

Homelessness, precarious citizenship and practices of 'forced inhabitation' in Cureghem, Brussels

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Odisee
DE CO-HOGESCHOOL



ARRIVAL INFRASTRUCTURES
AS SITES OF INTEGRATION
FOR RECENT NEWCOMERS

migrant arrival

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Introduction

- Homelessness and migration
- Census/counting as political tool but limits of:
 - What is measurable
 - What is politically possible
- Housing First *ethics* as normative horizon but:
 - Welfare chauvinism
 - Differential inclusion and precarious citizenship
- Critical research into development of:
 - Forms of precarious citizenship
 - Forms of collective political agency reconfiguring the field

3 themes – 3 research projects

- The spectacle of (migrant) homelessness as political tool (ReROOT – H2020)
- Forced inhabitation (AIMEC- ESRC)
- Infrastructural reconfigurations (ATLAS - Innoviris)

Brussels/Cureghem

With a.o. Hala el Moussawi, Shila Anaraki,
Karel Arnaut

1. From forced migration to forced homelessness



2015: forced migration and the spectacle of solidarity

1. From forced migration to forced homelessness



2017-2019: the transmigrant and the spectacle of wretchedness

1. From forced migration to forced homelessness



Denk je dat Oekraïners bevoordeeld worden tegenover andere nationaliteiten?



2020-: the undeserving asylum seeker and forced homelessness

1. From forced migration to forced homelessness

= increased differentiation of types of migrants:

- asylum seekers vs undocumented migrants
- within asylum seekers: single male migrants vs families, women, children
- 'good' and 'bad' migrants (race, gender, religion, Europe/third countries...)

> migration policies/political discourse contribute to the creation of 'good' and 'bad' homeless persons:

who is vulnerable and who is not (the confirmation of the colonial idea of 'savages' (street as sufficient for racialised men, especially Muslim and/or black men).

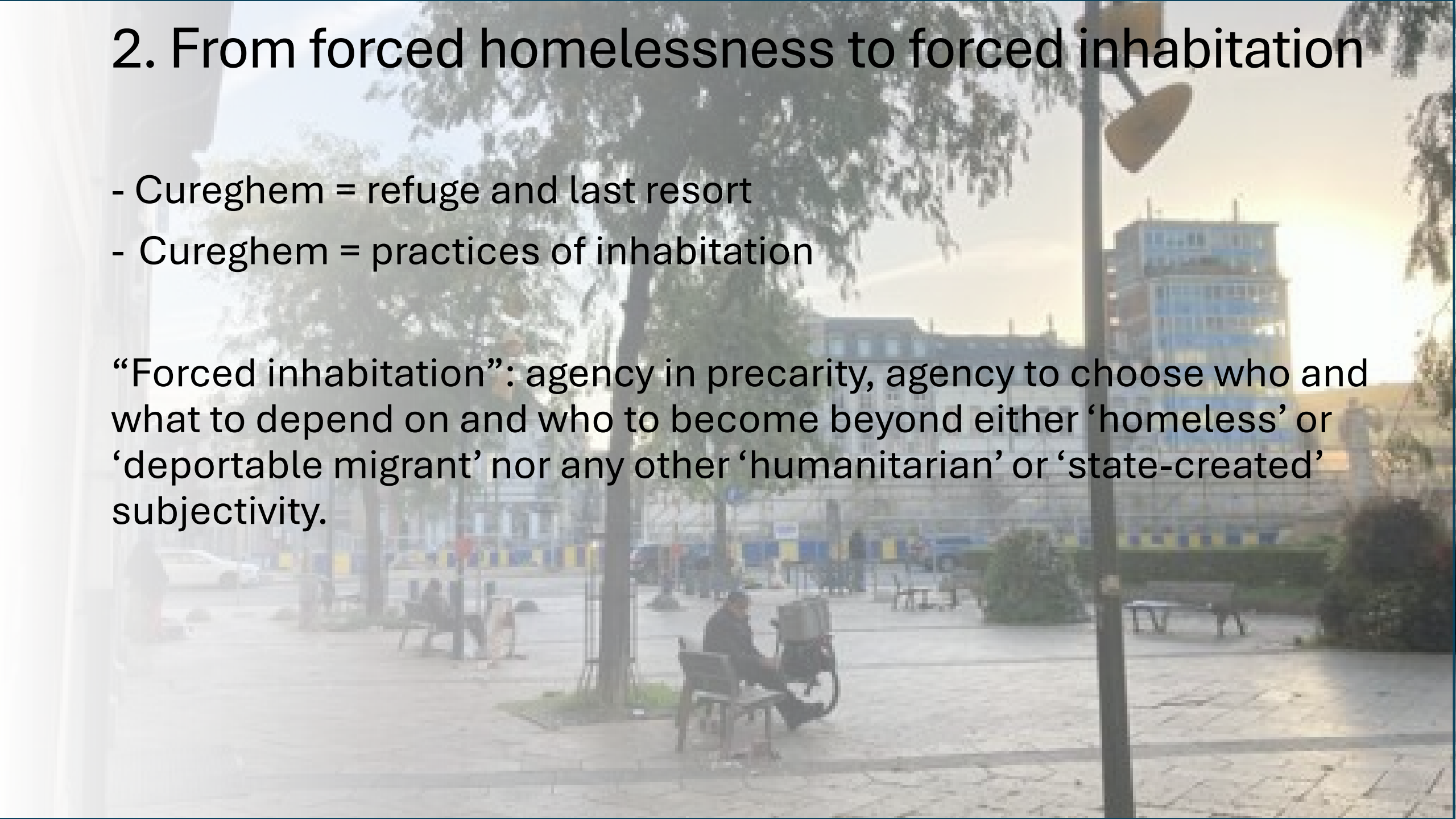
> tactic of divide and rule:

