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Contested Borderscapes

Transnational Geographies vis-à-vis Fortress Europe

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Publication date

2019

Document Version

Final published version

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Citation for published version (APA):

Gouvias, D., Petropoulou, C., & Tsavdaroglou, C. (Eds.) (2019). *Contested Borderscapes: Transnational Geographies vis-à-vis Fortress Europe*. Research Group Invisible Cities. <https://aoratespoleis.wordpress.com/>

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Contested Borderscapes

Transnational Geographies vis-à-vis Fortress Europe



MOVEMENT
OF FREEDOM

edited by

Dionysios Gouvas

Christy (Chryssanthi) Petropoulou

Charalampos Tsavdaroglou

**Research Group
Invisible Cities**

Contested Borderscapes

**Transnational Geographies
vis-à-vis Fortress Europe**

Contested Borderscapes. Transnational Geographies vis-à-vis Fortress Europe.

May 2019, Thessaloniki-Mytilene, 196 p., ISBN: 978-618-82533-1-5

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Introduction

European member states are signatories to the Geneva Convention Related to the Status of Refugees.

Human rights and dignity are respected in detention centres across Europe.

An electrified fence was built to protect the nation-state from illegal intruders.

Traffickers are responsible for deaths by drowning in the Aegean and Mediterranean seas.

Deportations are voluntary returns.

Turkey is a safe country.

War is peace.

Freedom is slavery.

Ignorance is strength.

In 2016, Oxford English Dictionary declared “post-truth” the word of the year. In this Orwellian moment, the movement of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants across the increasingly militarised borders of Europe have instigated a socio-spatial debate about the limits of human rights, national sovereignties, continental values, precipitating and contributing to the ongoing condition of European crises. Although in the era of globalisation borders constitute porous passages for capital and

commodities, at the same time they have hardened and ossified as “new enclosures” seeking to immobilise migrant and refugee populations. Fortress Europe emerges as a complex of new state control mechanisms, freshly erected border fences, newly built detention centres and improvised refugee camps; together, these technologies of migration management aim at the criminalisation, classification, stigmatisation, and biopolitical control of moving populations, fomented by xenophobic politics, and managed by humanitarian subcontractors. In this hostile climate, people on the move contest European border regimes, peripheries, and cityscapes by claiming spatial justice and political visibility while creating a nexus of emerging common spaces. They are joined by activists defending their right to movement, who are engaged in efforts to “welcome refugees” into a shrinking and contested public sphere, into alternative and self-organised social spaces, responding to the humanitarian crises wrought by militarism, violence, and structural adjustment with solidarity, stemming from a larger vision of sharing in each other’s struggles for survival and social transformation.

The collective volume is an outcome of the international conference ‘Contested Borderscapes. Transnational Geographies vis-à-vis Fortress Europe’ that took place in Mytilene (Lesvos), September 28 – October 1, 2017.¹

NOTES

1. The introduction is part of the call for papers of the conference ‘Contested Borderscapes. Transnational Geographies vis-à-vis Fortress Europe’. (Organizing Committee: Abatzi Matina, Alexiou Xenia, Catapoti Despina, del Val Jaime, Gouviyas Dionysios, Jaidopulu Vrijea Maria, Katseniou Elena, Lafazani Olga, Leontidou Lila, Makrygianni Vasiliki, Mermigkas Aris, Montesantou Dafni, Papachristou Ioanna – Anna, Papada Evie, Papoutsi Anna, Petrakou Ilektra, Petropoulou Christy, Pistikos Ilias, Sampanikou Evi (Evangelia), Stavrides Stavros, Tan Pelin, Travlou Penny, Tsavdaroglou Haris, Tselepi Naya, Tsilimpounidi Myrto, Varvarousis Angelos, Voulvouli Aimilia, Vradis Antonis, Zafeiris Constantinos).

I

“We took over by force what was not given to us civilly”.

Refugees claim their right to housing in a 1936 squatting incident

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INTRODUCTION

The present paper aims at providing an insight into the practice of squatting in the context of a refugee housing crisis through a historical perspective. It focuses on a specific episode that illuminates the viewpoint of the squatters and the meanings that they attribute to their action as part of a timeless struggle to proper housing.

Mass and organized occupation of building structures for housing purposes is a phenomenon relatively underexplored by international literature. In Greece specifically, the discussion about squats takes as a starting point the political movements and the respective mobilizations of the late 70s to early 80s. What preceded is quite obscure. Thus, squatting in the context of the Asia Minor refugees' settlement in interwar Greece is an unknown case, historically silenced and socially forgotten. Exploring it in the present framework can help us historicize the practice as an active

contestation towards the state's spatial governance that appears much earlier than it is usually thought.

The episode that is presented here took place in Mytilene, capital town of Lesbos Island, in February 1936. At that time, 85 homeless refugee families organized over a single night and simultaneously took over the houses of two settlements that were being built by the state. They were demanding to permanently settle in the houses as a final resolution to their 14 year old housing adventure. They eventually came to defend the occupation as the authorities repeatedly attempted to evacuate them with violent or devious means. The episode generates various questions, primarily as to the motives of both the squatters and the state. Apart from the standard who, where, when, why of the historical research that can be revealed by examining the context, it is crucial to understand how the squatters perceived and signified their action, how the state interpreted such actions and how the media presented the episode.

The present case study is part of an ongoing research regarding the formation and transformation of the Asia Minor refugee settlements that relies on both archival findings and oral testimonies. The local and national press of the time provides invaluable information on the topic. Articles, letters and reportages gathered from newspapers of different political orientations present the incident from various viewpoints and help in contextualizing it. What I attempt to do here is a "thick description"¹ of a particular episode in the sense that I intend to specify not only facts but also details and conceptual structures in order to extract meaning and reach an interpretation.

LESVOS AS AN EMERGING BORDERLAND AND REFUGEE HOSTING PLACE

The sea route from the East to Europe through the Greek islands that is used by the recent migration flows is not newly established. Crossing the sea stripe between Lesbos and the opposite coast used to be a routine among the vast commercial networks of the Ottoman Empire; and evidently long before that. Since the first years of the establishment of the border between Greece and Turkey in 1912² the movement between the two coasts survived either as a flow of smuggled goods (*kontrampanto*)

or in the form of people crossing over to seek refuge in one country or the other. The island faced at least two major refugee crises in the last century, the greatest being that of 1922.

Between 1913 and 1914, tensions in Greco-Turkish relations resulted in the arrival of about 100,000 Christian refugees from Asia Minor on Lesbos. The events of that period are known as the First Persecution (*Protos Diogmos* in Greek) and turned Mytilene into a refugee city for the first time in its modern era. The existing accounts show that in 1916 almost half of the city's inhabitants were refugees³. Yet, in a couple of years the peace in Asia Minor was restored and the majority of the displaced returned back to their homelands. It wasn't long before a new refugee tide flooded the island once more. In 1922 the defeat of the Greek army by the Kemalists incentivized the persecution of the Christian populations that reached a tragic peak with the Great Fire of Smyrna. At that time, the arrival and permanent settlement in Greece of 1.2 million Christian refugees from Asia Minor shook the country in almost every respect - socially, politically and financially. Lesbos was then again at the epicenter of that massive shift of populations.

It is estimated that about 300,000 people docked on the island during the autumn of 1922; 35,000 of which settled there permanently.⁴ Mytilene, the capital town, came to accommodate 13,000 new inhabitants that comprised almost half of its population. During the first five years, temporary settlement took over almost every open space and public building of the city. Churches, schools, parks, warehouses and the former Turkish estates that remained abandoned were flooded with destitute people, while tents and shanties sprung up everywhere. It wasn't until 1927 that the program of permanent rehabilitation for the refugees inaugurated its implementation with the construction of a large refugee settlement at the edge of the city.

THE PERPETUAL ADVENTURE OF REFUGEE HOUSING

The refugee tide brought along an acute socio-economic crisis that the state alone was unable to address. Since the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) introduced an exchange of populations with a binding character, every hope of return for the displaced faded away very soon.⁵ Hundreds of thousands of homeless and unemployed refugees were

in urgent need not only of temporary aid, but of permanent solutions. The national program of permanent rehabilitation for the refugees was developed later that year under the command of an international humanitarian committee and with funds acquired by international loans.⁶ Apart from alleviating the refugee issue, the program also served other long-term national interests. By siting the newly-arrived populations mainly in the provinces of Macedonia and Evros it aimed at consolidating the contested northern borders of the state. Additionally, the refugees were channeled away from the metropolitan areas and towards the agricultural sector to safeguard the urban order.

The program prioritized heavily the housing needs over employment and its sustainability was highly disputed. Urban and rural settlements sprung up all around Greece, but despite the intense construction effort, there were never enough vacancies to house everyone. Until the late 30s almost half of the refugees were still living in tents, shacks and other precarious dwellings waiting their turn to be allotted with a house in a settlement. For many years the right to proper housing was the central political demand of almost every refugee association.

Despite the intentions of the state, more than half of the refugees chose to settle in the cities, forming makeshift shantytowns on the outskirts. The emerging refugee neighborhoods in the Greek cities became centers of a new urban culture and of a strong and long-lasting refugee identity.⁷ Holding a marginal position in the socio-spatial hierarchy of the urban fabric, they became places of segregation, deprivation and poverty, but also of industriousness, tidiness, collegiality and pride. These “spotless slums” (Hirschon, 1998, pp. 3-4) were also cradles of political radicalization where left ideology had a strong appeal.⁸

During that time, in fear of a gradual proletarianization of the poor, the central intention of the state was to build a broad petty bourgeois class on the solid foundations of land ownership. The need for rehabilitation of the refugees as “decent house owners” was stressed by most political parties of the time. The land policies followed by the state can be analyzed from different theoretical perspectives. In a Gramscian perspective, they can be considered as part of a hegemonic plan aimed at securing the consensus of these lower strata through the ideological use of land and home ownership.⁹ The land aspect was notably suited for this purpose since it responded to issues

that concerned the masses and also allowed the state to 'offer' at a low cost. From a Foucauldian point of view, it can be seen as a tool aimed at controlling and managing the population, particularly the refugees that were characterized by high mobility. From this perspective the state can be considered as targeting the creation of subjects who, by enjoying of the special right to acquire urban land became more obedient, manageable and loyal to the established order.¹⁰ In any case, during that time property ownership was charged with great political significance and the commodification of refugee housing was one of its aspects. Additionally, the auction of the newly built settlements would provide the impoverished and indebted state with funds to pay back the refugee loans.

Thus, in 1927 a Bill was passed according to which the houses of the settlements would be sold directly to the refugee beneficiaries that were until then accommodated for free. The procedure was as follows: three-member committees would estimate the value of each house and set the price; refugee tenants would be asked to state within three months whether they intended to buy it at the arranged price; if they were not interested, the house would be offered for sale to other refugees; eventually the houses would be repaid in installments within 15 years. This plan allowed tenants and homeless refugees to become proprietors in a short time and under quite favorable conditions. Nevertheless, this central decision of withdrawal from the social nature of the refugee housing program towards a more profitable resolution intensified the feeling of injustice among the most disadvantaged. Furthermore, the majority expected nothing less than free housing as a minimum compensation for the properties that had been left behind in Anatolia. To them the Greek state was held responsible for their loss and suffering due to its careless decisions that led to defeat and persecution.

All in all, this attempt to commodify the state-owned housing was poorly achieved, since it appealed to a small part of the homeless refugees and full repayment eventually never happened. However, this shift actually meant the end - already at birth - of social housing in Greece. As a response to that, the first mass and organized squatting took place in Athens in 1927 when homeless refugee families took over the newly built houses of three major settlements in Kaisariani, Vyronas and Nea Ionia. The episode led to negotiations and violent confrontations according to a series of reports in the newspapers of the time. Further historical research could reveal the various as-

pects of the episode and the final outcome of the struggle. The incident that I examine below, albeit 9 years later, manifests an active resistance to this shift as well.

THE MULTIFACETED CRISIS OF THE 30S AND ITS EFFECT ON THE LOWER CLASSES

During the interwar period the refugee issue was not the only major problem of the country. The Great Depression had a strong impact on the national economy and led to bankruptcy in 1932. Moreover, Greece was trapped in a constant political turmoil that involved coups, dictatorships and civil conflicts. In 1936 events were accelerating dramatically since national elections drove to a political dead-end. At the same time social unrest was manifesting with massive movements of strikes, demonstrations, factory occupations and riots among the impoverished and unemployed workers. The communist guidelines were heavily influencing those struggles that in some cases led to generalized popular uprisings. But the fear of communism was being strategically cultivated among the most conservative parts of the Greek political and social system, paving the way for the establishment of the totalitarian regime of the 4th of August.¹¹ During that period the socio-economic downturn aggravated social antagonism among the lower classes and tensions among refugees and locals escalated. Some newspapers, instruments of right and far-right wing, incited aggressions towards refugees, targeting them as the cause of all national problems. As an outburst of this, a refugee settlement in Volos was attacked and set on fire.¹²

It is in this context that a mass popular uprising took place on Lesbos. In the winter of 1936 hunger and unemployment was kneeling the working class of the island. Harsh weather and bad crop led to a large number of the islanders surviving mainly on wild herbs and weeds. During the first week of February some villages faced mobilizations of groups of unemployed workers that were demanding bread, work and welfare support. At the same time, through its press the Communist party was calling for those groups to unite and take collective action. On February 10 a demonstration took place in the city of Mytilene where thousands of unemployed and starving people took over the streets. The insurgent crowd was demanding bread and work

from the local authorities and eventually clashed with the police and the army that were commanded to disperse it. The upheaval lasted for about a week and it's during that time that the incident of mass squatting took place.

THE REFUGEES, THE STATE AND THE PRESS: DISCOURSES OVER A SQUATTING INCIDENT

Unlawful housing practices such as arbitrary constructions of dwellings (and even churches) were common among the refugee world. Yet, they were often met by a silent tolerance from the Greek authorities as a self-regulative way of alleviating the problem and relieving social tensions. Mass and organized squatting, however, was interpreted as defiance towards the state's sovereignty. Such actions appeared to be inspired by socialist ideologies and had to be violently repressed. Apparently, when refugee and communist identities overlapped and manifested, they presented a truly precarious patchwork to the political establishment.

On the other hand, homeless refugees had very little to lose by engaging in such radical actions. Their former lives in Asia Minor were discontinued by the traumatic experience of uprooting. Fortunes, homes and family members were forever lost and conditions in the new homeland didn't quite meet their expectations. Especially for the most disadvantaged that abruptly descended the ladder of social hierarchy to find themselves trapped in the margins of the Greek cities the feeling of injustice was overwhelming. Through a letter to a local leftist newspaper we can hear the vivid voice of an anonymous squatter that provides us with unique insights into the hopes, expectations and frustrations that fueled part of their struggle.

So they exchanged us as if we were sheep, without asking our opinion, and then they brought us here, promising to rehabilitate us. [...] And instead of sheltering us like humans they threw us in the wooden shacks that they set up in Lagada. Instead of roofs they had tar paper. In 1927 a strong north wind took them and wounded some of us. Under the pressure of the dwellers, the State was obliged to install some phony metal sheets and promise that they would build a settlement. A few years later the government of Tsaldaris built 80 little houses beneath our

shacks and while we were waiting to finally enter our homes they announced that they would sell them and only the ones who had money would get a house. Thus, we stayed behind in the shacks because we didn't have a dime. Our compensation pennies had been spent many years before. (Embros, 1936, March 7)

As neglect and mockery raise the refugee housing issue to a moral level, another letter reveals an inside viewpoint on the constant political bargain between the political parties and the refugees.

The liberals and the conservatives that governed us for so many years pretended to be protectors of the refugees to steal our votes. Now the conservatives started the fight again and through their official press they curse us and call the locals to burn our houses down (like it happened in Volos) and chase us away like lepers. And the liberals undertook our protection once more. But what did they do during the many years that they were in government? [...] For 14 years they kept us canned like sardines inside the wooden shacks. Winters passed and we were rotting in there and no one cared about us. The new houses in Lagada and Kalithea were built long ago, but it seems that they were destined for others or that they wanted us to buy them. Till the time came that we couldn't carry on anymore. The recent rains brought us to a desperate state. We all got rheumatisms. Our children got sick with tuberculosis. And all of us, faced with such abandonment, took the unanimous decision to take over by force what was not given to us civilly. I don't suppose that any man who thinks righteously can say that we did wrong. But now the state remembered us! And it sent its enforcers to violently throw us out. Yet our collective resistance held them up. Now it sends various moles that terrorize the refugees and blackmail them to abandon the houses or get thrown in jail. But our decision is to fight, defending our life, until they take us out in pieces. Anyway jail is better than life in the wooden shanties. (Embros, 1936, February 22)

The writer justifies the action by reversing the unlawfulness towards the state's practices, oriented by a mixture of populism, profit, corruption and repression. The representation of the needy refugee is adopted here since it is highly functional towards this cause. But at the same time it directly contradicts with the subject that is struggling to re-conquer its agency. In addition to the restoration of justice, squatting is considered as a moment of action that ruptures a long period of passivity and en-

ables the squatters to take matters into their own hands.

The squatters' suspiciousness, which is a typical condition in most cases of occupation without legal tenure, is justified here by the illicit means employed by the authorities in the attempt to evacuate them. Threats, tricks and propaganda are summoned to the cause both by police and intermediaries. Elsewhere an episode is described where a group of police officers managed to evict a family by promising to give them a house in another settlement. In order to deceive them, the officers drove the family to their supposed new house, while their peers were throwing all their possessions out. And elsewhere a refugee testifies that various intermediaries are employed to propagate that they should leave or else they will be hanged. Below is an abstract from an article were a journalist and a parliamentarian, member of the Communist Party, pay a visit to the squatters. The romantic dream of proper housing that rapidly dissolves is presented in a sharp allegory:

Here we are in Lagada; from afar we see beautiful and newly built little houses in a great location. The midday sun endows them with a special brightness. [...] But as we approach the beautiful picture dissolves. There are no roads at all, nor lamps, nor water. Potholes are everywhere. Faces are pale, undernourished, women with their backs humped from deprivation; children look aged and sickly. And how strange!... When they see us they get in the houses and disappear. The ones on the windows give us hateful looks. [...] All the residents of the settlement go to bed and wake up with the same fear, that they will be evacuated and when they see a stranger they take him for a bailiff or a snitch. (Embros, 1936, February 29)

The editors of this newspaper devote a series of articles that endorse, support and legitimize the squatters' actions. The image of the squatter is mediated through the representation of the press that stresses the moral aspect of the issue. On a political level, the left press sees an opportunity where the right press sees a threat. The extreme right press¹³ maintains an ambivalent attitude that reveals the populist methods and the importance of attracting the refugee vote. In the abstract below it is mildly denouncing and calls for resilience as the most effective strategy.

