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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:

1. Paper / Proposal Title: _Permanent Impermanence – Housing, durable solutions and protracted internal displacement_____

2. Format: _Verbal Presentation_____

Written paper / verbal presentation / screening / short film / other – please specify

3. Author(s) Name: _Ben Hudson_____

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5. University or Company Affiliation: _University of Bristol_____

6. Abstract (300 words):

Housing provision is vital to any durable solution to internal displacement. However, despite its crucial importance, medium-long term IDP housing is often inadequate to meet even the most basic needs. Reflecting specifically on the protracted situation of internal displacement in western Georgia, this presentation will reveal how attempts to provide adequate IDP housing have been undermined by a multi-layered series of conflicting interests that trap IDPs in a state of permanent impermanence.

In Georgia, internal displacement was always supposed to be temporary. Yet, over twenty years later, significant numbers of IDPs remain displaced, prevented from dignified and safe return. The 2007 State Strategy for the first time promoted IDP integration at the site of displacement as a durable solution to internal displacement, and positioned housing provision as central to achieving that aim. However, any attempts to implement durable housing solutions have been negated by the pervasive view that integration is only temporary until the point at which return is possible. Such a view is the result of conflicting interests not only between but within key stakeholder groups, interests that bring into conflict geopolitical aims, humanitarian protection efforts, and the individual rights of IDPs to voluntary return.

It is the physicality and symbolic permanence of newly-constructed concrete apartment blocks that sits in opposition to displacement's purported impermanence. While locating new settlements far from municipal centres, leaving new streets unnamed, restricting ownership rights, and failing to provide the necessary support infrastructure (including schools, shops and employment opportunities), may have to some extent reconciled these two positions, little progress has been made towards delivering durable housing solutions on the ground. As a result, housing, rather than laying the crucial foundations that allow IDPs to rebuild their lives, has instead further contributed to IDPs' segregation, insecurity and instability during displacement.

7. Author(s) Biography (200 words maximum for all authors):

Ben Hudson is a Law PhD Candidate (ESRC 1+3 Scholarship) and Teacher at the University of Bristol Law School, United Kingdom.

Ben holds a BA (Hons) in Architecture (Manchester, 2009), an MSc in International Development (Bristol, 2011) and an MSc in Socio-legal Studies (Bristol, 2014).

Ben's doctoral research, which is supervised by Professor Malcolm Evans and Dr Diego Acosta Arcarazo, concerns the human rights protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Inspired by his time in Georgia working with non-governmental organisations and United Nations agencies in 2011-2012, his research specifically engages with the realisation of durable solutions to internal displacement.

In addition to his doctoral research, Ben is interested in the way in which the (forced) migratory consequences of climate change-induced sea level rise challenge orthodox ways of conceptualising forced migration, refugee protection and the nation-state itself.

Ben is the Student Director of the University of Bristol Law School's Human Rights Implementation Centre's Human Rights Clinic, and provides legal research assistance to the Centre notably in the areas of torture prevention, detention and migration.

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