018, while searching for the story of the Tiburtina settlement, I had the opportunity to meet Dali, a 45-year-old man from Eritrea who had arrived in Italy 15 years prior and had been residing in Tiburtina back in 2002. Dali shared with me his observations on how the Sudanese, Eritrean, and Ethiopian communities coexisted within Tiburtina, despite hailing from neighboring countries often in conflict. Dali referred to the constant violent conflicts of the war between Sudan and Ethiopia, together with Amhara militants and Eritrea, that have produced a state of continuous uncertainty, instability, terror, and deterritorialization that is carried in the bodies of their compatriots toward Europe, which he considers an A'raf state.

Significantly, Dali described A'raf in Islam as a borderland between Annah (heaven) and Jahannam (hell). Beings living there are balancing their actions: they are not completely bad or good. It is considered a kind of purgatory where there is a privatization of pleasure, happiness, and movement, but there is no physical or mental suffering. It is also considered that to enter this place, you have to pass through a threshold. Dali was trying to explain this term in very simple words, and he translated it to me as a kind of limbo from the Muslim perspective. The symbolic representation is a mountain where the person is waiting before crossing into the heavens. A kind of place of waiting where the person could experience terror and hell but at the same time could experience divinity and paradise. The binary between Annah (heaven) and Jahannam (hell) is mirrored by Dali with the reality that he and his compatriots lived in Europe and the dehumanization of the migratory asylum process within Italy.

The sense of lingering uncertainty is also powerfully expressed in the Tiburtina photographic archive taken by Davide Franceschini, analyzed in Chapter 2, which included a picture with a banner saying in Italian: "In Africa, we die immediately, but in Italy, they are killing us gradually." This phrase exemplifies the feelings of being in an intermediate state of symbolic death. Claiming that Italy is killing them "slowly" refers to the terrible bureaucratic structure of the asylum and refugee processes in Italy and the European Union. Many of them called the asylum process "the torture of hope," since the asylum process in Italy could take at least two years to decide the final verdict, and frequently four years. In pandemic times, it took almost six years, Dali told me from his own experience.

In another context, when I traveled to the Chilean settlement of Los Arenales in early 2022, the word limbo and its relationship to religiosity also came to the surface. In this case, it involved the Catholic faith. Cecilia, a resident of Los Arenales, repeatedly mentioned her feeling of being in an inbetween state—living in an earthly limbo, as she describes it. Sometimes she felt that living in Los Arenales and constantly struggling against many barriers can be "a punishment from above" and

“tests that God gives us to see if we are able to get ahead.” Cecilia described how, within the Catholic Church in South America, the concept of limbo refers to a place between *cielo* (heaven) and *infierno* (hell)—a waiting place where God and his angels were checking your actions to see if you were a “good” or “bad” person, and therefore if you were eligible to enter heaven. A kind of purgatory, where the state of the beings who arrived there did not know what their destiny would be.

Cecilia also relates her experience of living in two countries at once to the feeling of limbo, of being between “there and here,” but also “not really being there and here”⁴. Cecilia has to work to support two families, her family in Venezuela and her family in Chile. She spends a percentage of her monthly income (almost 50%) to support her parents and siblings in Venezuela, who have no job opportunities and are financially dependent on her. The feeling of living between two countries, not only at the emotional level, between the memory of her home country and her current Chilean reality, but also economically, produces a sense of duality that Cecilia interprets as living in limbo, a kind of purgatory where the tension of knowing that two families depend on her is a kind of punishment that can only be lived in a purgatorial state of inbetween.

From Terrestrial Limbo toward Spatial Liminality?

Drawing from these migratory experiences and their particularities, the notion of limbo offers a way to reflect on wider forms of potential spatial liminality. The various experiences of inbetweenness shared by the people I encountered during my fieldwork were deeply personal and subjective, influenced by their religious and cultural beliefs. However, a common denominator emerged: alongside these personal experiences of inbetweenness due to their migratory circumstances, there was a tangible sense of inhabiting a territorial purgatory, marked by interminable waiting and daily confrontations with the border regimes.

Through these migratory narratives, I came to understand that the state of inbetweenness transcended mere personal experience, as the spatial dimensions of the geographical territory emerged as crucial aspects of this condition. In my fieldwork, I could sense, from my own external positionality, an aura⁵ arising from the

4 Cecilia, and many communities who arrive in Chile, search for work and better opportunities. Since they are not considered “refugees,” they fall into the category of “economic migrants,” which means that they cannot receive any benefits from the Chilean state. In general, there is very little help from the Ministry of Migration. Still, nowadays, the debates about updating Chilean immigration laws are bringing to the agenda the differences between “economic migrants” and “political refugees,” particularly with the Colombian, Venezuelan, and Haitian diaspora who are escaping dictatorial, military regimes, as well as poverty.