Since the beginning we reproved the arbitrary occupation of the dwellings of the settlements, because it would be unthinkable to ever applaud it and because no man that respects himself would be possible to encourage such actions that turn

against the Laws, neither to fondle such mob ruling attitudes. But since the harm is done and we are before fait accompli we think that this has to be examined by the authorities with some sympathy and above all with calmness and superiority. [...] We acknowledge that sometimes human need can be even stronger than the Law [...] Throwing a man in the streets these days is a cruel and inhumane measure and especially under the circumstances that the island finds itself it is not wise at all. [...] It is unknown why the lawmaker that composed the Bill about refugee housing imagined that the homeless refugees are earners and millionaires. [...] A real homeless person, towards whom the State has explicit obligations, is the one who cannot pay his rent nor secure his bread. And yet it is him that the Law and the Governmental order deprive from his right to shelter!!! (Fos, 1936, February 28)

Until lately I had no clues as to how this struggle ended since relevant references on the local press fade and disappear. But during fieldwork in the neighborhood I discovered that the squatter's descendants are still living in these houses. In the interviews I was initially reluctant to ask directly about that episode, fearing that it might be offensive to associate the community with unlawful means of possession. But on the contrary it came out that this episode was praised as an important conquest of the past that functioned almost like a foundational myth for the community, cultivating feelings of pride, empowerment and place attachment. The 95 year old man that remembers occupying his house as a child with his family was happy to narrate the story of this community of fishermen that lived in the shanties and occupied the houses in one night. He proudly tells that the police couldn't take them out and that Welfare service came later to distribute legal documents.

The relationship between squatters and the political system in the process of establishing legitimacy has to be further investigated. Here refugees were not passively subjected to the state's policies, but neither did they seek to subvert the social order or spatial hierarchies of the Greek cities. While checking for a possible relation of the current residents to the Communist Party I sensed a silent support. A female interviewee told me: "when I was young I almost lost my job at the factory for being in the Party, so I had to quit". And as another informant stated, "what we did over the ballot box is one thing, but I had seven mouths to feed, I couldn't mix with politics". It seems that these people couldn't afford the cost of being openly political and that fact

outweighed the tendencies towards more radical claims. Currently I plan to expand the research with more interviews in order to illuminate how schemes of memory in such context function in the long-term.

CONCLUSIONS: SQUATTING AS AN ACTIVE CONTESTATION OF THE STATE'S SPATIAL GOVERNANCE

The history of the Asia Minor refugees' settlement in Greece is often told in terms of a successful achievement and almost never in terms of a violent struggle,¹⁴ but here we explored an episode of collective claim to housing when the state/refugee confrontation reached its peak. In the context of a political and financial turmoil, an acute housing crisis, the "threat of communism" and the strategic significance of land ownership I sought to find an entry point to this underexplored and currently relevant phenomenon.

It is interesting to observe how the state manifested not as a coherent and rigid mechanism, but rather on the basis of improvisation. Repression was the initial and automatic central reflex. Yet, this response offered to the squatters a chance to shift from a denunciatory discourse to a militant one. Thereon, the authorities resorted to illicit means to achieve their eviction, but faced with strong resistance and possibly under the pressure of the public opinion finally compromised. Thus squatters turned quickly into tenants and in the long run they became proprietors. It is precisely this flexibility of the official policies that achieved assimilation and ultimately pacification of the marginalized and threatening to the status quo strata. On the other hand this opportunistic attitude of the state impeded the planning and implementation of a concrete social housing program.

A double subordination was imposed upon the protagonists of this story: they were both refugees and homeless, thus culturally and socially "others". Squatting was a scenario of survival, a practice that addressed their urgent housing needs. But their collective action aimed not only at producing shelter; it was also an act of rebellion. This example from the past offers a case of an unmediated struggle that helps us transgress the boundaries between active political agents and refugees, since refugees take

over urban political action and demand their right to the city.

Squatting as a practice involves a sense of political disobedience that brings it close to other conditions of relegation on the margins of the city and the society. As Sanyal (2009) observes in her research of the Palestinian camps in Beirut, the act of squatting empowers the refugees to stake claims to land in analogous ways to their urban poor counterparts in cities of the developing world. Squatters, homeless, undocumented migrants and other marginalized groups express a differentiated way of being in the city and exercise the right of living beyond the law.

NOTES

1. This approach is based on interpretive ethnography as introduced by Geertz (1973).
2. The first Balkan War (1912-1913) and the subsequent military actions put an end to the island's 450-year-old Ottoman era. The island remained under the control of the Greek Army and Navy, but it was officially annexed to the Greek State in 1914.
3. Data obtained from Mytilene's Sorority School, *Register of pupils 1914-1915 and 1915-1916*. General Archives of the State, Department of Lesbos.
4. According to the 1928 census out of the island's 122,720 inhabitants 35,485 were refugees, while in Mytilene out of 31,661 inhabitants 13,512 were refugees. (Ministry of National Economy, 1936, p.338).
5. The socio-cultural results of the Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey are thoroughly examined for both parts in the collective volume edited by Hirschon (2003). For an earlier research on the topic in English see Pentzopoulos (2002).
6. The Greek Refugee Settlement Commission was established by the League of Nations in 1923. Details on its work can be found on the accounts of its chairman Morgenthau (1929) and his successor Eddy (1931).
7. For more on the social life of the Asia Minor refugees see Hirschon (1998).
8. Since the Treaty of Lausanne guaranteed the civil rights of the "exchanged" populations, refugees constituted an electorate that could agitate the political status quo. The main preexisting political forces of the time were anxiously seeking to absorb refugee vote under the imminent "threat of communism".

9. This interpretation is based on Gramsci's notions of hegemony and "the manufacture of consent" (Gramsci, 1971).

10. For more on Foucault's approach to the State's mechanisms of control over the population see Foucault (2009).

11. The Metaxas regime (1936-1941) was supported by the King and inspired by Mussolini's Fascist Italy. Fierce anti-communism was the core of its ideology and tactics.

12. Two wildfires were set among the refugee barracks of Volos within a period of two months. The second one, on the 12th of February 1936, killed a young refugee man (Tahydromos, 1936, February 13). Such outbursts were not rare since the first months of refugee settlement, but usually took place during periods of crisis and mainly under political motives.

13. Newspaper "Fos" in a few years would become the local Nazi instrument during the island's German occupation (1941-1944).

14. The only exception is the relatively well known "battle of the barrack" that took place in Drapetsona neighborhood of Piraeus in 1960 with refugees resisting their eviction from the shanty town.

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2

The struggle to become visible. Commoning practices in a migrants' informal settlement on the South- eastern Aegean Sea

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INTRODUCTION

From the summer of 2015, Greece has experienced a huge influx of refugees, which by far exceeded existing capabilities in reception and hospitality (given also the stark socio-economic condition of a country already in its sixth year of recession) (Psimitis, Georgoulas & Nagopoulos, 2017). In 2014 the number of arrivals in Greece by sea was estimated at 41,000 persons, in 2015 it climbed to more than 856,000, it dropped to 173,450 in 2016, then down to 29,718 in 2017, and for the first 6 months of 2018 (last update July 8, 2018) it was 14,387 (<http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>).

Under the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, migrants arriving in Greece are now expected to be sent back to Turkey if they do not apply for asylum or their claim is rejected. That, in combination with the increasing anti-immigration rhetoric in some EU countries of the Central and Eastern Europe, and the ensuing tightening of the EU border controls, started to create a sense of “entrapment” of the newcomers (migrants/refugees) inside the Greek territory. In total, Greece is currently (end of April 2018) hosting approx. 55,000 persons: more than 41,000 in the mainland and almost 14,000 on the islands (<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63723>).

Some of the Aegean Islands close to the Turkish coastline (mainly Lesbos, Chios, Kos, Leros, Samos) shared the largest burden of the refugee population (Alexiou, Tsavdaroglou & Petropoulou, 2016; Papataxiarchis, 2016, 2018; Psimitis, Georgoulas & Nagopoulos, 2017). The Dodecanese islands, and especially Rhodes, have not been affected by major refugee flows. However, the drastic cuts in funding of food and health programs by international organizations (e.g. the United Nations High Commission for Refugees / UNHCR) and the absence of a viable national or regional plan for hosting the incomers, tightened security around refugee camps, discouraged solidarity groups and NGOs from working with migrants/refugees and decreased the originally very generous influx of supplies (Papataxiarchis, 2018; Psimitis, Georgoulas & Nagopoulos, 2017). On top of that there have also been “fears” of the local –and booming— tourist industry for the prospect of “spoiling” the idyllic picture of the Aegean islands (e.g. Rhodes).

In this paper, we will present such an example from an *informal refugee camp in the city of Rhodes* (the capital of the island of Rhodes, on the South-eastern Aegean Sea), where migrants/refugees decided to prepare their own meals around the clock. We will examine how this initiative had been originally perceived, how it was implemented, and to what extent does this may constitute the emergence of a new kind of “commoning” framework.

THE SITUATION IN RHODES

As we said earlier, Rhodes has not been affected by major refugee flows. According to official figures, a total of 3,098 persons applied for asylum in Rhodes from June

2013 till May 2018, as compared to 25,500 in Lesbos (see <http://www.unhcr.gr/sites,https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/64636>). The corresponding numbers for the applications filed from January to the end of April 2018 are 211 for Rhodes and 5,823 for Lesbos (http://asylo.gov.gr/?page_id=143).

Those who do not seem eligible for “refugee” status are forwarded to the nearest Reception and Identification Centres (RICs), located in Kos & Leros (on the northern part of the Dodecanese islands). During the first two years after the major refugee influx (2015-2016), the vast majority of them resided in an unofficial site, which is a *former slaughter-house*, near the passenger harbor of Rhodes. The buildings are municipal property and they were provided by the mayor of Rhodes on the promise that the camp would remain unofficial and there would not be any official hot-spot on the island (<http://www.dimokratiki.gr/19-08-2015/se-kentro-prosorinis-filoxenias-metanaston-metatripan-ta-palia-sfagia-tis-rodou/>, http://www.ert.gr/perifereiakoi-stathmoi/notio_aigaio/sto-kentro-filoxenias-sti-rodou-xenagithikan-ekprosopi-tou-oie/).

The situation in the camp is below acceptable standards. The buildings are shabby, and there is a complete lack of basic amenities (e.g. regular and sufficient water & electricity supply, laundry services, WC facilities), something that has been gradually dealt with, but with only minimal consequences on the living standards of the refugees and asylum seekers, while at the same time there has not been any noticeable change in the local perceptions about the necessity of the camp (<https://www.rodiki.gr/article/378228/prepei-na-fygoyn-oi-prosfyges-apo-ta-palia-sfageia>). In the meantime, the UNHCR intervened, using EU funding for the housing of the remaining refugee population and those who apply for asylum. As a result of this intervention, the camp is currently hosting a small number of immigrants and asylum seekers, and there is an increasing debate about its permanent closure (<https://www.rodiki.gr/article/383541/kleinoin-gia-thn-filoxenia-twn-prosfygwn-ta-palia-sfageia>).

The number have fluctuated considerably (UNHCR, 2018a,b). At the time of the study (May-June 2017), 50-60 persons was the norm, but there were times with more than 150 persons residing in the camp. All those people were living in “a regime of institutionalised waiting” (Tsilimpounidi & Carastathis, 2017, p. 414), with

the most vulnerable ones enjoying some “privileges” in relation to others. The rest were forwarded to other RICs (Crete, Leros, Kos, or the Greek mainland).

Most of the refugees and asylum seekers were from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan but increasingly from a vast array of foreign countries and/or regions within countries (e.g. Kurdistan) (for recent data see UNHCR, 2018b).

In November 2016, some of those staying in the (informal) camp started to complain about the quality of the food provided to them by various humanitarian groups and individual volunteers, coordinated by the Municipality of Rhodes and the Region of the South Aegean Sea. They decided to take turns in preparing their own meals around the clock, given that they would have uninterrupted supplies. This situation continued until the summer of 2017, due to the departure of those who had taken the initiative (transfer by the UNHCR to other islands, in rented accommodation).

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THEORY

Historical Materialism and political economic analysis are my main starting points, in the sense that I am deeply influenced by theories that privilege the economic in explanation of non-economic phenomena. I concur with the famous motto that Marx used in his Preface to *The Critique of Political Economy* (1856): “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness” (Marx, 1956 [1856]).

However, the way the migrants/refugees *live through* those events, and their *attitudes* and *motives for further action* cannot be explained by a simplistic invocation of “structural barriers” or “collective strategies”, nor can they simply mirror power relations of either the country of origin or the country of migration. As Erel put it (2010), “[m]igrants create mechanisms of validation for their cultural capital, negotiating both ethnic majority and migrant institutions and networks” (pp. 642 & 656; for the use of “social capital”, see also Çelik, 2017).

In this study, we focus on the interplay between the “material basis” of the refugee’s lives (in their place of origin and in the host country) on one hand, and their *religious, ethnic, linguistic, gender or other identities* and *idiosyncrasies*, on the other, and how this interplay affects their course of action.

To this end, we will also use the Knott & Vasquez's (2014) concept of the "place-making" spatial strategies of migrant religious groups in cities (especially "global" or "cosmopolitan" ones), as something that encompasses both "dwelling" ("mapping", "building" and "inhabiting") and "crossing" boundaries, in a state of mobility (forced or other).

Finally, their attempts for self-organization raises important questions about the possibilities for "bottom-up" approaches to the creation of "commons spaces" (Lefebvre, 1977), that is possibilities for challenging the triumphant neoliberalism of the late 20th century and the "intensification of new and old processes of enclosure" (Kioupiolis & Karyotis, 2016, p. 143), and promotion of collective ownership that communities—even "precarious" and "vulnerable" ones such as the ones constituted by refugees— can cater for the well-being of each and every one of their members (Harvey, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

An ethnographic approach was adopted in order to highlight the refugee's own experience, through the organization of focus-groups and in-depth interviews, in May and June 2017.

Migrants/refugees have been called to reflect on a number of issues regarding their living standards in the camp their relation to the state agencies (Coast Guard, Police, Asylum Offices) and local authorities (Municipal & Regional), as well as to various representatives of the "civil society" (social philanthropists, volunteers, NGOs, professional and scientific bodies etc.), their future plans, etc.

Finally, they were asked to reflect on their effort to self-organize regarding the food preparation, to give the reasons that pushed them to do so and what this "self-organization" meant for them, and assess the whole process (possibly providing proposals for improvement of their efforts).

There have been some major obstacles in this study, especially in a place like Rhodes, where, due to the undeniably lower rates of refugee flows in relation to other Aegean islands, these matters are invariably under-explored:

- *Language*. The vast majority of the refugees did not speak other from their

native language, and it was difficult to find interpreters to assist with the data collection.

- *Time management.* This is one of the most important problems in ethnographic research, especially when we deal with population living in very precarious conditions in the world's "borderlands" (Agier, 2016). When is the appropriate time to conduct an interview or set up a focus group with refugees who struggle to gain a life in dignity and safety, day by day? How much time should the researcher spend on preparing a "relaxing atmosphere" for a face-to-face interview (Kvale, 1996) when an unpredicted event occurs (e.g. a quarrel between two refugees over the distribution of food, or a hyper-active toddler who needs her parents' attention)?
- *Space limits.* Given the fact that refugees and asylum seekers used to live mainly in the informal camp—at least before the UNHCR intervened—there are certain space limits on where an interview (individual or group, formal or informal, structured or not) could take place and how long will it last (Briggs, 2007; Hollway & Jefferson, 1997). The focus group took place in a lecture room used by the refugees for (informal) Greek-language courses¹, while the (two) in-depth interviews were carried out in one of the city's cafés and in a private apartment.
- *Legal & administrative problems.* Although all the examined persons held a temporary residence permit and lived freely within the Greek national territory at the time of the field work, some "gate-keepers" from formal authorities (e.g. the UNHCR staff) were very hesitant to provide assistance with the interviews. Thus, the implementation of the research took place only with people understanding or speaking English or Greek.
- *Suspicion.* How can a researcher conduct an "in-depth" investigation of a person's past—especially when that involves recording the interview data—when that person is deeply distrustful of anyone speaking Greek, since s/he has been subject to degrading and often aggressive & humiliating behaviour from the time s/he stepped his/her foot on Greek soil? It is characteristic, however, that none of the respondents ever mentioned information about their country of origin and the events that pushed them to migrate.

We ended up with:

- *Three In-depth interviews*, with:
 1. **Fatima**: She is from Afghanistan and was 38 years old at the time of the interview, single. She is an accountant by formation and a former secondary-school teacher, with a medium level of understanding English and Arabic, and a very good command of Farsi, Urdu and Pashtun. At the time of the interview she was staying in a shelter for abused women. She is recognized as a “refugee”. She strongly wants to stay in Greece.
 2. **Hasan**: He is from Syria. He was 41 years old at the time of the interview and married, with two kids (5 & 7-year-old), who attend Greek school. He is recognized as a “refugee” and got his two-year residence permit. He holds a vocational-school certificate in fashion designing. He has been working as a cook in various Greek restaurants. He used to live in the camp, but now lives with his family in a private accommodation. He strongly wants to stay in Greece.
 3. **Saleh**: He is from Syria. He was 20 years old at the time of the interview and single. He is recognized as a “refugee” and got his two-year residence permit. He graduated from a lower-secondary school. He initially registered in an evening vocational school in Rhodes (September 2017) and worked in a Greek fishing boat and a fish house in the summer of 2017. He took part in Greek-language lessons offered at the University of the Aegean, although not very frequently after the 2017 Easter break.

- *One Focus group*, with a group of refugees from Iraqi Kurdistan who arrived in Rhodes in spring 2015.
 1. **Abu**: He is from Iraqi Kurdistan. He was 25 years old at the time of the interview, and single. He did not provide information about his past life, or about any attempt to work in Greece. He has not completed secondary school, but he attended regular Greek-language lessons offered at the University of the Aegean, although not very frequently after the 2017 Easter break. He stated that he wanted to stay in Greece, but he left Rhodes to an unknown destination in summer 2017. He provided some help in the food preparation efforts during the “self-organization” period.

2. **Ahmad:** He is from Iraqi Kurdistan. He was 35 years old at the time of the interview, and married, with two kids. While in Greece, he worked in agricultural and other unskilled occupations. He did not provide information about his past life. He took part in Greek-language lessons offered at the University of the Aegean, although not very frequently after the 2017 Easter break. He has been transferred by the UNHCR to Crete. He stated that he wanted to stay in Greece. He assisted a lot the food preparation efforts during the “self-organization” period.
3. **Mahmud:** He is from Iraqi Kurdistan. He was 47 years old at the time of the interview, married, with three kids. While in Greece, he worked in agricultural and other unskilled occupations. He did not provide information about his past life. He was a regular attendant of the Greek-language lessons offered at the University of the Aegean. He has been transferred by the UNHCR to Crete. He expressed his strong wish to stay in Greece. He was one of the initiators of the “self-organization” effort for the preparation of the refugees’ food².