competition and tense relations between service providers, them and civil society organisations but also between persons in a precarious situation, and between them following documented/undocumented divide and others...

2. From forced homelessness to forced inhabitation

- Cureghem = refuge and last resort
- Cureghem = practices of inhabitation

“Forced inhabitation”: agency in precarity, agency to choose who and what to depend on and who to become beyond either ‘homeless’ or ‘deportable migrant’ nor any other ‘humanitarian’ or ‘state-created’ subjectivity.



2. From forced homelessness to forced inhabitation

Moussa

- undocumented first days / resorts to Ali's 'tricks' as undocumented person (who does not apply for asylum) > rough sleeping
- applies for asylum but is not given a place in the Fedasil reception facilities > has to continue to resort to rough sleeping (still with Ali)
- can stay for max a week in a homeless emergency shelter (still with Ali)
- finds a *room* to sublet in a house rented by a countryman, the rent is 650€ (!), two other undocumented countrymen also sublet a room in the same house + starts exploring the possibilities to become a second-hand car trader
- gets a place in a temporary reception centre (Fedasil)
- gets a place in an asylum centre far away + plans to move back to Cureghem and bring his son

Angélique

- undocumented and exploited by her husband, lives in a 'cage' with her three children
- moves to an apartment in Cureghem, where she sublets a mattress to guarantee a small income
- organisations in the neighbourhood only offer 'occupational' activities ('you learn skills that are of no use in practice')
- builds a career at Cultureghem, an organization of volunteers
 - > builds a network, a.o. with collectives of undocumented persons
 - > builds a file to request regularization