5 Here I use the idea of ‘aura’ to listen to the atmosphere in these places. I am inspired by the writings of the scholar Ana María Ochoa Gautier (2014) and her notion of *Aurality*, which ex-

feeling of being “trapped” in a territorial purgatory described as limbo, alongside the perpetual struggle to overcome barriers and cross borders. This aura was characterized by a combination of emotions—sadness, frustration, anger, grief, and nostalgia—that play crucial roles in recounting the experiences of living in a state of purgatory. Understood through an aural perspective, this sensory register exceeds mood and becomes a politically charged way of experiencing space and belonging (Ochoa Gautier, 2014). However, alongside these feelings, there is a unique aspirational quality, a desire for something beyond the current situation, which is reflected in the placemaking within these settlements. This is evident in the cultural and political materials found within the settlement, such as the building of houses, kinship bonds, mutual care gatherings, the organization of cultural and public events together with volunteers and neighbors, and the coordination of demonstrations defending their right to remain in their homes. As I discuss in the Epilogue of this book, these strategies of conviviality are essential in building alternative placemaking and advocating for the right to the city that these communities have been achieving in the last ten years.

I was initially interested in liminality not only in relation to personal and subjective experiences but also for its ability to define a spatiotemporal form that, thanks to its connection with ritualistic and performative contexts, broadens the notion of person-centeredness into a state involving the sense of an inbetween place. This framed my early approach to liminality as a concept that also incorporated urban studies and postcolonial terms on space such as “marginalization,” “periphery,” “edge,” “between the borders,” “hybridity,” and “space of possibility.” My approach was a reaction against the marginalized designation of “non-places” for “refugee” camps, a term that formed my starting point for thinking about liminality as a potential term for places-in-transit within the border regime. As I mentioned earlier, the recurring word used to define temporality and spatiality within these places on the part of their inhabitants was the term limbo. Limbo becomes a collective imaginary about urban life on the “threshold”; between “what was” and “what is to come.” From the perspective of its inhabitants, the perception of time and space, from transit and belonging, changes significantly, reshaping the discourse on these so-called non-places. The experiences of migration and mobility are linked to the crossing of certain territories, as well as a specific temporal dimension. Time/space becomes the defining feature that shapes the migration narrative and the importance of physical space. This was the starting point for perceiving the Dzjanganl,

plores how listening is present in cultural memory and history, contradicting the visual idea of Aura as analyzed by Walter Benjamin from an aesthetic perspective. *Aurality* argues that sound and voice define knowledge and power, as well as the presence of the human in a post-colonial society.

Tiburtina, and Los Arenales as potential “liminal places” where temporality, spatiality, identity, and belonging merge into other urban forms apart from assumptions about everyday life in contemporary cities.

From this perspective, the transition of the concept of liminality from ritual processes in communities (Van Gennep, [1961] 2019) to the production of liminoid situations (Turner, 1982) in theater and performative acts makes the term interesting for its degree of “localization,” especially in relation to the idea of “camps,” whose infrastructure and design is geared toward the management of border regimes. In contrast to official-state “refugee” camps, where political and state actors are responsible for their design and establishment, in places such as the Dzjangan, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales, due to their informality and self-built nature, the process of designing the place, even if temporary, is determined by processes of alternative placemaking (see Epilogue). Despite the destructive and transformative aspects of the liminal, the process of self-designing and building something, in this case a “temporary home,” can be seen as part of a ritual process highlighting the reconstructive aspect of the liminal (Halse and Clark, 2008). Building on this, my initial interest extended beyond the notion of “suspended time” associated with liminality. I found it compelling to explore how the Dzjangan, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales, with their uncertainty and fragility about the future, could still foster conviviality, solidarity, and resistance, giving rise to a sense of *communitas*, as described by Turner and Schechner (1988), that is intrinsic to liminality. These initial observations led me to consider the idea of an intermediate stage in the urban area, a place that serves both as a repository for collective migratory memories and as a platform for defense and resistance against the border regime.

As I have discussed throughout this book, the concept of liminality has been subject to critique from various perspectives, particularly regarding tensions between the idea of people-in-transit as being “outside of time.” Initially, as I saw these places through the lens of liminality, moving away from the conventional descriptors of “non-places” and “places of exception,” recognizing the inherent biases in such categorizations. Viewing these places as liminal, however, I risked reinforcing the idea that they exist outside the temporal confines of modern cities. My intention was to shift the focus from subjective experiences to a broader spatial understanding of liminality. Transitioning from subjectivity to a liminal spatiality allowed me to explore the complex migratory inbetweenness within today’s cities. However, this shift did not fully capture the complex nature of places like the Dzjangan, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales, which are experiencing daily border regimes.

These communities navigate their inbetweenness through migratory experiences on placemaking, political actions, and resistance, seeking to challenge their marginalized status within the urban landscape. Their efforts extend beyond merely being “out of time,” as they actively engage with city-making and citizenship. By rejecting state spatial frameworks (“refugee” camps) that have led to their so-called

illegalization, these communities propose alternative models of urban existence, highlighting the need for a fundamental redefinition of what constitutes placemaking in today's city. This redefinition is particularly necessary in postmigrant cities, where migration is at the core of their urban reconfiguration.

In the next chapter, I examine the Dzjantal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales through a postcolonial lens. This perspective allows me to move beyond labeling these places as "non-places," "places of exception," or "liminal places," and instead to reveal the colonial past underpinning the experiences of their inhabitants. These often-unseen patterns manifest in racist practices against communities-in-transit, exacerbating their "limbo status" and perpetuating systems of inequality. By highlighting these entanglements, the next chapter seeks to contribute to a more holistic understanding of migration, urbanism, and the colonial legacies still present in today's cities through the lens of self-built settlements and their placemaking.