RESULTS

Distinction between “eligible refugees” and “deportable economic migrants”

None of them had a clear picture of this distinction, and they all depended on various experts, state officials and volunteers to elucidate this distinction. Nevertheless, those who were not generally considered as “refugees” (i.e. not Syrians) and had not come from war zones, realized that this distinction can harm them. That made them feel very bad and instilled a sense of “injustice”.

It takes time to realize and understand the whole “asylum” process. [...] The authorities have not given us a clear picture of our rights. [...] I cannot understand why they recognize people from Syria as refugees, and not me, ... not us! [Abu] Me too.... They have not explained me yet why they [the state authorities] treat Kurdish people so badly! Too many papers!... Too many questions, and too few answers!... [Ahmad]

Personal experience from entering to Greece, and from living in, or close to the camp

All of them expressed mixed feelings, with invariably negative experiences in the early days in Greece, and more positive feelings as times went by. What mostly strikes me is that they expressed feelings of resentment towards not the Greeks, but towards other refugees, from different geographical origins and with different ethnic, language and political identities.

It's the first time that I come to Greece. [...] I have been here for almost two years!... The authorities treated me relatively well, but I have not managed yet the temporary residence permit! In the [informal] RIC, they treated us with suspicion. I mean, not only the Greek citizens there [...] but some other refugees like me! [...] I mean people with different ethnic origin.... They don't like us! I don't know why, but... this is a reality. [Ahmad]

I have the same feeling myself... Although we all are Muslims, some people do not trust us [i.e. the Kurds], and they keep us at a distance... They don't want to talk to us... and stuff like that... You know... [Abu]

In the [informal] camp they treated us with suspicion and, sometimes, hostility [...]. I mean, not only the Greeks, but the other refugees, even those from different parts of Syria!.... [Hasan]

There are times when the “refugee” status is not the only distinctive feature of the respondents’ situation, and that the details of individuals’ social trajectories diverge from one another, with many factors, such as *age, gender, race, educational experience, family wealth, place of origin, personal skills and talents* etc., intervening in the outcome of an individual’s response to the various circumstances. In the case of the female member of our informant group, the *gender* can be a crucial factor in the way a person might experience exclusion, prejudices, stereotypes and even hostile behavior.

The authorities treated me well when I entered Greece [...]. The attitudes were positive. [...] I gradually became familiar with the people in the camp in Rhodes, although I was not very comfortable there, with so many male refugees staring at me all the time... You know... I was a woman... alone... [Fatima]

In the case of Saleh (the youngest of our respondents), it seems that age, combined

with *socio-economic background* and *family wealth*, proves to be a determining factor in the creation of feelings of uneasiness and distress.

In the [informal] RIC, the situation was ok, but ... a bit disorganized. They treated me with suspicion [now he lives in a private accommodation]. It is not only the Greeks, but some of the other refugees... You know, there are people there who.... used to live in slums!... So it's natural for them to live like this. Whereas for me... it's bad! What can I say!..... [Saleh]

Social networks they have managed to establish during their stay in this country

According to Schiller's definition of "transnational migration" (1997, in Pusch, 2016, p. 208), immigrants very often "forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement". However, in our case, refugees did not show any sign of maintaining strong ties that "bridge" their places of origin and their destination(s) –the latter being a very fluid goal, both in geographical and emotional terms. Most of them seem to keep only a minimum contact with their relatives and friends in their home country.

I do communicate sometimes with my relatives back in Iraq... just to see if they're ok... to check for their health and stuff... The smartphones help us to do that!... [Abu]

There is a general sense of mistrust, not always manifest in an overt way. Refugees, as expected, socialize more frequently and strongly with compatriots and with people with the same ethnic origins and the same language, although other factors, such as geographic origin, socio-economic & educational background and the social & cultural capital etc. might affect their "place-making", "dwelling" and "bonding" strategies (Bourdieu, 1984; Çelik, 2017; Erel, 2010; Knott & Vasquez, 2014).

Some people group together. They set up their networks, and keep other people away... They share everything among them. I've got my own circle of friends – mainly from my place of origin [...] My family.... We get along very well! Why searching for other friends? We are ok like that. [Ahmad]

There are very few people I can talk to and trust, especially Greek volunteers who have helped us during our stay [...] In the refugee camp, I tried to contact people,

but I met a lot of distrust, and even hostility from certain persons. [...] Some people are not educated at all! They are “peasants”!... You know what I mean... [Hasan]

Women show a more “defensive” attitude towards socialization with other refugees, especially when they are single among many men or multi-person families.

As I told you, I was not very comfortable when I was living in the camp. When I stayed in the shelter [for abused women] I felt very nice. [...] I met some women, and now I am close to one woman (abused) and four persons [who teach Greek at the University]. [Fatima]

Through this excerpt, we see that women from places where their status –by law and my tradition—is invariably considered “lower” than men (and Fatima clearly testified for this anytime we had talked to each other, not only during the interview), in their attempt to “dwell” and simultaneously to “cross the boundaries” (Knott & Vasquez, 2014), may not limit themselves to increase their “capital” but “to transform, partially or completely, the immanent rules of the game” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2007, p. 99) by depending on their bonds with new acquaintances.

Level of trust for the various people they come across, or have to deal with

The refugees, due to their “precarious” status, are forced to trust other people for reasons of enjoying even basic human needs, such as shelter, food, health, and often talk to somebody as a means to feel “special”, to feel “esteemed” by someone else.

There are very few people I can talk to and trust.... Maybe the Greek volunteers who are helping us. The teachers.... Very few people.... But, I’m happy being among them. [Abu]

I can trust some agencies like the UNHCR, ... Not “trust”... I should say I am forced to trust them. I don’t have any alternative!... Ok, they help some people ... But they do not seem to care about all our needs. [Ahmad]

Some of them link the sense of “trust” for others with political agendas, which are part of wider, regional, national and transnational, policy-making institutions.

I only trust friends (Greek mostly) who help me, not other Syrians. Very few people ever cared about us. [...] Some agencies (e.g. the UNHCR) have their own agenda.

They help some people and let other people helpless! I don't know why!... [Hasan]

The level of trust is always linked with the level of “cultural capital” one might possess, leading to a distinction between “us” and “them” (Bourdieu, 1984); a distinction that is not based necessarily on a “rucksack approach” to cultural capital, according to which there is a homogenous amount of ethnic or religious cultural resources (Erel, 2010), but rather on a refined version of identity building, which is based on and interacts with other elements of the person’s life trajectories and individual psychological traits.

I socialize with people irrespectively from religion, nationality, language. But I feel more comfortable with polite and educated persons. I prefer people with “open mind” (e.g. when they respect). I am a bit introvert (because of my previous experience, in my country of origin). I avoided speaking to other men during my stay in the camp [RIC]. [Fatima]

Their opinion about the socio-economic situation in Greece, and their goals for the future

As we said earlier, the refugees expressed more positive feelings as times went by. Although Greece had been considered as a “transitory” border land for most of them, after the tightening of the EU borders and the restrictions imposed on their movement by the Greek authorities after the EU-Turkey deal of March 2016, they started to realize that settling down in this country and trying to integrate might become the only viable solution.

It is bad, but it's better than where I come from. [...] At the beginning I wanted to go abroad ... I wanted to go to Germany. Now I wish to stay here. The main problem is unemployment. I need to work. [Ahmad]

My opinion of Greece was very negative at the beginning.... but more positive now. [Fatima]

Some of them, especially the younger ones, voiced their concerns about the lack of “equal status” and even demanded –even on purely humanitarian grounds, and not on grounds of norm-setting– equal rights with the “natives”.

We do not provoke anything and anyone. We just want to be treated equally [...]

The State should intervene and help us to feel decent and free. Especially the basic technical infrastructure (showers, beds, central heating, lighting, water supply, electricity) should be improved! Now, it is better, but there have been many times when we felt abandoned!... [Abu]

The reasons that pushed them to self-organize

Those who got involved in the preparation of the food –for the limited period we mentioned earlier—stated that they were forced to self-organize, because there was no “alternative”. However, that attempt did also help them raise their self-respect and to “build bridges” with the “other”. In their endeavor they had to cooperate with other refugees with whom they had not used to socialize hitherto. In other words, the material bases of their life pushed to cooperate and find solutions to an unbearable situation.

I decided to do something for all my friends here. For all the refugees. The food was ok, but not so satisfactory as I expected it to be [...] The locals don't know our customs and eating habits.... Don't get me wrong. They have tried hard! [...] Mrs. Sofia [a local lady who was cooking for the refugees for some time during winter 2015] did her best [...] but she could not accommodate all the needs and tastes. Additionally, at a certain point she left, so... we were left without a cook, and I volunteered. [...] Along the way, many people got involved [...] [Mahmud, the main cook]

To the question if all the refugees agreed on that, the replies revealed that not everybody embraced that initiative and they were many divisions, dissatisfaction and alienation in the process. Nevertheless, the whole process went along nicely, given the previous situation and the conflictual relations between the various groups in the camp. In the very end, the experience was positive for everyone.

*It went ok, better that I expected. Everybody was satisfied with the food... [Mahmud]
At least we were!... I liked the food... It was a lot better that before! [Abu]
Not everybody was eating the food I was preparing.... But those who tasted it did not complain. Even those people with whom our relationships were not the best possible... [Mahmud]*

In this process, it seems odd that female refugees did not participate in the cooking process, given their heavy involvement in household keeping in the refugees' countries of origin. One explanation could be that in this case their involvement would be made in the public sphere, not the private one, with which the female presence is associated (Erel, 2009; Peterson, 2010).

As for the ladies who helped in cooking (rarely), I saw that their husbands/ relatives would not let them approach the kitchen. It was not their home, so ... they did not care about the preparation of food. [Ahmed]

I did not participate in such an effort. I only cared about myself. It's difficult for a woman to express her opinion. [...] However, I saw that people who did eat, were satisfied with the food. [Fatima]

Possible proposals for improvement of their life

Apart from struggling to survive and satisfy basic human needs (food, clothing, safety, bodily hygiene etc.), before proceeding to "higher order" ones (see the A.H. Maslow's hierarchy of needs [1943]), our respondents started to raise issues of citizenship rights, something purportedly "odd" given their precarious situation and fragile status.

The authorities should pay more attention to our needs and be more responsive to our demands. [Hasan]

They [i.e. the authorities] should pay more attention to our needs and be more responsive to our demands. They should not care only about Syrian immigrants.

We are refugees too! [Ahmad]

The state should provide affordable housing to all refugees who need it. [...] I believe that the distinction between "refugees from Syria" and "refugees from Irak" is wrong. [Abu]

One of them even raised wider macro-political issues concerning the involvement of the EU (as a transnational entity) into the armed conflicts in the Middle East and the havoc that the latter caused on people's life there.

The European Union has responsibility for what is happening in my country, ... so they must help us!.... [Saleh]

Most of them identified the whole process with an attempt to give meaning to their life and overcome the state of “dependence” they had been in from the moment they arrived in Greece. Additionally, they had the chance to leave behind stressful and conflictual situations, and feel “secure”, in the sense that –coming from war zones themselves— they did not have to “fight” for their preservation of their life again.

Yes... we felt free at last! [...] Everybody who tasted the food was satisfied. It was a sense of solidarity to see people who did not like us beforehand to come and talk to us (mainly Homar), and congratulate him for his knowledge & skills on cooking. It was quite calming you know... realising that you do not have to fight for your food... for your life!....[Ahmad]

Thus, they experienced a kind of “crossing” boundaries when they disregarded old and dominant distinctions in their place of origin (e.g. religious & ethnic divisions) and formed a more “inclusive” way of “dwelling” (Knott & Vasquez, 2014). That was evident not only as regards the intra-refugee relations, but also their contribution to a rejuvenation of certain parts of whole neighborhoods in the receiving communities. This, according to the author’s personal experience, is partially true for Rhodes, especially when some refugee families were moved by the UNHCR to rented apartments across the city, and it holds true also for the city of Mytilene (capital of the island of Lesbos, the main refugee entrance point to Greece) (Papataxiarchis, 2017).

DISCUSSION - CONCLUSIONS

Refugees & migrants in this case study, not matter what their place of origin was, showed that despite their undeniable “fragility” and vulnerability, they struggle to survive and cover basic human needs, but also to satisfy other important needs of “higher order” (Maslow, 1943), like “self-esteem“ or “self-actualization”.

They showed that, despite their differences (and there are a lot of them), what unites them is the common experiences of displacement, alienation, ethnic (even racist) discrimination, repression, harassment, insecurity, precariousness, unemployment, etc. However, not all differences are overcome, or even forgotten and left behind. They may come to the surface depending on the circumstances.

They do not claim a “right to the city” and certainly do not articulate an eman-

ciatory rhetoric about an imagined and lived “Common Space” (Lefebvre, 1977; Harvey, 2011), through which new emerging social movements that defy neo-liberal enclosures may flourish. However, their engagement with the new spatial settings that their gate-keepers of the hosting country (border police, asylum officials, local authorities and other state and non-state agents) enforce on them is not a passive one. The “space”, in its physical, mental and social dimensions, that is as a “sensed”, “perceived” and “lived” multi-dimensional totality (Lefebvre, 1977; Tsavdaroglou, 2016), becomes a “limit”, as well as a “tool” for the refugees to negotiate their existence and their identity. Stripped from any kind of (formally recognised) national identity—especially those who, for various reasons, do not possess official travel documents—and living at the *metaichmia* (crossing points) between different nation states (the border-lands described so vividly by M. Agier [2011, 2016]), in an endless “institutionalised waiting” (Tslimpounidi & Karastathis, 2017, p. 414), refugees—at least some of them—seem to attempt a “border-crossing” and to give their own meaning—not fixed and clear, but radically new and unpredictable—to the new “enclosure spaces” within which they are confined and surveilled.

Finally, we should keep in mind the perceptions that the refugees have about the various actors of the “hosting” societies who are involved in their “handling” (whether *institutions* or *individuals*). In their narratives, they portrayed a very negative picture about the European Union (EU), which is targeted for its role in the Middle East, and for some EU countries for their unwillingness to assist the refugees and satisfy their demands for relocation.

Regarding Greece, the authorities project a generally negative image in the refugees’ minds. It becomes obvious that the EU, in the face of the huge humanitarian crisis of hundreds of thousands of refugees, chooses to stick to the hard logic of previous years; the logic of a “sealed” fortress, allowing only targeted crossing into European land of a very small number of persecuted persons from war-ridden countries in Africa and Asia.

On the other hand, the volunteers—especially solidarity groups, not NGOs—enjoy a more positive image. Refugees seem to realize that those (of us) who belong to the solidarity side—that is just opposite to the prevalent “Fortress Europe” approach—fight not only to help them to cover basic everyday needs, but also to prevent the mili-

tarization of maritime borders and the setting-up of “hotspots” that decide, usually with unsubstantiated and arbitrary demarcation criteria, who will stay and who will return back to a situation of continuous risking of one’s life.

The situation of the refugees here in Rhodes, although widely underreported and unacknowledged in the local, regional and national media (see <http://oasisrhodes.blogspot.com/2017/09/170.html>, <http://www.efsyn.gr/arthro/ypanaptyktes-synthikes-kratisis-sti-rodou-kataggellei-i-omada-oasis>, <https://www.kar.org.gr/2018/03/12/i-omada-allilengyis-prosfygon-rodou-oasis-gia-tis-epanaproo-thisis-prosfygon-ke-metanaston/>), is better and constantly improving, at least compared to other islands of the North Aegean Sea (i.e. Lesbos, Samos, Chios). Thus, the few refugees who are still living in the informal camp –and of course who have been transferred to rented accommodation—are trying to pull themselves together and start planning for a new life in Greece, despite their initial hopes to get into the European “promised land”. In this re-arrangement of their strategies, in this new quest for “dwelling” and “crossing” boundaries, in a state of mobility (forced or other), their experience of self-organizing food preparation might be proved enlightening.

NOTES

1. Greek language lessons for adults have been held from December 2016 for refugees at the Linguistics Laboratory of the Department of Primary Education of the University of the Aegean (Rhodes campus) (for more details see Oikonomakou, Kourtis-Kazoullis, Skourtou & Gouvias, 2017).
2. All the names are false for reasons of anonymity.

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3

Whose safety? Differentiated justice within the “safe countries / places” discourse concerning the EU-Afghanistan Joint Way Forward agreement

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INTRODUCTION

In the present politically turbulent times, numerous yet diverse events are described and defined as crises, denoting an acute sense of emergency (Allen et al, 2018; De Genova et al., 2018). Irrespective of the increase or decrease of the number of emergencies, crises and emergencies (even imminent or alleged ones) have become a dominant way of governance of the social and the political (Athanasidou, 2012). Ever since 2015, when the number of refugees arriving in European shores multiplied extensively, migration and asylum topped both the EU policy priorities and many national political agendas. 2015 came to signify what was described as “Europe’s refugee crisis” somehow implying that Europe was the actor mostly affected by the ‘crisis’ rather than the people actually seeking refuge to Europe. Subsequently, the Asylum and Mi-

gration agenda, became one of the most contested and influential portfolios of the EU, with an array of high level meetings taking place and new (mostly harsher) policies being introduced. At the same time, it became a defining issue for electoral campaigns and politics which, in a context of continuing austerity and Islamophobia, embedded (far)right populism in European political arenas (Koutrolikou, forthcoming).

As several researchers have argued, governing migration through containment, securitization and externalization of border / territorial control is not completely new for Europe (Huysmans, 2006; Hyndman, 2012; Maillet et al, 2015), making a point of the significance of the coming to force of the Schengen agreement in the 90s. However the post-2015 European climate, border closures along the Balkan route and deep splits among European partner countries, accelerated trends of not only hardening the allocation of asylum but of trying to deal with refugees' mobility away from European territories.

This approach was mostly implemented through a “carrot and stick” strategy involving development aid incentives, security apparatuses and infrastructures and (re) categorizations of deservingness (Bunyan, 2018) – all of these expressed and incorporated through diverse ‘partnerships’, ‘agreements’ and ‘statements’ that have received considerable criticism. For example, it entails several and multi-level arrangements (in order to avoid their legal definition as agreements or not) with mostly African but also Asian countries (such the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, or even the Operation Sophia, the Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and Libya and the evacuation programme from Libya to Niger, see Akkerman, 2018). The European development aid that such agreements promise (focusing on democratization, conflict prevention and economic development) could, at times, be perceived as a trade-off (Garcés-Mascareñas, 2017) and seem to supplement the harshening of the criteria for receiving international protection (Craig and Zwaan, 2018).