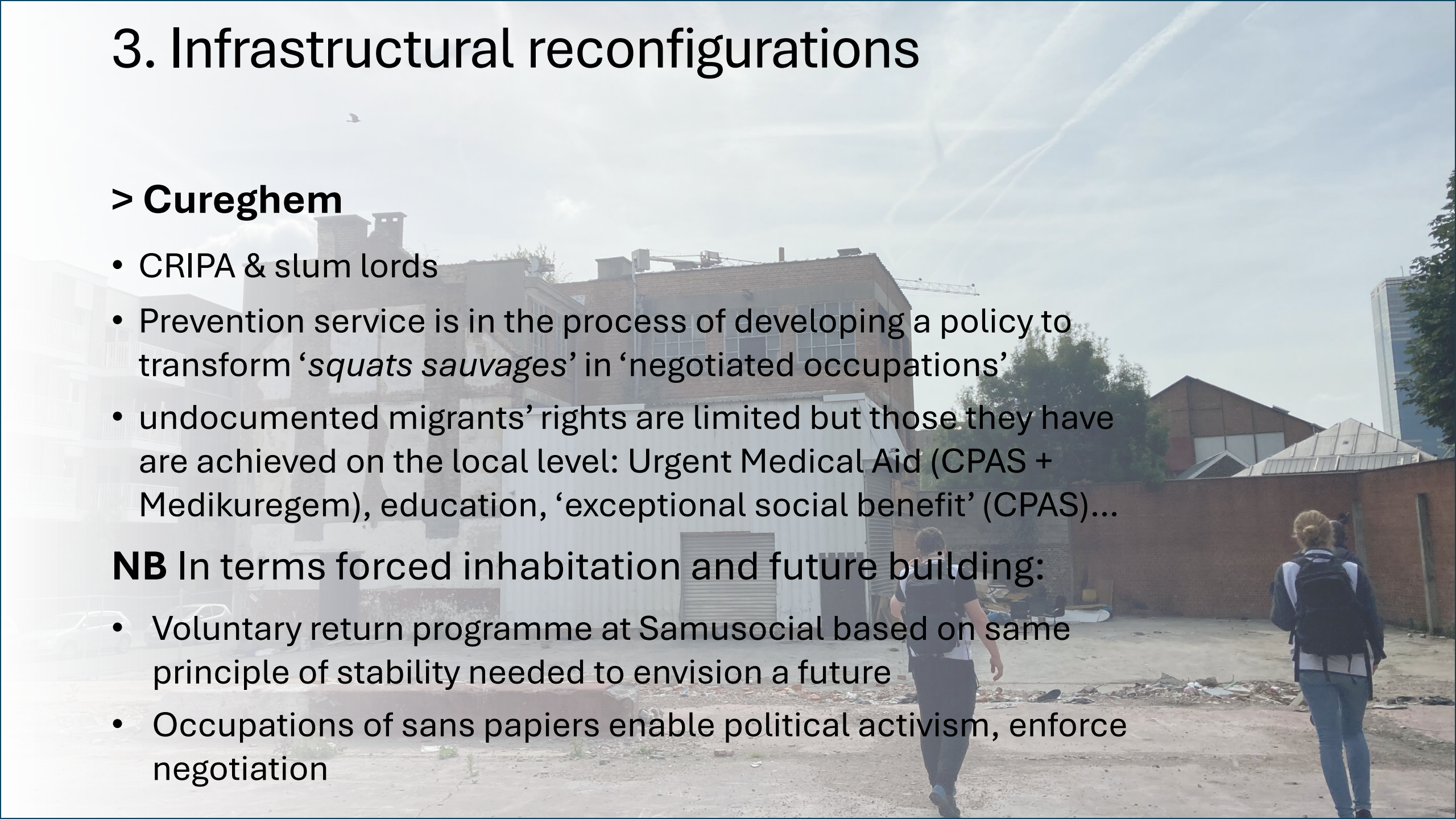
3. Infrastructural reconfigurations

> Cureghem

- CRIPA & slum lords
- Prevention service is in the process of developing a policy to transform '*squats sauvages*' in 'negotiated occupations'
- undocumented migrants' rights are limited but those they have are achieved on the local level: Urgent Medical Aid (CPAS + Medikuregem), education, 'exceptional social benefit' (CPAS)...

NB In terms forced inhabitation and future building:

- Voluntary return programme at Samusocial based on same principle of stability needed to envision a future
- Occupations of sans papiers enable political activism, enforce negotiation



3. Infrastructural reconfigurations

- ‘Official’ organisations and gradual ‘inclusion’ of undocumented migrants into homelessness organisations
- ‘Unofficial’ organisations tackling and preventing homelessness of migrants: citizen and non-citizen initiatives/practices
- Reconfiguration through (relative) mutual recognition and/or to limit possible ‘disturbances’ / linked also to corona pandemic



4. Conclusion

- Increasing variety of differential inclusion
- Denizenship/ precarious citizenship increases
- But:
 - Individual and collective agency in a situation of forced inhabitation
 - Local social and/or reception facilities reconfigure beyond the migrant/homeless divide, but continues within a situation of permanent crisis management
 - Research must integrate these dynamics

Note

We prepared a written conference paper for this presentation. Let us know if you would like to read it!

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