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HOUSED by CHOICE, HOUSED by FORCE - Homes, Conflicts and Conflicting Interests

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Architecture_MPS, University of Cyprus; Cyprus Institute

Abstract / Initial Proposal Form:

Housed by Choice_Housed by Force – Conference Architecture_MPS

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1. Paper/Proposal Title:

**No voice, no choice – Housing experiences of asylum seekers and recognised
refugees in Vienna/Austria.**

2. Format: verbal presentation, written paper

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6. Abstract:

Until now, architects have both little say in and little to say about the housing of refugees. Considering the increasing number of vulnerable persons applying for asylum in Europe, not only smart design solutions and planning concepts for temporary, longer and long-term accommodation are required. To provide a better basis for planning measures, guidelines and policies, there is also a strong need for empirical research on the existing housing situation of displaced persons. By using the concept of 'housing pathways' ('housing careers' or 'housing biographies') this paper addresses the housing experiences of asylum seekers and recognised refugees in Vienna/Austria. Based on empirical research carried out by students of architecture at Vienna's Technical University, various temporary housing stations – situations of a 'stand-by living' characterized by uncertainty, waiting, and a low degree of self-determination – are examined. This study does not simply aim at giving people voice who have no choice. It rather strives to take the perceptions and housing experiences of displaced persons seriously – as valuable data that allow to better understand and improve refugees' living conditions. This also represents a pedagogical project. By treating refugees as experts and becoming attentive listeners, future architects should be better prepared to resist paternalistic planning practices and to take a stand for dignified living conditions. This research-driven teaching project aims (1.) to compare and assess various forms of accommodation (provided by the state, humanitarian aid organizations and private persons) in the light of social integration, (2.) to explore practices of appropriation and home-making in refugee accommodations from a material culture perspective, and (3.) to identify barriers that impede displaced persons' access to the housing market.

7. Short Biography:

ANITA AIGNER teaches and conducts research in the field of architectural sociology at the Faculty of Architecture and Planning, Vienna University of Technology. Her most recent publications address modernist housing estates as lived-in monuments.