One such arrangement, the common statement between the EU and Turkey came into effect (20th of March 2016), offering financial and political support to Turkey¹ in order for the latter to ‘manage’ (actually obstruct) refugees crossing to Europe and to receive rejected asylum seekers and all the people categorised as ‘irregular migrants’. In other words, supporting that Turkey is a “safe third country” for asylum seekers and refugees who passed through its territory, despite strong criticism about such

designation and about the ‘deal’ as a whole². Some months earlier, the EU deal with Afghanistan was agreed upon and made the front pages – along with voiced concerns and criticisms (mostly from human rights organisations but not only) about the potential repercussion of such agreement.

The migration – development nexus that can be traced in most of the recent EU external migration policies and agreements is crucial in understanding the implicit or explicit coercive strategies from European Institutions and Governments to countries in need of financial aid and resembles centuries’ old practices of imperialism and exploitation. Whilst keeping this mind this paper focuses on one aspect of such policies; on the differentiated access to and deserving-ness of rights and particularly to the right to live in a safe place based on the ‘origin’ of the subjects in question. In other words, by juxtaposing the different designations of place-based safety for European and for specific Third Country nationals it wishes to debate the position of the rightful subject – a positions that crucially impacts the lives of individuals but which is also central in the discussions about inequality and injustices.

THE “SAFE COUNTRIES” CONCEPTS

In our fear dominated societies, safety and security have become major priorities to be ensured (often at all costs) increasingly shaping political and policy agendas and, more often than not, shaped in juxtaposition to a ‘threatening Other’ and/or to looming emergencies (Pain and Smith, 2008). Safety and security have become complicated and contested notions also within the EU Migration agenda. On one level, increased securitization and control have become permanent features in the recent debates about migration in the EU, while institutions and policies tasked with their implementation expand their influence and enlarge their budgets.

Beyond these aspects though, safety has become an integral feature in the asylum process and a pivotal one for those asking for international protection. As versed in article 3 of the Universal declaration of human rights (as well as in other charters of rights), security of person is right to be safeguarded for everyone. However, besides this more general articulation, evaluations of the risky security situation of a person has become far more convoluted in asylum legislation and applications. At present,

there are three significant notions affecting such evaluations: two legal ones, the “safe country of origin” and the “safe third country”, and a rather loosely articulated one, the safe country/place for returns.

As described, a ‘safe third country’ is a “country through which an applicant transits, which is considered as capable of offering him or her adequate protection against persecution or harm” (European Parliament Research Service, 2017, UNHCR, 2010 and for a more detailed analysis see Moreno-Lax, 2015). Although this concept was incorporated in earlier Directives and Regulations (such as the Directive 2013/32/EU on international protection), it forms an important part of the proposed common Asylum procedures legislation (Council of the European Union, 2018; Amnesty International, 2017). The EU-Turkey statement might well fit in this concept.

The safe country of origin on the other hand is a country where its own citizens are generally not persecuted. Specifically (AIDA, 2015:3) a “country is considered as a safe country of origin where, on the basis of the legal situation, the application of the law within a democratic system and the general political circumstances, it can be shown that there is generally and consistently no persecution as defined in [the recast Qualification Directive], no torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and no threat by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict”.

Lists regarding safe countries of origin are not a new thing for many European countries, although the countries included may differ, since their adjudication as ‘safe countries’ depends not only on geopolitical situations (such as conflicts, persecutions etc) but also on issues that the host countries consider significant for them (for example the number of people of the specific nationality already living in the country or the ‘desirability’). As the Dutch Minister for Migration³ wrote, “a country is considered to be a safe country of origin if people are not prosecuted based on, for example, race or religion, torture or inhumane treatment. Asylum seekers from safe countries of origin will, however, be given the opportunity to demonstrate why the country may not be safe in their specific situation. However, asylum seekers from a safe country will have to do more to demonstrate that they need protection. The list of safe countries already included over 50 countries. [...] Asylum seekers from safe countries hardly have any chance of obtaining an asylum residence permit. Their asylum applications

are handled with priority in an accelerated procedure. The accelerated procedure consists of one interview. Asylum applications filed by asylum seekers coming from a safe country may be rejected as manifestly unfounded. This means that rejected asylum seekers will have to leave the Netherlands immediately. They are also imposed an entry ban for the entire Schengen Area for a period of two years”.

At the moment, at least 13 European member states have national lists of countries of origin⁴, although “suggests that the administrative practice may exist in countries with no formal SCO list” (Apap and Orav, 2015). More recently, since 2015 (when the Asylum procedures directive 2013/32/EU became applicable) the EU is trying to legislate an EU list of safe countries of origin⁵. The argument for its establishment has been the speedier and more effective management of migration and international protection in light of rapid increase of people arriving and applications for international protection. For the moment, this list includes Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey⁶. As expected, human rights organizations have voiced concerns and strong critiques on the notion of the proposed list, since, as argued it would curtail the claimants’ rights and not country should be simply judged as ‘safe’ (AIDA for Turkey, UNCHR, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Fundamental Rights Agency, L’Association Européenne des Droits de l’Homme (AEDH), EuroMed Rights and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)).

Finally, the third concept of growing ‘popularity’, the one that this paper focuses more, is that of “safe country (place) for returns” rejected asylum-seekers or people who are residing in Europe without the necessary legal documents (permits) are forcefully or ‘voluntarily’ returned. As mentioned by H. Bjelica (2016) “under international refugee law and international human rights law, it is not illegal to deport people who have failed in their bids for asylum, provided [their] cases have been judged equitably and the home country is not so dangerous that there is a general ban on returning anyone. At the moment, only two countries are judged to be in this category: the UNHCR has issued non-return advisories for Syria (dangerous for everyone) and Libya (dangerous for foreigners)”.

The frenzy desire of the EU to limit migration towards its territories has resulted in an increased use of the concept of safe country (or places within a country) for returns concept, even in places still considered as non-secure by most assessments. A

renewed – and stricter – Returns Directive (proposed) along cooperation pressures towards countries through the development – security – migration nexus, have resulted in increased numbers of deportations and ‘returns’ with adverse consequences. One such case is that of Afghanistan, which will be briefly outline further on.

THE EU – AFGHANISTAN JOINT WAY FORWARD (JWF)

On the 2nd of October 2016, European Union signed an agreement with Afghanistan: the “The EU-Afghanistan Joint Way Forward on Migration issues”. As stated the Joint Way Forward “reflects the joint commitment of the EU and the Government of Afghanistan to step up their cooperation on addressing and preventing irregular migration, and on return of irregular migrants, who after the consideration of all relevant international law and legal procedures cannot be granted international protection status” (Joint Way Forward, 2016).

As Afghanistan Analysts mention, reaching this agreement hasn’t been an easy process. On the contrary, it involved tactics of ‘stick and carrot’ (or in Gramscian terms of coercion and consent) in order for the government of Afghanistan to agree on the specific document. “The EU has negotiated the agreement with the Afghan government as part of the run-up to this week’s Brussels donor conference, where international donors will pledge aid for Afghanistan for the coming four years. Some Afghan officials seem to have felt strong-armed. The Afghan minister for refugees and repatriation, Sayed Hussain Alemi Balkhi, refused to sign the document, leaving the duty to a deputy” (Rasmussen, Guardian, 2016)⁷.

As characteristically noted by From Jelena Bjelica⁸

“Finance Minister Hakimi again told the parliament that no document had yet been signed on deporting failed asylum seekers, but added that, “partner countries do expect us to cooperate with them on the refugee issue [...] The EU countries cannot deal with the refugee crisis alone.” He concluded by saying: “If Afghanistan does not cooperate with EU countries on the refugee crisis, this will negatively impact the amount of aid allocated to Afghanistan. Germany cannot provide aid money and deal with the refugees at the same time.”

The agreement can also be read as an enforced trade-off between International

Aid (EU in this case) (including security and civil reforms as well as development assistance) and readmission of Afghan citizens whose live or are in Europe without papers or whose asylum claims have been rejected. And Aid is particularly important for a country whose only 10.4% of its GDP comes from domestic revenues and 40% depends on Aid.

“Liza Schuster, a Kabul-based migration expert, said the deal was an example of “how developed countries are able to push through their agenda in countries where there simply isn’t the capacity in the ministries to push back”. She added that there had been little transparency in the negotiation process. “There has been no oversight, no consultation, and hardly any mention of it to any of the migrant organisations or rights organisations [in Europe]. There was no chance to mount resistance against it,” Schuster said.” (Rasmussen, 2016, Guardian)

During the negotiations the Government of Afghanistan argued (Bjelica, 2016) that returns would be on a voluntary basis, with financial support and would not include any vulnerable groups. However the deal includes forced returns and, in practice, it paves the way for deporting vulnerable groups as well⁹. As soon as the deal was agreed, deportations of Afghan citizens from European countries increased rapidly. After pressures from humanitarian groups, this practice was temporary suspended (by some countries) after the very lethal attack in Kabul (2017) but it was soon resumed.

As expected, reactions and criticism to the agreement abounded (from rights groups and organizations as well as from refugee support groups) as did for the increased numbers of deportations to Afghanistan. Despite all these, and despite the present situation in the country, deportations are still going on while the number of asylum applications decreases. In order to by-pass obstacles for returns to Afghanistan, the Joint Way forward mentions “placing a time-limit of four weeks for the Afghan authorities to identify Afghan nationals and issue a travel document, after which time a European travel document can be issued instead” (ECRE, 2017).

In addition, the Internal Protection Alternative (IPA) is often considered in asylum applications, whereby it can be decided that protection to the applicant can also be provided in specific places within the country. As stated in EASO’s Country Guidance note (2018), and considering individual circumstances and networks, “IPA in the cities of Kabul, Herat and Mazar-e Sharif could be considered reasonable for

the following profiles, including where the applicant has no support network in the respective IPA area: Single, able-bodied adult men and Married couples of working age without children”. Yet the same guidance goes in arguing that the same IPA may not be considered reasonable if individuals lack a support network in the respective area for those belonging in the categories of single women, unaccompanied children, family with child(ren), applicants with severe illnesses or disabilities, applicants who were born and/or lived outside Afghanistan for a very long period of time, elderly. In other words, the way this guidance is written, doesn’t recommend against the use of IPA to the specific cities even of individuals belonging to vulnerable groups if they have a support network in the area. In addition, many people with Afghan citizenship were not residing there or were not even born in the country. Millions of Afghans live in Iran and Pakistan (although in the past 10 years they were increasingly urged to leave these countries) and their deportation to Afghanistan might lead them to a place with no connection or social ties (Schuster and Majidi, 2013; Lafazani 2008)

Although the security situation in Afghanistan has been deteriorating (ECRE, 2017; ECOI, 2017), some Country of Origin Information reports (EASO, 2018; Home Office 2017) still try to portray some part of the country – especially in the city of Kabul – as less threatening for returns. As specifically stated in a UK tribunal, “that those parts of Kabul city where returnees are most likely to live are ‘the poorest areas of the city or its environs’ and have been less affected by indiscriminate violence, stating that the ‘great majority [of attacks] have concentrated on areas where the government or international organisations have their offices or where their employees frequent’”. These poor areas of the city are mostly informal areas where also the thousands of internally displaced people struggle to live often in severe poverty, thus placing further burdens on the livelihoods of the people living there.

The Joint Way forward was negotiated and agreed upon with the Eurozone crisis on its back, in the midst of what has been termed as Europe’s ‘refugee crisis’, in a climate of rising Islamophobia and stigmatization of European Muslims as ‘terrorists’ and with increasing electoral and discursive success of far-right / racist political parties. This is reflected on a restricted non-paper (March 2016)¹⁰ where it is argued that because of the deteriorating security situation together with the deteriorating economic situation and the pressure in Iran and Pakistan upon Afghans “there is a

high risk of migratory flows to Europe”. Thus, and despite security and humanitarian concerns, the non-paper supports “that there is a need for a common definition of safe areas in Afghanistan”.

As such, the Joint Way Forward and the subsequent safe areas definitions (and the resulting deportations) make the ‘everyone’ of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights much less inclusive despite stated commitments to safeguarding and respecting rights.

CHANGING POSITIONS AND JUXTAPOSITIONS

Based on the above directives and recommendations, if one is an Afghan citizen then there are significant chances that s/he will be returned to a safe area within Afghanistan. But what happens if one is a European citizen? Then what is considered as a safe area (or country) changes radically. For example, as stated by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK):

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advise against all travel to all districts in the following provinces of Afghanistan:

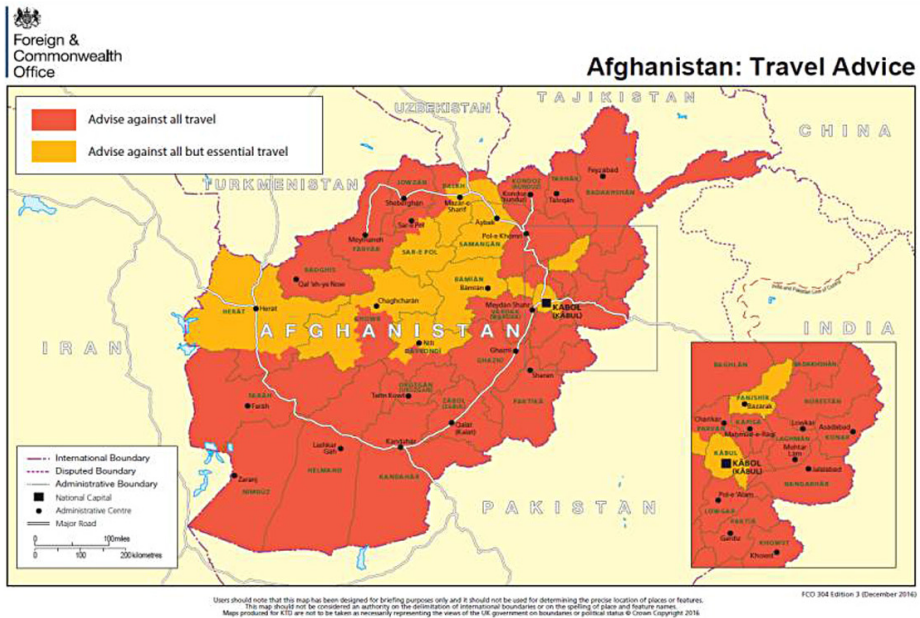
Kapisa; Kunar; Nangahar; Laghman; Nuristan; Ghazni; Khost; Paktika; Paktiya; Logar Wardak; Kandahar; Uruzgan; Zabul; Helmand; Nimroz; Badghis; Farah; Faryab; Jowzjan; Badakhshan; Baghlan; Kunduz and Takhar.

The FCO advise against all travel to the following specific districts of Afghanistan: Kabul (Surobi district); Parwan (Charikar City, Bagram, Ghorband/Siaghird, Jabal Saraj, Kohi Saraj, Salang, Sayed Khel and Shinwari districts); Daikundi (Gizab and Kajran districts); Ghor (Dolina/ Du Layna and Pasaband districts); Herat (Shindand district); Balkh (Chaharbolak, Chamtal/Chimtal, Daulat Abad/Dawalatabad, Hairatan Port, Kaldar and Shortipa/Shur Tapa/Shor Tepah districts); Sar-e-Pul (Sar-e-Pul City and Sayad districts).

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advise against all but essential travel to all other provinces and districts of Afghanistan.

This is clearly represented in the following map visualizing travel warnings for citizens of European countries (this one is from the UK but many other European countries have similar ones).

Whose safety?



FCO is not the sole governmental agency providing travel warnings to its citizens. Similar travel warnings are issued by the respective agencies in Austria, Germany and the Netherlands (among others). Many of these agencies are also providing baseline country information to EASO in order to formulate its guidance. Surprisingly (or maybe not so much), the evaluations of safety differ substantially according to the ‘deserving subject’.

An array of international and national laws guarantee (actually or supposedly) the fulfilment of certain minimums deemed essential for dignified and safe human life (such as Charter of Human Rights, or Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union etc). Other protective laws have also been put in place (mostly after wars) in order to deal with people facing adverse situations that violate these rights. To all of these one might add other, equally significant but complementary rights such as the social, economic and cultural rights. However, in addition to wars and conflicts, socio-economic injustices and the extreme deprivation that millions of people are facing should/are valid reasons for wanting to escape from them and have a more secure life (see also Pogge, 2007)

This brief outline of the case of Afghanistan and the Joint Way Forward (an extreme case but not the only one) underlines hypocritical behaviours, hegemonic positions and, in the end, grave injustices. First and foremost, it illustrates the discrepancies of who is the deserving subject of rights in the implementation of refugee protection, since not everyone is entitled to “the right to life, liberty and security of person” or to “a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family”. When international protection is judged vis-à-vis political/electoral and possibly economic gains and threatening public discourses, then it could be safe to argue that the actuality of such rights is highly positional and geopolitical (Basaran, 2011). It depends on who are the subjects claiming rights and in which geopolitical context and era.

More and more it seems that we are going back to the deserving / undeserving debate that shaped much of the welfare and poverty discussion. This time the debate is taking place on exclusive political and legal battlegrounds and it involves lucrative businesses such as weapons, trafficking, recourse monopolies, security and development. But it also takes place on sea and land borders and on human bodies. It concerns the materialities of human existence.

Yet, beyond the aspects of rights, the way the EU Migration and Asylum agenda is integrated and imposed via the EU International Cooperation and Development agreements, replicates strategies of power and domination to impose its own hegemonies through the development – security – migration nexus. If rights are a form of a social contract as some theorists argue, then their violation, manipulation or selective use in the context of migration (and not only) raises questions about the kind of polity one wants to live in.

NOTES

1. Financial aid for taking care of refugees and political support regarding the facilitation of the Visa process and implicitly supporting the current of Erdogan’s government.
2. The common statement has been judged not as a European agreement since the European Court of Human Rights considered it outside its jurisdiction.
3. Netherlands has one of the toughest policies on asylum.

4. Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Slovakia and the United Kingdom.
5. Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an EU common list of safe countries of origin for the purposes of Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection, and amending Directive 2013/32/EU http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/569008/EPRS_BRI%282015%29569008_EN.pdf
6. Countries will be re-examined and new countries will be added to the list. EU member-states can propose to add countries but they cannot have their own lists
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/oct/03/eu-european-union-signs-deal-deport-unlimited-numbers-afghan-asylum-seekers-afghanistan>
<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/dec/15/first-wave-afghans-expelled-eu-states-contentious-migration-deal-germany-sweden-norway>
8. <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/eu-and-afghanistan-get-deal-on-migrants-disagreements-pressure-and-last-minute-politics/>
9. As for example has been the case with a number of teenagers or elderly deported from Germany and Netherlands.
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4

Contested Bodies/ Contested Borders. Re-Imagining the Refugee Crisis through Sophocles' *Philoctetes*

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INTRODUCTION

The continuous influx of refugee populations from Syria towards the West has given emergence to a number of socio-political subjects, and particularly to issues of cultural representation of the refugees as the Other; being represented as inherently non-canonical bodies, orientalised, victimised, diseased, and contaminated, the collective body of the refugee populations can be seen as denominator of change in the cultural representation of canonicity and the current socio-spatial regimes of inclusion/exclusion on the borders of South-eastern Europe. The presence of refugees, asylum seekers and dead bodies washed ashore on the threshold of Europe are calling for a reconfiguration of border policies and practices.

Ancient Greek tragedy, being born as a political event itself and expanding beyond the limits of entertainment, can become the privileged site of the representation of the vulnerability and precarity of the human life as well as of the artificiality and discursive construction of geographical demarcations, i.e. borders. Drawing parallels between a literary topos (Lemnos) with a real, geographical one (Lesvos), allows us to examine the concept of borders through space and time. Shedding light on a Greek tragedy as a medium of and beyond representation, brings in the foreground its agnostic capacity and the chance to rethink and disturb our pre-conceived notions of our institutions, namely borderlands, and expose the deep tensions within border regimes.

Lemnos and Lesvos are both sites of contestation, where precarious bodies oscillate between spatial binaries, such as proximity/non-proximity, inclusion/exclusion. Both Philoctetes and the Refugee are figures occupying spaces of transition and ambiguity that are either tragic or culpable. In a similar manner that Philoctetes commits a transgression by stepping onto the shrine of the goddess Chryse, the refugee engages in the transgressive act of arrival, which Abdelmalek Sayad calls 'the original sin of migration' (Sayad 2004, p. 283) posing a threat to the state's attempts for order and the artificial 'stability' that borders induce. Juxtaposing Sophocles' text and the ongoing situation on Lesvos, offers the ground for renegotiating the meaning of the island as a categorical yet porous border within the social life of a community, and calls for an alternative ethics that take place outside the realm of sovereign power and secure nation state.

The present article seeks to explore the ways in which ancient Greek tragedy can solicit critical engagement of the reader with the emerging problem of the "intruding" collective body of the refugees seeking asylum in the West. We would like to explore the ways in which the given text can open up new representational potentials of the transgressive bodies of the refugees, while at the same time we are also interested in fathoming the potential of drama to create the presuppositions for an empathetic engagement of the Western reader/viewer with the social, political and cultural aspects of the precarious lives of the refugees. In this framework, our article will take issue with the limits of representation, the politicization of literature, empathy as well as spectatorship and contemporary (melo)dramatic performances and understandings of uprootedness.

LEMNOS/LESVOS AND THE FOUCAULDIAN HETEROTOPIA

What is a heterotopia? Published in 1986, after his death, and based on a lecture given in 1967, Foucault's article under the title "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias" has been seminal in the sense that it has informed our current conceptualization of space, while also giving impetus to a burgeoning body of scholarship which engaged with the concept of the heterotopia in various levels, cutting across different disciplines, such as human geography and geopolitics. Drifting away from the fixation of the 19th century with time, Foucault postulates that "the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space" (p. 1). Foucault's emphasis on and fascination with space signifies a paradigm shift within various disciplines, as space will no longer be seen as a static, essential given; on the contrary, a new era starts, one in which space becomes worthy of philosophical analysis due to its fluidity and dynamism. Common binaries of exclusion/inclusion, local/international/foreigner, legal/illegal, self/other, here/there, underlie the founding principles of constructing modern state borders, suggesting that borders are fixed, given and beyond negotiation, while at the same time excluding emerging heterotopias. Even though modern politics of state and governmentality rely on the idea of borders as clear, demarcating lines which define separate countries and their residents unambiguously, a consideration of migratory movements and contemporary politics of globalisation needs to defy such definitions. Within this framework, Lesvos can be seen as a palimpsest of various heterotopias which co-exist in non-exclusionary terms. The juxtaposition of modern-day Lesvos with literary Lemnos exposes the plasticity of space in terms of representation but also lived experience; the relations of power and its unequal distribution reflect upon individuals, whose vulnerability is systemically produced and sustained. The concept of the island, therefore, becomes a discursive marker which produces various phenomenologies.

Heterotopias are characterized by their heterogeneity and varied typology. In the context of the refugee camps or hot spots, it seems that the fittest type of heterotopia is the crisis one; Foucault defines crisis heterotopias as places "reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment they live, in a state of crisis" (p. 4). The hotspots imposed as a security measure by the EU have been

promoted through a political agenda which supports regulation of the borders in order to minimise the migratory flows from Syria seeking asylum to the West. FRONTEX, which is officially known as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, was founded in 2005 but saw its role becoming even more intensive in the protection of the European Union borders, particularly after 2015, when its budget increased significantly. The response to the migratory flows, therefore, goes through a technocratic approach to disasters caused by war, which seeks to 'treat' the disruption of normalcy through steps of regulation and militarisation of the borders, being in line with the idea of the clearly demarcated limits of the modern state-nation. Seen through the scope of the Foucauldian heterotopias, the hotspots that were established with the intention of creating a register of the incoming refugee populations and providing safety passages¹ for them, incarnate the par excellence spaces of crisis, where the individuals or group of individuals who deviate from the norm are placed.

The discourse of crisis intersects with the discourse of heterotopias to reveal the many levels of transgressions performed by the figure of the refugee. Naomi Klein's theorisation of disaster capitalism reveals the constructedness of the idea of the crisis and emphasises how the discourse of disaster can be used as the pretext in order to facilitate the application of reform measures by economic technocrats (Klein, 2007, p. 10). The movement of the migratory populations and the so-called European migrant crisis can be seen, therefore, through the prism of globalised capitalism and the unequal distribution of power which produces zones of emergency in the periphery of the West; it is seen as a symptom of the modern state, which has been built on the foundations of civil security and order, policing, discipline and surveillance. Therefore, the response to it seeks to restore order and uses the vocabulary of restoration and recovery, expelling the migratory flows to the realm of a borders' pathology that calls for treatment. Within this framework of highly militarised borders, the hotspots and concentration are in lieu of prisons. Lesbos, thus, acquires the status of a contemporary penal exile on the south-eastern edge of Europe. The heterogeneity of the concept of heterotopias points towards the idea of deviation and how this is treated: The insularity of this prison (which is not named as such in the public rhetoric of the EU policy makers) allows for the corroboration of the binary of us/them and inclusion/exclusion. Therefore, the problematic shores of Lesbos are used to relieve the unrest caused by the very

prospect of the Other transgressing the clearly defined lines of the centre against the periphery. Nevertheless, the presence of the Other on the threshold of Europe is there to remind the Continent of its imperial past and neo-colonial present, contesting at the same time its rigid, concrete borders both physically and ideologically.

To further extent this crisis approach, crisis heterotopias can be re-signified at the biopolitical level: individuals or groups of individuals who find themselves exiled in heterotopias experience a major ontological shift in terms of vulnerability and precarity of life. The consideration of the border policy of the EU in relation to its Mediterranean neighbourhood is deeply entangled with biopolitics and the distinction between *bios* and *zoe* as well as the state of exception, as they have been theorised by Agamben. The refugee embodies the home sacer par excellence, who may be killed and yet not sacrificed (Agamben, 1998, p. 8). What lies at the heart of the concept of the homo sacer is impunity: homo sacer can be killed but the perpetrator will remain unpunished. In other words, being placed in a heterotopia, equals the loss of one's humanness and visibility. At the same time, the representation of the refugee migratory flows corroborates even further the distinction between grievable and worth-remembering lives. The use of statistics and probability by technocratic policy makers, who rely on the use of certain types of knowledge in order to render disasters predictable and, therefore, easier to tame, deprives individuals of their uniqueness and humanness, paving the way for the distinction between disposable and non-disposable lives. It is not surprising to underscore that the UNHRC Greece provides detailed statistics on the daily arrivals and deaths on the Greek shores, which is indicative of the technocratic approach to the mitigation of the effects of the war. What is more, the use of the term 'vulnerability' in discourse of risk management cannot go unchallenged, as it implies a passivity on the part of the individuals or communities who are affected by a disaster to a lesser or greater extent. Consequently, the Other, as it is reflected on the refugees, figures as a homogenous and recognisable body, which can be deprived of any kind of agency, disenfranchised and marginalised to the status of a disposable life.

Modern Greece, nevertheless, forms a complex migratory landscape which problematizes the currency and the validity of the modern state narrative and the implications of it on agency and citizenship. It serves as an example of a country/space forged by various ongoing crises, that is the fiscal crisis that emerged as a serious national

problem in 2010 as well as the so-called refugee crisis, which culminated in 2015-16². As such, it both attracts certain populations, while it also pushes away others. For the local people, the economic crisis has meant that many individuals have found themselves in the margins of the economy, being forced to work with minimum, if any, work rights and finally being forced to migrate to other countries, and mainly in the European North, in search of better opportunities. At the same time, though, Lesbos, being so close to Turkey and being the last border of the EU and the first host country which can offer shelter to asylum seekers, has attracted people from disadvantaged countries, or countries that have been afflicted by war. Lesbos, being part of Greece, exemplifies the idea of the border as a space of becoming- and not being. Located on the borders between Greece and Turkey, it forms one of the last borders of the EU. An island that has been traditionally attracting tourists from all over the world and for which tourism is the resource that sustain its economy, becomes a zone of emergency with the influx of Syrian refugees, attracting asylum seekers and volunteers at the same time. The island of Lesbos defies monolithic representations and definitions of borderlands, as it has transformed into a malleable space of becoming. The day-to-day lived experience of the island and the interaction between different people in its social space reveals the polysemy of the concept of the border, as it becomes reconfigured through the presence of different occupants.

PHILOCTETES, HOSPITALITY AND HOME

Greek Tragedy offers scope for theorising and rehistoricising dispossession, displacement and seeking refuge. Representations of the migrant are abundant in various plays and have been adapted within different contexts of humanitarian crises. Oedipus, in *Oedipus at Colonus*, asks King Theseus to grant him sanctuary so that he can finally find his last resting place. Similarly, in Aeschylus' *the Suppliants* the daughters of Danaos also seek asylum. Adaptations of *Antigone*, *the Trojan Women*, and *Hecuba* bring to the foreground depictions of vulnerability, the need of belonging and the right to community. These themes resonate powerfully with the current refugee situation, as, according to Antonio Guterres, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the world is experiencing 'the highest levels of forced displacement in

recorded history'. In this context, tragic characters do not only represent migrants fleeing war and atrocities but can be appropriated to illuminate and call attention to the position of the stateless person and the ethical obligations that arise towards them. In this sense, ancient Greek tragedy, which was born as an act denoting the political involvement of the Athenians in their democracy, can be rehistoricised and reinterpreted in order to provide a more affective understanding of the precarious condition of the refugee, pointing towards an ethics of moral responsibility and inclusivity towards the de-territorialised war people.

A play that has been adapted many times in recent years, Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, alludes to themes ranging from illness and pain to war trauma and PTSD, albeit has not been frequently connected to representations of the refugee plight. Taking into consideration Philoctetes' wounded and exiled body, this article considers that the play offers metaphoric equations to current conceptualisations of borders. The *Philoctetes* is a play that ponders on a wound that never heals. The protagonist oscillates between health and disease, liminal spaces and non-linear territoriality/ temporality, navigating the eremia of Lemnos' barren landscape, as contradicting forces attempt to contest control over him. Philoctetes' terrestrial and bodily boundaries are fluid, and the danger of violation is constant and ever present.

Ancient tragedy, like the one being examined here, invites not only critical engagement with issues of vulnerability, dispossession and disenfranchisement, but also provides a study on the importance of empathy and community, the ritual of supplication or *hiketia*, which was actively practiced as a moral agent in ancient Athens. The juxtaposition of Sophocles' tragedy with the events that took place in Lesvos in 2015-16 crosses the boundaries between the ancient and the contemporary and seeks to rehistoricise the ancient Greek tragedy in order to bring on the foreground vital issues of precarity, vulnerability and the ethics of togetherness.

The concept of hospitality, which has been emphasised as a fundamental conceptualisation of ethics by Emanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, is highlighted in the *Philoctetes*, as a political action of providing community and empathy to the suffering protagonist of the play. In her seminal work *Precarious Life, Vulnerability and the Ethics of Cohabitation*, Judith Butler addresses and problematizes the ethical obligations towards people or groups living in precarious states redefining

geographical borders and the implications that arise from forced proximity or lack thereof. She writes: ‘Emmanuel Levinas offers a conception of ethics that rest upon an apprehension of the precariousness of life, one that begins with the precariousness of the Other’. (p. 17, 2004) Philoctetes embodies the vulnerable Other, the discarded body at the shore of Lemnos with very little materiality to carry him into the civilised world, trapped within categorical boundaries which he nevertheless threatens with his mere existence.

The borders of both Lemnos and Lesvos render both Philoctetes and the refugee either powerless or culpable, figures to be pitied or held accountable. Seen from this perspective, the Sophoclean tragedy sheds light on the contemporary tragedy of the refugee, as they both oscillate between acceptance and rejection, inclusion and exclusion, between stability and fluidity. As Mark Justin Rainy argues in ‘The Tragedy of the Border and the Dialectics of Repair’: “At these borders the arriving migrant occupies an ambiguous set of positions that allows the receiving state to cast moral judgments on both groups and individuals and affix a stratified set of legal and social statuses which [...] range from the posthumus citizen to the criminal.” Philoctetes occupies the liminal space which strips him of any kind of human rights and the state, personified by Odysseus, who ascribes his authoritarian conditions on Philoctetes’ wounded and vulnerable body, at times stripping him off any kind of agency, and at others restoring him to his previous status of Greek warrior when he needs to fulfil his utilitarian purposes. Similarly, the refugee populations occupy various, often contradictory roles, embodying the threat against the idea of a homogenous Europe on the one hand, but, also become the humanitarian *raison d’être* on the other hand, justifying the existence of humanitarian spirit among NGO’s, activists, and volunteers. In the latter case, far from incarnating a threat, the refugees become the promise for a Continent that can extend its sympathy to those who have been afflicted by wars and other disasters. In this binary, the role of the refugee is that of the victim, who needs protection and therefore Europe occupies the role of the caring mother who provides for her children.

The action in the play begins when, following his accidental trespassing onto the sacred ground of goddess Chryse, he is bitten on the foot by a poisonous snake and suffers from chronic infection and acute spasms of pain. The horrible stench of his

wound and the constant cries of agony force his cohort to abandon him on Lemnos for 10 whole years, while they continue their journey to fight in the Trojan war. During this time, and with no sign of the war ending, a prophecy reveals that victory would come to the Greeks only with Herakles' bow which was bestowed upon Philoctetes shortly before his death. As the play begins, Odysseus explains to Neoptolemus that they have to deceive Philoctetes with a false story in order to extricate the bow from him and bring it to Troy. Neoptolemus agrees and this is where the action begins.

Lemnos takes centre stage as a *topos* of crisis, thus constituting a heterotopia where the state, in the form of Odysseus, employs utilitarian means in order to disenfranchise and deceive him. The play begins with the word, *ακτή*, or shore, as for the first 100 lines of the dialogue the protagonist is in so much pain that he has no words. Philoctetes' precariousness is emphatically intertwined with Lemnos' assertive insularity. Sophocles turns his stage in something akin to a laboratory, where the othered, exiled, precarious body, is gazed upon both by the internal (Odysseus, Neoptolemus and the chorus) and the external audience (the spectators). Philoctetes is encompassed and simultaneously in flux within the boundaries of the island, his pain keeping his materiality on the surface, living in a constant 'in-between'. Lemnos hosts Philoctetes in crisis, as the refugees in Lesvos, in very fixed yet abstract borders.

Butler considers proximate and distant suffering, and the ethical claims that determine the 'here' and the 'elsewhere'. She writes: 'To find that one's life is also the life of others, even as this life is distinct and must be distinct, means that one's boundary is at once a limit and a site of adjacency, a mode of spatial and temporal nearness and even boundedness'. (p. 141) Philoctetes' embodied existence is exposed to both kindness and injury, community and exclusion, containment and contagion. The *Philoctetes* is a study on the illusion of borders, on vulnerability and the wound of displacement. Sophocles creates a deeply political ecosystem, with various contesting forces fighting to keep liminal boundaries while they are challenged both by Philoctetes himself and by the pity and empathy Neoptolemus manifests. His marginal existence demand from the others to position themselves with or against him ethically. By removing any kinship elements, present in various other tragedies, Sophocles sends a very clear message: Philoctetes' precariousness is a distinct political problem, as Odysseus assumes the role of governmentality as theorised by Michel Foucault, as

a mode of ruling based on population knowledge and control (Rozakou, 2015), trying to alienate and quarantine him within his watery and terrestrial borders, while there is an act of resistance happening from within, in the way the relationship between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus grows and alters both characters' emotional states.

The character of Neoptolemus is an addition by Sophocles as he does not appear in previous adaptations by Aeschylus and Euripides. As Marina McCoy argues, "this dramatic innovation allows Sophocles to explore the significance of natural sympathy between human beings as the grounds for a political bond." (2013, p. 73) What these two characters have in common is nothing but their mutual encounter with the pain, but it succeeds to produce a clear decision on the part of Neoptolemus to stand ethically with Philoctetes.

Juxtaposing the two islands, the ancient and the contemporary one, Lemnos and Lesbos, provides the space for critical engagement with the notion of border zones, where both the protagonist's and the refugee's social calibre are contested and re-conceptualised. In this manner, the play can be read or staged by inviting a different definition from the one that Aristotle provides about the purification of the audiences' emotions through the spectacle of violence (*katharsis*), by demanding ethical and political criticism that could lead to the construction of a deeply political community. As Martha Nussbaum argues in 'Invisibility and Recognition: Sophocles' Philoctetes and Ellison's Invisible Man', "...narrative imagination is an essential preparation for moral and political interaction. Habits of empathy and conjecture conduce to a certain type of citizenship and a certain form of community: one that cultivates a sympathetic responsiveness to another's needs, and understand the way circumstances shape those needs." (1997, p. 270). (...) Sophocles invites his readers and spectators to question societal representations of the diseased, the marginal, the not fully human. Not all characters in the play receive Philoctetes in the same way. The Chorus, unlike their leader, make an effort to imagine his suffering, loneliness and isolation, alluding to spectators' imaginative engagement with the protagonist's invisibility and forced lack of humanity:

This man Philoctetes,
for all we know, is just a good
as any member of the finest clan.
But here he lies all by himself,

Apart from other human beings,
With shaggy goats and spotted deer,
Suffering from hunger pangs
And from his painful wound.
It's pitiful—he has to bear
An agony that has no cure,
And, as he cries in bitter pain,
The only answer comes from Echo,
A distant, senseless babble. (231-240)

The Chorus serves in a way as a representation of the spectatorship, as through them the audience is invited to acknowledge Philoctetes' plight and evoke feelings of empathy and community. Martha Nussbaum considers this an act of political decision, as "in this way, by showing the public the benefits of the very sort of sympathy it is currently awaking in its spectators, the drama commends its own resources as valuable for the formation of decent citizenship and informed public choice." (p. 275). The process of forming this decent citizenship is underpinned not only by taking a political stance against extreme suffering, but also by engaging critically with the importance of mundane materiality and the ordinary as a way to carry humanity into civilisation, like the need for shelter, comfort and of course food. The fact that Philoctetes lives in a cave in an isolating, inhospitable place, means that his diseased body is not carried into civilisation, his ties with the community are cut off. Everyday objects that carry no complex meaning other than their practical use, become signifiers of malignancy, contaminated by the disease that festers in Philoctetes' foot, and with each close examination by Neoptolemus and Odysseus connotes the dissolution of any certainty or comfort, any projection of the body to the outside world, to the making of a sharable experience and connection. The fact that Philoctetes is absent from the scene further destabilises any suggestion of cure. Elaine Scarry argues that the catalysis of the prisoner's material world contributes to their unmaking of the world:

"There is nothing contradictory about the fact that the shelter is at once so graphic an image of the body and so emphatic an instance of civilisation: only because it is the first can it be the second. It is only when the body is comfortable, when it has ceased to be an obsessive object of perception and concern, that consciousness

develops other objects, that for any individual the external world (in part already existing and in part about to be formed) comes into being and begins to grow.”³

Philoctetes, is reduced to his bodily faculties and his ‘built’ environment becomes a source of sustenance but also proof of his descent to savagery and lack of community. A space with categorical borders (Lemnos, the cave), but with no trace of civilisation or community, creates a constant interplay of dichotomies between containment and expansiveness, health and disease, extreme embodiment and disembodiment, a complex interplay of subtexts, which forces readers and spectators to constantly question its premises, entering the ambivalent space of a person in pain, always occupied by efforts to alleviate, comfort or numb the suffering.

There is a constant battle of perception in the play, and a constant battle for space occupation. The diseased, noxious body of Philoctetes is removed in this first scene, but there is a tangible ecosystem that indicates the material aspect of his experience. Philoctetes has created an ecosystem upon which he relies: A cave which has two openings, shaped in a way that when it’s cool there are two exits facing the sun, and when it’s hot the breezy drafts slip in through the narrow tunnel. To the left below the cave, there is a water spring that satisfy Philoctetes’ basic needs. The attempts of Odysseus to dehumanise Philoctetes and deem him some sort of an animal, whose ‘wild howling rang throughout the camp’, that ‘we could not pray in peace or make libations and burnt sacrifices’ fail, as Philoctetes, although in great pain, chooses the best spot on the island with a very human sensibility in order to make his shelter. When Neoptolemus approaches his cave he finds signs of civilised life, and of a life that is self-preserving and alleviating.

‘A pallet bed, stuffed with leaves, to sleep on, for someone. | A cup, made of single block, a poor | workman’s contrivance. And some kindling, too’ (33-35). Philoctetes endeavours to live in a distinctive human way, marking the space as his own. The cave and the objects he has accumulated serve as a vehicle to drive his pain outward, to the external world. The caves, the creeks and dens become more than just a metaphor. They become the environment that sustains him, and provide him with a ‘referential object’ for his pain:⁴ ‘Caverns and headlands, | dens of wild creatures, | you jutting broken crags, | to you I raise my cry | there is no one else that I can speak to | and you have always been there, have always heard me’ (336-39).

He calls out to the cave that was both his sanctuary, and his encompassing platform of suffering:

Two doors cut in the rock, | to you again, | again I come, enter again, unarmed, | no means to feed myself! Here in this passage | I shall shrivel to death alone. | I shall kill no more, | neither winged bird nor wild things of the hills | with this my bow. (952- 957)

Philoctetes reclaims agency by creating an environment he can depend on, using tangible objects as means of palliation almost, not as an external referent to unload his pain. He keeps referring to his cave and rags as if they possess human qualities like seeing and feeling. This emphasis on sight and perception is also relevant to the discussion surrounding visible and invisible forms of suffering. The extensive focus on materiality and the use of it, and the way the scene addresses the audience highlights the resistance to the dehumanisation of Philoctetes, as Neoptolemus identifies with him and his pain. The play, therefore, gives spectators the incentives to think deeply about the treatment of the diseased, the Other, the marginalised and consider their inclusion and acknowledgment.

Similarly, in order to regain their agency, the refugees are attempting to make the hot spots and detention centres where they are forcefully kept the space of familiarity and solidarity. Again, as it has been aforementioned, the heterotopia of the hot spot cannot be exclusively seen in monolithic terms, as it functions in a palimpsestic fashion. Even though they have initially been designed as penal exiles for the pathologised collective body of the refugee populations, the interaction of the migratory flows with the local community, the volunteers and other individuals who showed solidarity inscribes the place as a zone of contact between contradictory binaries. The locals set up unofficial trade exchanges with the refugees, creating a separate ecosystem around the camp, which evades clear categorical distinctions, oscillating between visibility and invisibility.

CONCLUSION

In the onset of this article, we brought on the foreground the concept of the Foucauldian heterotopia as a seminal methodological tool, which can shed light on the discursive

sive representation as well as the lived experience of the refugee. Our paper attempted to take a transhistoric look at the idea of the refugee within (a) heterotopia, juxtaposing the literary figure of Philoctetes with the present day refugees and asylum seekers who flee war in Syria and transgress the European borders to find themselves, alive or dead, on the shores of Lesbos. The juxtaposition of Philoctetes vis-à-vis the refugees relies on the consideration of the Other as a figure that poses a threat against the perceived homogenous self-image of Europe. At the same time, we also examined the concept of the heterotopia as a palimpsest which is inscribed with meaning at many discursive levels: the crisis heterotopia, far from being monolithic, seems to be fermented with different interpretation potentials as it is constantly reconfigured through the interaction of space with different individuals. Therefore, within the *topos* of the island, both Philoctetes and the refugees, become deprived of their right to a lawful, visible life, embodying the role of the homo sacer, but through the occupation of their penal exile they also reinscribe this very space with their presence, claiming their agency back. In drawing the parallels between the discursive representation of the refugee as the foreigner and the lived experience of the asylum seekers reaching out the Greek shores with the hope of safety and inclusion, we seek to establish a dialogue between the *topos* as text and the *topos* as experience in order to promote a better, more inclusive understanding of togetherness and the ethics of cohabitation.

NOTES

1. Even though the concept of safety might sound clear, unambiguous and intrinsically benevolent, the lived experience of the hotspots in Moria, Lesbos, exposes the contested nature of such spaces of exclusion and imprisonment. In September 2018, the MSF reported an increase in the number of children who had proceeded to acts of self-harming, had made attempts to suicide or had suicidal thoughts. The NGO has repeatedly called for a drastic intervention that will enable the asylum seekers to be set free from the penal exile of the hotspots. For more information, see <https://www.msf.org/child-refugees-lesbos-are-increasingly-self-harming-and-attempting-suicide>.

2. According to the statistics provided by the UNHRC Greece, the number of the asylum seekers reaching out to the Greek coast in 2015 was 856,723, while it significantly declined the next year (173,450 people arrived). It is interesting to notice that even the UNHRC employs a technocratic

parlance of statistics and disaster management measures in order to present its response to the needs of the migratory flows.

3. Scarry, p. 39.

4. Scarry, pp. 38-61.

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5

Violence at Europe's external and internal borders. The dehumanization of migrants in border-control operations and its effects on people and policies

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DEATHS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

The most visible result of the absence of an adequate governance of migration flows is the never-ending tragedy in the Mediterranean Sea.

As EU member states have not been able to ensure an efficient program of safe passage for people fleeing from conflict, prosecution and extreme starvation¹, for them the only way to reach Europe is crossing the Mediterranean on extremely overcrowded vessels and inflatable boats. In numerical terms, the death toll in Mediterranean Sea in the last fifteen years is over 34,361², of which 17,180 between 2014 and

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2018³. In the last three years, the highest number of dead and missing migrants has been recorded along the central Mediterranean route (4,578 in 2016, 2,873 in 2017 and 938 in 2018) with a peak in the month of May of 2016 of 1,141 dead⁴.

Even though the “*block*” of the central Mediterranean route has led to a general decrease in the number of arrivals, the deaths rate in proportion to the number of arrivals between January and July 2018, increased proportionally: 1 dead on 18 migrants rescued, compared to 1 dead on 42 migrants rescued during the same period of 2017⁵.



Figure 1, 2 and 3: Aegean sea. Little boats carrying on board asylum seekers coming from Turkey and heading to the Greek islands

Furthermore, to the decrease of deaths rate on the Aegean (441 in 2016, 54 in 2017 and 48 in 2018) and central Mediterranean routes, corresponds the vertiginous rise of the deaths toll on the western Mediterranean route, as the block of the Italian harbours and the Libyan corridor triggered a stronger migratory pressure on the Moroccan and Algerian routes (from 77 in 2016 to 212 in 2017 and 302 in 2018)⁶.

DEFEND THE BORDER, WHATEVER THE COST

The response to the growing migratory pressure has been characterized from the beginning by the militarization of both external and internal borders, accompanied by the conclusion of bilateral agreements with the main countries of origin and transit, aimed to block the migration haemorrhage outside the doors of Europe. It is in this context that have been signed the political agreements between Italy and Libya, in 2017 and in 2018, and the agreement between the EU and Turkey, in 2016.

Libya

Although direct or indirect financment of Libyan detention centres and military in order to prevent arrivals by sea was already used by the Italian government before 2011 under Gheddafi's regime⁷, such instruments of externalization of the borders have been reinforced in 2017, with the support of the European Union⁸. This new strategic plan has seen Italy as the main politic and economic sponsor of the Libyan government⁹.

Alongside economic support to ensure administrative detention of irregular migrants in libya prisons and the patrolling of southern and sea borders through the reinforcement of the military and the Coast Guard, the Italian authorities completed the scheme of militarization of the Mediterranean through a political and judicial campaign aimed to exclude NGOs and civil society from rescue operation, in order to prevent organization to collect data and evidences about the illegal pushbacks at sea operated by the Libyan Coast Guard and military ships. First of all the Italian government financed the reconstruction and training of the Libyan coast guards and sent a

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representation of the Italian navy to coordinate rescue operations from Tripoli, then imposed a code of conduct¹⁰ on NGOs involved in rescue operations and finally put political pressure for the formal recognition of the Libyan SAR zone¹¹. Such measures combined, have fortified the central Mediterranean and led to a sudden decrease of arrivals: from 119,369 in 2017 to 23,055 in 2018¹².

In 2017, Amnesty International reported that 20,000 migrants were intercepted and pulled back from Libyan Coast guard and transferred in detention centres in Libya¹³.

F., a 16 years-old girl from Eritrea, rescued at the end of June 2017, during a massive rescuing operation, said *“the first time my brother and I were pulled back. We were on a small inflatable boat when the Libyans stopped it not far from the coast. They used a cable to beat our heads and pushed us back on their ship. I was scared as the inflatable was sinking while we were transferred on their ship. I started to cry loud and a soldier slapped me and when he saw that I had a necklace with a coptic cross he tear it off with force and hit my head on the floor. I'll never forget it. Now I always keep a cross around my neck.”*

M. and his family were saved from Aquarius, MSF's and SOS Mediterranee during one of its last rescuing operations in May 2018. He said, looking at the video of their rescuing operation published on Facebook, *“We tried to leave Libya for three times before succeeding. for two times we were taken back by Libyan Coast Guard: we were lucky cause we had libyan stay permit and we were not taken to jail but I was beaten hardly, my son started to cry and we thought we'd have never reached Italy. We were rescued after three days at sea from Aquarius, they were very good people. I thank Allah they saved us.”*

Arbitrary violence committed against migrants. Today, Libya is a country where chaos reigns. Migrants coming from all over Africa hoping to be able to embark on their way to the Italian shores, have to wait for months and years in unbearable living conditions, be enslaved and be tortured by traffickers for the purpose of extort money from their families¹⁴. The picture that comes out from migrant's testimonies and available press reports resembles a lager where murders, torture and rape that are perpetrated daily against migrants¹⁵.

“I was imprisoned in Gargheresh (Tripoli) for more than 8 months. My family did not have enough money to pay for my release and the policemen beat me every

day. They used sticks on feet, electric betons and used to die out their cigarette on my arms. One day they came and said <if your family don't pay we'll kill you> ad they shot at my right knee. The other detainees tried to cure me from infection, but it was really painful. I still feel the pain.” said Y., 17-years -old unaccompanied minor from Chad.

Rape, in particular, is an instrument of retaliation and fear used both against women and against young boys and children¹⁶. “My wife and my children had just joined me in Libya coming from Sudan. A few days later my five-year-old daughter was kidnapped, they gave she back to me after more than a week and a half, during which they repeatedly abused her”, said F. a Sudanese father, crying in the courtyard of St. Anthony’s Church, in Ventimiglia, two months after their arrival in Italy.



Figure 4. Italy, Ventimiglia. Y., UASC show the evidence of the violence suffered in Libya.

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M., a lone mother travelling with her two children after she was forced to flee religious persecution and sexual slavery in Borno State, Nigeria, said that she tried to protect herself and her daughter from sexual abuse by jailers in Libya. “I kept B., my 4-years-old son on my lap all the time and I gave F., my 7-years-old daughter in custody of another lonely and helpless Nigerian girl who was detained with us. When it was time to leave Libya, the trafficker told me that I could not take both children with me and that I had to choose only one. I was exhausted, my heart was going to break again: I had already been forced to leave behind, my first 9-years-old son B. under the protection of another woman when i escaped from Borno and I couldn't leave F. So I sent her ahead with the nigerian girl. When I arrived in Italy, two months after, it was really hard to find her but in the end we managed to reunite”.

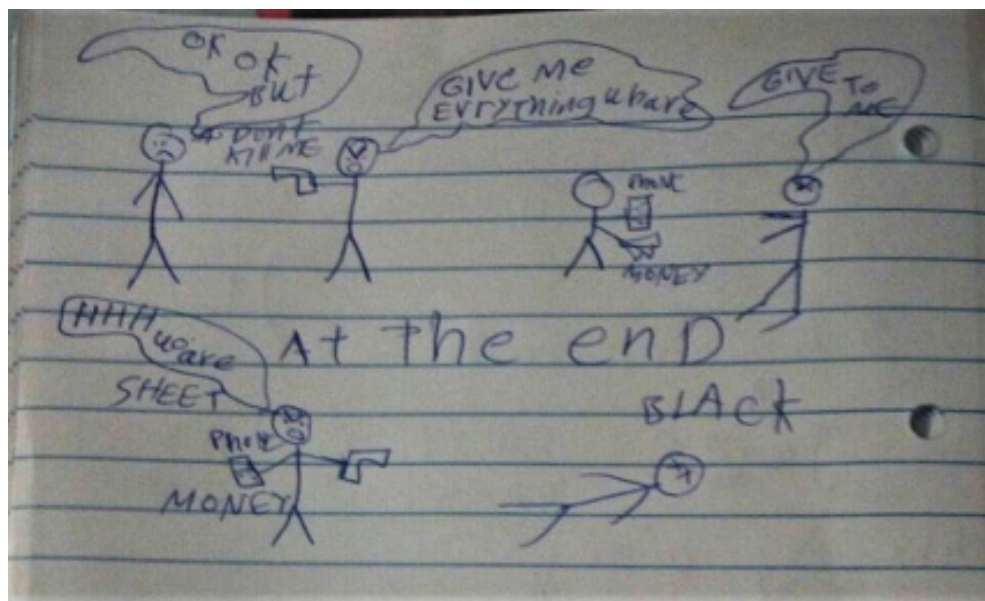


Figure 5. Libya. A 15 years old UASC from Darfur draws a scene of violence.

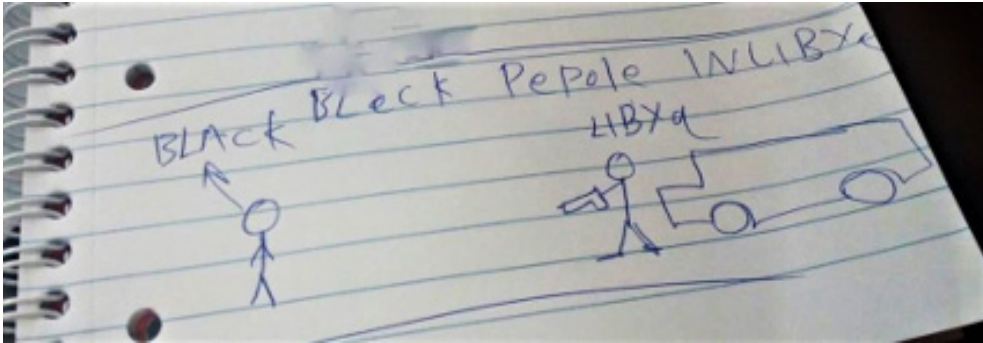


Figure 6. Libya. A 15 years old UASC from Darfur draws a scene of violence.

The Turkish cork

The direct effects of the agreement: deaths, arrests and arbitrary refoulement.

The EU-Turkey agreement - which had a major negative impact on the migratory flow of refugees arriving in Europe through the Balkans - represents an emblematic example of the externalization of borders. After the agreement, the EU was accused to have defeated his human rights obligation, delegating to a strongly anti-democratic Turkish government, the management of the flow of asylum seekers coming from the Middle East. Indeed, the EU has promised to invest 6 billion euros in the area, in exchange for Erdogan's commitment to prevent asylum seekers to arrive in Greece, blocking them in Turkey.

In order to minimize the migratory flow, first of all Turkey has reinforced the already militarized border-lines of the south east through the construction of a wall along the Syrian border, a three meters high fence that extends for 800 km, whose construction ended in 2017¹⁸. Along the few kilometres not protected from the wall, the border is today defended by ditches and fences patrolled twenty-four hours a day with the aid of cameras and drones¹⁹. *“The area farther east is full of mines, from there you can pass only with a mule. [...] we followed the mule to be sure not to hit the mines²⁰, from where it passed, we passed”* said Khaled who fled from Syria with his brother at the end of 2016.

The desperates who nevertheless try to entry in Turkey are brutally killed at the

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border. In the last years, under the silence of the international medias, hundreds of Syrian asylum seekers have been massacred by the Turkish Army while attempting to cross the border “illegally”²¹. Such practice has been recorded and documented by international observers since August 2015, and so far is esteemed to have caused more than 400 killings, 20% of which involving minors²².

“Now it is difficult to enter into this country. We can not enter from this side [...]”²³. The border is controlled day and night and the wall does the rest. You need to have good knowledge among the Turkish military who control the border, and enough money to be able to pay for their silence”, Fadi explains as he bends under the sun to pick vegetables in the fields near Nizip.

The treatment reserved to those ones who managed to jump the fence isn't more soft: the data from the Turkish Ministry of Interior show that thousands of migrants have been arrested for illegal entry or stay, with a steady increase in the last four years (+ 211% from 2014 to 2018²⁴), which involves mainly the Syrian population, followed by the Afghan, Pakistani and Iraqi. Furthermore, a recent study indicates more than 250,000 cases of direct and illegal pushing back, carried out close the Syrian border only during the year of 2017²⁵. *“My family is Kurdish. We come from Iraq “said I. “ One evening, while we were sleeping close the bus station²⁶, the police asked us for the documents, they asked us to follow them at a police station, the Turkish police held me, my wife and my two sons(a three months baby and a one- year-and-half-old in prison for more than 3 weeks”.*

This militarization of the Turkish borders is also taking place thanks to the economic aid, mentioned earlier, promised by the EU. In fact, a recent investigation²⁷ showed that Turkey has benefited from over 80 million euro from the EU for the purchase of weapons and surveillance and defence systems for border patrolling, aimed to fight the irregular migration flows coming from the middle east and directed to the Europe. Specifically, the first 35.6 million euros were transferred from Brussels to the Turkish company Otokar for the purchase of 82 armored military vehicles that are now used in the Syrian border patrol activities. The purchase of an additional 50 heavily armored vehicles was financed to patrol the Turkish-Greek border²⁸. Finally, for the control of the Aegean Sea, the financing of an additional 17.9 million euros allowed the World Organization for Migration (I.O.M.) to purchase six SAR coastguards to donate them to the Turkish Coast Guard²⁹.



Figures 7 and 8. Turkey, south east. Turkish-Syrian militarized border.

Some of the indirect effects of the agreement.

Survival outside governmental fields. In March 2018³⁰, of the more than three and a half million registered Syrians, only 6% of them, 225,557, lived in the 21 temporary shelters (TACs) located in the Turkish provinces close to the Syrian border³¹. The absence of a governance of the emergency raises serious problems regarding the possibility of using the most essential services, such as health care or school education.

The asylum seekers are forced to survive by gimmicks, plunging into the vortex of black work to get enough money to rent a house to live in. Many of them get sick due to the unhealthy conditions of the environments in which they are forced to live or to work.



Figures 9 and 10. Turkey, Nizip. AFAD refugee camp.

Child labour. Today in Turkey, thousands of minors refugees are working in the factories in the southeast of the country or in those in the suburbs of the big cities, some in the fields as pickers.

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This happens on the one hand because the majority of families, escaping from Syria and residing today on the Turkish territory still do not receive adequate assistance from the government. On the other hand, because the Syrian families who do not have enough money to pay the traffickers to grant a passage for the whole family, often send first their younger children, so that they can work in Turkey and to send them back enough money to enable the entire family to flee. *“See, they are all small children because we do not take them older than 10/12 years old. The little ones do not make problems, they work, they do not answer and they are easier to manage”* said N., the responsible of the irregular factory just outside the Gaziantep city center³².

Access to education. During the 2015-2016 school year, data provided by the Turkish government reported that not more than 320,000 Syrian children were registered in the Turkish schools³³. AFAD³⁴ wrote that the percentages of children schooling between the ages of 6 and 11, who lived outside camps, did not exceed 15%³⁵.

The following year (2016-2017), compared to almost 1,300,000 school-age minors registered by UNHCR, the number of children behind the desks was just under 490,000³⁶. They are a ghost army, at least two generations lost. *“We can not go to school, we have to work so that our families have the chance to survive”*, said A. a 9-years-old boy in Gaziantep.





Figures 11,12, 13, 14, 15 and 16. Turkey, Gaziantep. Minors forced to work in the factory.

Access to healthcare. For those who do not have access to medical care because they are not registered, or those who could not overcome linguistic barriers in the hospitals because of the absence of cultural mediators, the last hope is to be cured in the “invisible clinics”. These clinics, financed exclusively with private money, are of particular importance especially in frontier cities: volunteers (most of them are Syrians) welcome those who escaped from the war, who were shot at the border and who do not know where to go to be cured.



Figure 17. Turkey, south east. Unofficial health clinics.

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Figures 18 and 19. Turkey, south east. Unofficial health clinics.

THE INTERNAL BORDERS ACROSS THE BALKANS' ROUTE.

The road that runs from the Aegean coasts to the heart of the Balkans through the borders of Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Hungary is marked by walls and barbed-wires³⁷, and is today one of the most violent routes to Europe.

Abuses committed by police forces. It is along these borders that most of the violations of human rights occur by the police and military forces³⁸.

“I tried to leave Turkey crossing the Bulgarian border for five times walking through the woods. For four times we were caught by the Bulgarian police beat us badly and used dogs against us. One of us was seriously injured because of dogs bites. The police stole all our money and then took off our clothes and shoes. We had to go back to Istanbul dressed only with underwear for two times, it was really cold. Road to freedom is like hell”, told A. from Afghanistan in the barracks near Belgrade railway station in February 2017.

The same violations occurred since the closure of the borders of the Balkan countries since December 2015. In April 2016, in Idomeni Refugee Camp K., a father who wandered in despair over the field, looking for food for his little daughter, told *“We were sleeping in an emergency camp in Macedonia. We were surprised for the second time an attempt to enter Serbia. After that Serbian police discovered, beat some of us and rejected us in Macedonia, we came back to the refugee camp. Macedonian army*

men was really angry with us, they woke us up during the night, they slapped the children and stole the money, at last they broke our cell phones. They forced us to return to Greece passing under the metal net that separates Idomeni from Macedonia”.

It does not matter if who is trying to cross the border is underage. *“We tried at night to leave Greece and enter Bulgaria. First they made us approach and shot at us with their rubber bullets”* says limping M. with his glasses repaired with a piece of scotch tape.

J. had the same destiny. He also still bears the signs of the violence suffered by the Hungarian army men who repeatedly kicked his mouth, seized his shoes, stripped and forced to return from Subotica to Belgrade, aching and frozen.

Even in R., a young Afghan has a similar fate while he was entering in Croatia from Bosnia, *“Croatian police immediately used the batons after stopping and taking my phone”.*



Figures 20, 21 and 22: Serbia, Belgrade. The violence of the Hungarian border guards on UASCs trying to leave Serbia.

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Figure 23: Serbia, Belgrad. Violence on migrants by Hungarian border guards.



Figure 24: Serbia, Subotica. Violence on migrants by Hungarian border guards.

The expedients to survive. The closure of the borders has caused the dilatation of the travel times of the asylum seekers' march to reach their destination in northern Europe. Since there is no longer a fast transit from one state to another, asylum seekers are almost always forced to stop before finding an expedient -more frequently the contact of a smuggler- to enter the next country. This means that in the border areas, in the neighboring cities and in the large metropolises of the countries affected by the migratory routes, there has generally been an increase in the prices of rents and food.

To survive and raise enough money to continue the journey, almost all migrants are therefore forced to work, without being registered and an equal pay, *“I worked for 8€ a day, and during the break I was not allowed to sit with my friends at the same table”* said M., 17-years-old, referring to when he was staying in the Kerso camp near Idomeni.

Others, as has been recorded in Athens, remain trapped in the “survival sex” that pushes them to prostitute themselves in exchange for a few tens of euro, *“I have nothing to eat, nor where to sleep, I just want to reach Germany, it’s the worst thing I’ve ever done but I have no other choice if I want to survive”* said A. with a still teeny voice.



Figures 25 and 26. Serbia, Belgrad. UASC forced to live on the street.

Psychological disorders

“He made these cuts during the journey, the pain pushes us to do this” explains [...] crouched along the Roja river in Ventimiglia pointing to his brother’s harm.

A recent report wrote by MSF about the difficult work on the Greek islands, where

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those who arrive are prevented from continuing their journey to the mainland, has highlighted that suicide attempts and cases of self-harm among asylum seekers have increased dramatically, among adolescents. MSF registered that between February and June of 2018 “*nearly a quarter of children had self-harmed, attempted suicide or had thought about committing suicide. Other child patients suffer from elective mutism, panic attacks, anxiety, aggressive outbursts and constant nightmares*”³⁹.

THE ITALIAN BRIDGE

For some refugees Italy represents just a bridge, a country to cross in order to reach the final destination of their migratory path in northern Europe. Others instead, decide to leave Italy only at a later stage, pushed by despair for the impossibility to see a concrete prospect of integration in the country because of the inadequate reception conditions, the difficulties in obtaining documents and legal family reunification, the difficult access to the job market.

Throughout their journey along the peninsula, from when they enter the country till they reach the alps, refugees who try to move up have to face direct or indirect violence: episodes of arbitrary deprivation of personal freedom, physical and psychological violence and inhuman treatments have been reported both following disembarkation as well as during internal borders' control operations.

Identification procedures. Since 2015, Italy⁴⁰, in order to ensure prompt registration and identification of incoming migrants according to the European Agenda on Migration⁴¹, implemented the s.c Hotspot approach through the provision of a mechanism of pre-identification and registration to be conducted directly at disembarkment points and inside Hotspots, closed identification centres organized to provide first aid and divide asylum seekers from “irregular economic migrants”. In few years Italy has reached the goal of 100% identification of migrants rescued at sea, but what is the human price of such efficiency?

Most of the migrants interviewed in the last three years complained that at the time of registration and identification they were not aware of their obligation to seek international protection in the first country of arrival, of the possibility to refuse fingerprinting

and of the consequence of such refusal. Many of those who refused to be fingerprinted reported that they were forcibly identified through violence or intimidation.

It is June 2016 when A., a 18-year-old boy from Darfur, under the hot sun that hits the parking lot in front of the church of Sant'Antonio in Ventimiglia, tells us *"I arrived in Calabria and I was taken to the First reception centre of Isola di Capo Rizzuto to be identified. I opposed to identification and I was confined with other six boys in a container. It was all dark, there was no window and no bathroom. It was really hot, I thought I was dying. They left us there with no food and just few bottles of water for three days. Every day two policemen stepped in. They told us: "If you want to eat you do fingerprinting or you go back to Sudan". On the fourth day they took me for identification again. I tried to resist but they beat me with an electric beat on my legs, hurt my back and pressed with force my hands on the machine. they asked: "do you want to stay in Italy?" and I said "No, I want to go in England". Afterwards, they gave me some papers (an expulsion decree written in Italian) and they took me on a bus with both hands and ankles tied. The journey was long and we couldn't eat. I was taken to the Centre for Identification and Expulsion of Caltanissetta (Sicily). After few days I was released and I run away to reach Ventimiglia. Italy is so bad, I want to go to the UK."*



Figure 27. Italy, Ventimiglia. June 2016, UASC from Sudan shows the signs of the violence suffered in the italian Hotspot.

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Violation of human rights at the internal borders. Episodes of violence have been reported also by migrants who tried to cross the northern internal borders in the attempt to reach Switzerland, from Como-Chiasso and France, from Ventimiglia-Menton.

In Como, in the spring of 2017, M., 18-years-old, still deeply shocked, said *“I reached Como and tried cross on train to reach Switzerland. The Swiss border guards stopped me in Chiasso station. They lead me in a close room where I was forced to stand all naked and subjected to physical inspection. I felt so humiliated. Then they drove me to the Italian police office in Como with other migrants had just been subjected to the same treatment. One policeman found that I had Italian documents and said to his colleague “This niggars must be a stupid.” I replied “I understand Italian, I am not stupid.” So, the other policeman took me from my back, told me “oh, do you like to joke?” and started to kick me and hurt my face until I fell down. Then the first policeman took my neck from the back, forcing me to stand and hurt my head badly on the wall. I lost consciousness”*.

The border of Ventimiglia-Menton has always been the main crossing point and since 2015 became the laboratory where the French and Italian governments could develop their repressive policies of border management, policies characterized on both sides by the systematic violation of migrants' fundamental rights. On the French side, migrants are deprived of personal freedom and pushed back every day without any assessment of their vulnerability and without the possibility to apply for protection, even if they are unaccompanied minors. Lately, the French Controleur General des lieux de privation de liberté⁴² and the French Commission National Consultative des Droits des Hommes issued two important decisions that confirm the denounces of NGOs and civil society⁴³.

“We tried to cross the border on foot. We were on the path when French soldiers stopped us. They pushed us down, we fell on the ground and they kicked us badly. Then we were taken to the police office at the border. We were kept in a closed room with no water and no foot for one day, with a really high freezing air conditioned. Only one day after they released us forcing us to take the train to Italy”, told us in September 2017, N. e O. 17-years-old.



Figure 28. Italy, Ventimiglia. Migrants walking through unsigned mountain path to France.

Smuggling, sex and money. The suspension of Schengen agreement by France since 2015 has encouraged the development of a well-organized network of traffickers and forced, once again, migrants to endanger their lives to cross the border along impervious unmarked mountain paths, hiding in trains or walking the tunnels of the highway that runs above the coast.

The human cost of the trip often does not end in the danger that they are forced to face, but also in what they are forced to suffer to pay back the traffickers. The cost of the passage for France varies depending on the comfort of the trip and duration of the passage: for 100-150 € migrants are crammed into overhead vans or cars, closed in the trunk, in the trucks or closed by the traffickers inside the doors of the train that contain the electric cables.

To the children alone and to the women who can not pay in euros their passage, the package offered by traffickers provides the opportunity to pay back the offer with

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sexual favours.

B. a 15-years-old Eritrean girl who was traveling alone with her 6-years-old brother and another Eritrean lady, said “*A Nigerian smugglers asked us for sex twice in change of a passage. We refused but he asked to other girls who were in the train station*”.

Bad government assistance to the migrants. In addition to the dangers related to illegal border-crossing migrants, waiting in the limbo of the city had to face for long time inhumane reception conditions in which: in the last years 5 migrants died drowned in the river or near the beach while they were trying to wash themselves, due to the absence of public baths and water sources. Other two migrants died hit by cars as they walked the stretch of high-distance road that divides the city from the government centre Camp Roya, which stands in an isolated area.

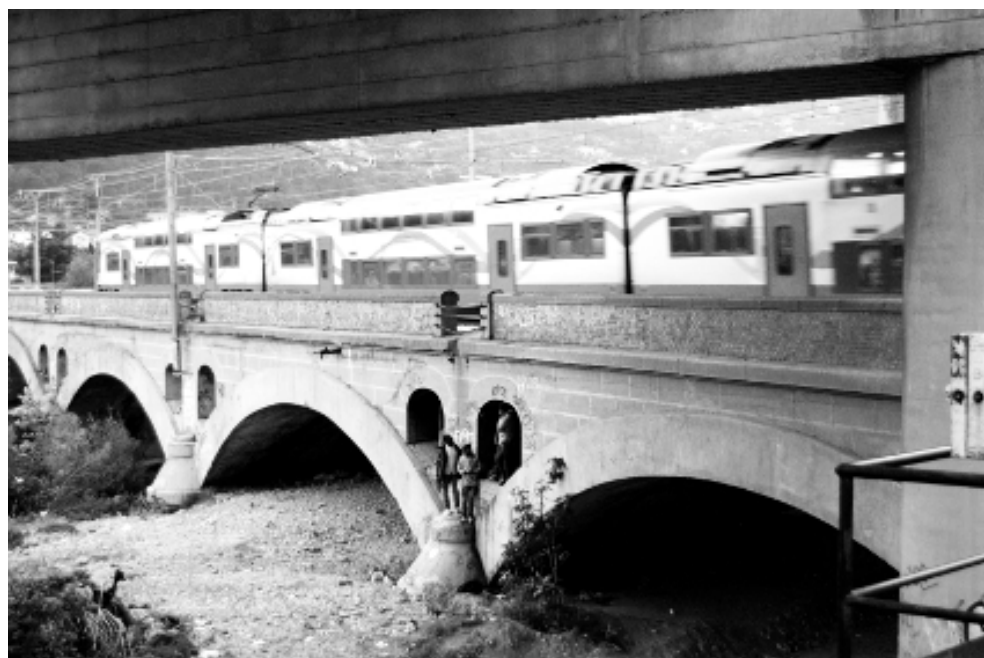
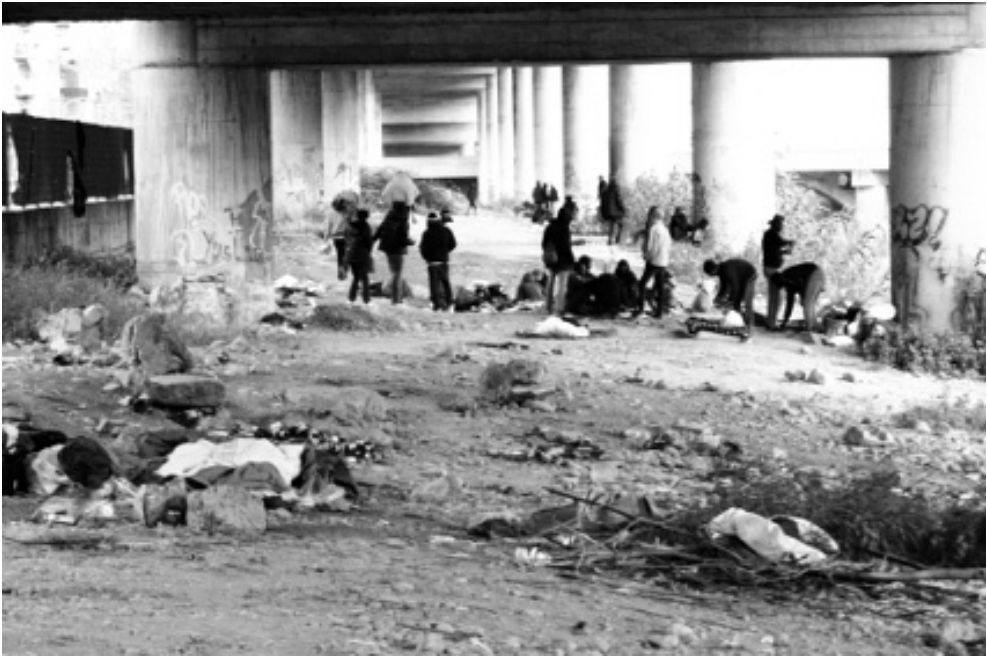


Figure 29. Italy, Ventimiglia. Migrants living outside under the bridge.



Figures 30 and 31. Italy, Ventimiglia. Migrants living outside under the bridge.

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The game of the goose. On the Italian side, with the intention to “*decompress the migration pressure on the border*”, since 2016 the Italian Ministry of Intern put in place a new strategy to forcibly remove from the town of Ventimiglia the migrants pushed back from France. Forced deportation of migrants to the Hotspot of Taranto or to other closed identification centres in southern Italy are organized weekly by the Italian police. Since all the migrants have already been identified upon arrival in the emergency governmental Camp Parco Roya or at the border after being pushed back from France, the only objective of such measures is to arbitrary deprive migrants of their personal freedom. “*After being released from the gendarmerie, I was taken to the Italian border-guards office. They took again my fingerprint, and gave me a paper with my name and a number. There was no interpreter. I was then taken to a room with other guys and we waited for some hours until they forced us to get on a bus. The journey took 17 hours. The bus was followed by another one full of policemen, and other two cars of the army. We stopped 3 times, but we could get off only one time. We had to go to toilet in open air when the bus stop in the middle of nowhere on the highway. We were 22 and there were 18 cops surveilling us.*” said H., 23- years-old, from Sudan.

NOTES

1. Even though special programs to transfer asylum seekers from third countries have been developed, as the “human corridors” organized by the italian NGOs Comunità di Sant’Egidio (<https://www.santegidio.org/pageID/30112/langID/it/CORRIDOI-UMANITARI.html>) and Mediterranean Hope (<https://www.mediterraneanhope.com/corridoi-umanitari/>), the number of refugees who could benefit of an humanitarian visa is still insufficient (Italy accorded 1000 humanitarian visa for 2016-2017 and another 1000 for 2018-2019).
2. This is the number of deaths that have been ascertained until May 5th, 2018. Data from United for Intercultural Action (www.unitedagainstracism.org/): <https://uploads.guim.co.uk/2018/06/19/TheList.pdf>
3. Data IOM from: <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean>
4. Data UNHCR from: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>
5. UNHCR. (September 2018). Desperate journeys. Refugees and migrants arriving in Europe

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8. Prestigiacomio D. (2018, July 6). Centri per migranti in Libia l'UE sblocca altri 29 milioni. Europa Today. From: <http://europa.today.it/attualita/libia-centri-migranti-ue-salvini-armi.html>

9. For a brief description of the agreement and its impact: Genoviva F. R. (2017, April 24). Tutto quello che c'è da sapere sull'accordo Italia-Libia. Open Migration. From: <https://openmigration.org/analisi/tutto-quello-che-ce-da-sapere-sullaccordo-italia-libia/>

The text of the agreement can be read here: https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2017/02/02/news/migranti_accordo_italia-libia_ecco_cosa_contiene_in_memorandum-157464439/

10. The text of the code of conduct can be read here: <https://www.humanrightsatsea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2017070516-EU-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>

11. Vassallo Paleologo F. (2018, June 28). Una zona SAR per la "Libia" che non esiste. Si perfeziona la politica dell'annientamento. ADIF-Associazione diritti e frontiere. From <https://www.a-dif.org/2018/06/28/una-zona-sar-per-la-libia-che-non-esiste-si-perfeziona-la-politica-dellannientamento/>

12. Data UNHCR from: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205>

13. Amnesty International Italia. (2018, February 1). Italia- Libia, un anno fa l'accordo sull'immigrazione. From: <https://www.amnesty.it/italia-libia-un-anno-laccordo-sullimmigrazione/>

14. Porsia N. (2017). L'industria libica delle migrazioni, in Limes, Rivista italiana di geopolitica, vol. 6/2017. From: http://www.istitutodegasperi-emilia-romagna.it/pdf-mail/368_06022018a5.pdf

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15. Al Jazeera. (2017, November 26). Migrants for sale: slave trade in Libya, 26 November 2017. From: <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/countingthecost/2017/11/migrants-sale-slave-trade-libya-171126063748575.html>

16. Cf. Not a weapon of war: <https://www.notaweaponofwar.org/actions/sur-le-terrain/en-libye/> “En Libye, le viol de guerre a été massivement utilisé par le régime de Kadhafi lors du soulèvement de 2011. C’était un moyen de répression politique, de terreur; visant à casser l’opposition. Il a aussi bien ciblé les femmes que les hommes. Depuis la mort du raïs en octobre 2011, le viol est devenu un outil de vengeance courant. Les milices libyennes qui recouvrent tout le territoire, les katiba, l’utilisent et réaniment les rivalités entre tribus.”

17. At the same time, the construction of another wall, whose end of the works is scheduled for the spring of 2019, will “defend” 144 of the 499 km of the border with Iran. Cf Coskun O., Gumrukcu T. (January 10, 2018). “Turkey to complete wall on Iranian border by spring 2019” from: <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-turkey-construction-toki-interview/turkey-to-complete-wall-on-iranian-border-by-spring-2019-idUKKBN1EZ179>

18. Aldroubi, M. (2018, June 10). Syria-Turkey border wall completed. The National. From: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/syria-turkey-border-wall-completed-1.738637>

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20. Mine Action Review. (2017). Clearing the mines 2017. From: http://www.mineactionreview.org/assets/downloads/Turkey_Clearing_the_Mines_2017.pdf

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The video of the violences is available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3583152/Shocking-footage-shows-wounds-Syrian-migrants-shot-beaten-death-Turkey-s-border-police.html#v-915347197670767893>

22. Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (2018, April 23). “*More casualties raise to about 70, the number of children victims of the Turkish Jandarma’s shooting out of 361 civilians*”, from <http://www.syria.hr.com/en/?p=90124>

The Syrian Human Rights Observatory documented 361 cases of murders of Syrian civilians, committed by Turkish border guards between August 2015 and April 2018, including 69 children and 34 women.

Cf also: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/11/23/turkey-syrians-pushed-back-border>
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/03/turkey/syria-border-guards-shoot-block-fleeing-syrians>
<http://www.syria.hr.com/en/?p=78799>

23. Border area of the province of Kilis.

24. From 01.01.2014 to 21.09.2018.

25. NRC, StC, Action Against Hunger, Care International, Drc, Rescue. (2018). *Dangerous ground. Syria’s refugees face an uncertain future*. From: <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/dangerous-ground---syrias-refugees-face-an-uncertain-future/dangerous-ground---syrian-refugees-face-an-uncertain-future.pdf>

26. Beginning of 2017, city of Sanlurfa.

27. Cf. the investigation Billions for Borders (2018) carried out by Politiken and Dainwatch, in collaboration with European Investigative Collaborations (EIC). Look at: <https://eic.network/projects/billions-for-borders>

28. The tender, worth about 29.6 million euros, was won by the Aselsan company (owned by 84% of the Turkish army) that supplied technology and electronics while the vehicles were from HIZIR, the whose owner is a former member of the AKP party of Erdogan.

29. IOM. (2017, June 16). EUR 20 Million EU Project in Support of Turkish Coast Guard Seeks to Save More Migrant Lives. From: <https://www.iom.int/news/eur-20-million-eu-project-support-turkish-coast-guard-seeks-save-more-migrant-lives>

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30. IOM. (March 2018). MPM Turkey overview of the situation with migrants. Migrant pres-

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ence monitoring. From: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sitrep_Turkey_Q1_2018.pdf

31. Near the ten cities of Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kilis, Osmaniye, Adana, Mardin, Adiyaman, Malatya and Kahramanmaraş

32. Panico A. (2017). *I don't have dreams - Childhood Lost An investigation on the effects of the EU-Turkey deal: child labour*. Progetto Meltingpot Europa. From: <https://www.meltingpot.org/I-don-t-have-dreams-Childhood-Lost.html#.XBQ9Iy5Ki00>

33. Hayata Destex. (2016). *Child Labour in Turkey: Situation for Syrian Refugees and the Search for Solutions*' Conference Report.

34. Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, <https://www.afad.gov.tr/en/>

35. OECD. (July 2016). Economic Surveys.Turkey July 2016 Overview. From: <http://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/turkey-2016-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf>

36. UNICEF. (December 2016). 2016 Year-end situation report in numbers. From: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF%20Turkey%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report_Year-End%202016.pdf

According to the report, on 6 January 2017, out of 2,814,631 migrants registered by UNHCR there were 1,258,140 minors under 18 and 385.604 under 5 years.

37. Bulgaria completed the construction of a wall along the Turkish border in August 2015. Hungary completed the construction of a barrier along the Serbian border and portions of the Croatian one in 2015. Also Slovenia and Macedonia built a fence along the border respectively with Croatia and Greece.

38. Cf. MSF. (2017). Serbia: games of violence. Unaccompanied children and young people repeatedly abused EU member state authorities. From: <https://www.msf.org/balkans-children-repeatedly-abused-border-authorities>

MSF. (2018). Push-backs, violence and inadequate conditions at the Balkan routes new frontier. From: <https://www.msf.org/push-backs-violence-and-inadequate-conditions-balkan-routes-new-frontier>

39. MSF. (2018, September 17). Greece: Increase in suicide attempts among child refugees on Lesbos. From: <https://www.msf.org.uk/article/greece-increase-suicide-attempts-among-child-refugees-lesvos>

According to the report, the health officers of MSF observed during the mental health activities of

the team, that 18 children of 74 (between 6-18 years) of the group suffered of these pathologies.

40. Italian Ministry of intern, Italian Roadmap, 28 September 2015, available (only italian) at: <https://www.meltingpot.org/IMG/pdf/roadmap-2015.pdf>

41. European Commission, communication of the 13th May 2015, COM (2015), 240, A european agenda on migration, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf

See also European Commission, press release 23 September 2015, Managing the refugee crisis: Immediate operational, budgetary and legal measures under the European Agenda on Migration, available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-5700_en.htm

42. Report of the first visit of the Défenseur des droits at the border: http://www.cglpl.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Rapport-de-la-deuxi%C3%A8me-visite-des-services-de-la-police-aux-fronti%C3%A8res-de-Menton-Alpes-Maritimes_web.pdf ;

Decision of the Défenseur des droits about the situation of unaccompanied minors at the border Ventimiglia/Menton issued on 25.4.2018 https://juridique.defenseurdesdroits.fr/index.php?lvl=notice_display&id=25002

Reply of the Ministry of Intern of the French Republic: <http://www.cglpl.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Observations-du-minist%C3%A8re-de-lint%C3%A9rieur-Services-de-la-police-aux-fronti%C3%A8res-de-Mention-2e-visite.pdf>

43. Full report of the CNCDH: <http://www.cncdh.fr/fr/actualite/avis-sur-la-situation-des-migrants-la-frontiere-franco-italienne>

http://www.cncdh.fr/sites/default/files/180619_avis_situation_des_migrants_a_la_frontiere_italienne.pdf

6

Socio-spatial Integration: a two layered process

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INTRODUCTION

Almost three years have passed since the summer of 2015, when an unprecedented influx of people crossing the borders through mainland routes and the Mediterranean waters into Europe was observed and declared as the ‘European Refugee Crisis’. Although, forced displacement and migration, due to violence, wars, economic issues and political reasons is not a new phenomenon, but rather one that has been world-wide present for decades, the current wave of refugees aiming to enter the European continent, allowed for the framing of such a conjuncture as an exceptional one, a ‘crisis’. A European Crisis which has been constructed through mainstream media attention, humanitarian calls for aid and public narratives alike.

Greece, specifically, due to its geographical location and as a first country of entry pursuant to the Dublin Regulation (EU Regulation No. 604/2013) has experienced a significant number of migrants and asylum seekers entering its geographical territory. Since August 2012 patterns of arrivals and entry into the European Union have shifted from the Greek-Turkish land borders to the sea borders (UNHCR, 2013), highlighting

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the dangerous passage refugees are forced to take; a passage that has been marked by deaths and missing persons. In 2014, arrivals of refugees who have successfully crossed the borders into Greek territory from Turkey were counted to 41.038, while in 2015 the number of arrivals increased up to 856.723 (UNHCR, 2017). And even though, the numbers substantially decreased the following year, Greece being a country of arrival, reception and ‘temporary’ settlement, has been concerned with the pressing issues of adequate accommodation, and most importantly integration.

Accommodation and integration have been addressed both by state-led responses, through a collaboration of the state and the humanitarian sector, and bottom-up initiatives, organized by volunteers, activist groups and local communities. These responses are underpinned by different practices and ways of realization on the ground, developing distinctive approaches towards integration, however both ‘equally’ focusing on basic needs and opportunities for economic, social and cultural inclusion.

How, then, are processes of integration implemented and achieved, and what is their relation to the accommodation’s location? This article tries to illustrate the ways in which state-led responses have an integral role to play in the construction of the aforementioned processes. The relationship among the geographical location of government-led refugee camps and opportunities for inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers is examined from a critical perspective. It is argued that the location of the camps rather than contributing towards fostering processes of inclusion, reinforces social segregation through state control. Nonetheless, this is realized within the rhetoric of formal integration.

Contrary to the state policies and narratives on refugees’ reception and accommodation, I am arguing towards the territorial potentiality of social, economic and cultural inclusion, and therefore on the spatial aspects of integration. I reflect on the concept of integration as it is declared within humanitarian aid interventions and implemented through state migrant policies. In particular, by revisiting the notion of the border, both visible and invisible, I explore the informal processes of integration which materialize within and beyond the territorial and physical boundaries of state-led refugee camps. This work then aims to contribute to an expanding research work on the implementation of refugee policies and bottom-up practices in the Greek context. This is achieved through an empirical study of the ground reality as it becomes more concrete, localized and networked.

This article is based on research conducted between November 2016 and August 2017, through visits in the field and specific refugee settings in the Attica region, that I had access during my employment in an international humanitarian organization operating in Greece. Taking the official Ministerial Decision N. 11.1/6343 of December 2014 as a starting point, I conduct a policy document analysis, trying to unpack institutional elements that underpin the state's response to processes of integration. This analysis is complemented by empirical data collected and informal talks realized in both contexts of state-led refugee sites (Elliniko, Elefsina, Skaramagkas, Rafina, Lavrio) and informal squats (Chora Community Space, Refugee Accommodation and Solidarity Space City Plaza, 5o Lyceum School Exarcheia squat), located mainly in central areas of Athens, where many undocumented, 'without papers' refugees reside. Lastly, drawing on observations and through my personal engagement with institutional, humanitarian actors and refugees, what became explicit from the early stages of the research was an apparent disjunction among the institutional procedures, their 'formal' application by governmental and non-governmental humanitarian actors, and the 'informal' processes developing on the ground. This indicated that processes of spatial and social inclusion and integration advance in two, nonetheless distinct layers. However, could it be argued that by departing from the concept of border as a territorial and social boundary and perceiving it as membrane, processes operate in a rather porous manner illustrating a two layered system of integration?

DIALECTICAL APPROACH TO INTEGRATION AND EN-CAMPMENT PRACTICES

What then is considered integration, and how can it be perceived in formal and informal terms? Is integration merely a concept or a process that unfolds in numerous and diverse ways? And being a process what kind of formal or informal passages can be pursued to be achieved?

Integration can be perceived as a concept and a process that asks for the involvement of both the individual and the receiving society. Understood as such, integration is multi-dimensional since it addresses several aspects of the social, economic, cul-

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tural and political sphere. There are numerous actions to be performed by several actors, ranging from the state level to non-governmental stakeholders (UNHCR, n.d.), and a constant struggle which relates to the acceptance and recognition of the 'other'. According to the ICRIRR Principles (2002, p. 12):

“Integration is multi-dimensional in that it relates both to the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country of resettlement as well as to refugees’ own perceptions of, acceptance by and membership in the host society.”

The above statement clearly illustrates the multi-dimensionality of the process and the need for achieving balance among the demands placed on the refugee and the receiving community. At the same time though, this statement perpetuates the narrative of the asylum seeker, migrant, refugee perceived as a 'guest' and the receiving country as a 'host community'. A narrative which maintains the notion of 'hospitality' as a predominant one in asylum and immigration, and which places the sovereign state in a privileged position, whereas the newcomer in an inferior morally debt position (Herzfeld, 1992). Such a rhetoric underpins the state's response to reception, basic needs provision and accommodation, and highlights the politics of compassion on which humanitarian aid in Greece has been established. It problematizes and defines the role of the state in relation to responsibilities, rights and opportunities granted to refugees and puts in the forefront the notion of inclusion and exclusion essential to integration processes.

However, in accordance to Rozakou's analysis of the 'biopolitics of hospitality' (2012) the aforementioned rhetoric also emphasizes the conceptualization of asylum seekers as guests which “puts them in a space between biological existence and full political and social life. Neither merely 'bare life' nor a full political being, the refugee was produced as the receiver of humanitarian generosity, as having limited agency.” (2012, p. 563). This space then is physically materialized in the refugee camp, the state's first response to provision for accommodation and a dominant model of refugee management in humanitarian aid as Malkki (1995) has argued. In migration and camp studies numerous scholars have focused on the relation of biopolitics and humanitarianism (Foucault, 1977, 2003; Agamben, 1994, 1998; Malkki, 1995), stressing the function of the camp both as a site of humanitarian assistance and as a space that control, monitor and supervision upon refugees and asylum seekers are performed (Malkki,

1992; Pandolfi, 2003). Therefore, these geographically bounded spaces can be perceived as territories where technologies of control are attempted. And as Delaney asserts territory is deployed as “a means of controlling ‘what is inside’ by limiting access or excluding others” (2005, 19). In this sense, “the camps can be described as ‘areas of the other’, outside the generalized disciplinary order, where the social boundaries are defined, not the different characters of the differences” (Stavrvides, 2016, p. 151).

The above emphasize the relationship of power, control and the camp. At the same time, the social and political aspects of life within it and in relation to the receiving community are also addressed. The model of refugee management through encampment practices has also been performed in the Greek context, however, with remarkable differences. This can be scrutinized in several layers from the categorization and the labelling of the encampment sites, to their geographical location and territorial existence. What kind of understandings can be drawn from the spatiality and location of the camp itself; of the site of reception and accommodation in relation to the processes of integration?

FRAMING THE GREEK CONTEXT THROUGH AN EXAMINATION OF STATE-LED POLICIES

In 2011 the European Court of Human Rights and Court of Justice of the EU “found that the Greece’s asylum system suffers from ‘systemic deficiencies’, including lack of reception centres, poor detention conditions, and the lack of an effective remedy.” (Papademetriou, 2016). The Greek state’s response at that time in order to address the above ‘systemic deficiencies’ related to asylum processes, adopted Law 3907/2011 which established screening procedures, addressed detention conditions, and devised actions for improving host facilities.

Since the adoption of the above law, several Presidential Decrees and Ministerial Decisions have added to the clarification of legal procedures and amendments of existing ones in order to define the organization and operation of First Reception Services, Asylum Service and establishment and operation of Hospitality Centres for third-country nationals (Δομές Φιλοξενίας υπηκόων τρίτων χωρών). These

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host facilities, or otherwise referred to as state-led refugee camps, in the official documents of the Greek state are named by and thus framed within the concept of hospitality (φιλοξενία). Specifically, in December 2014, the regulation of 2012 (MD 7001/2/1454, 2012) was complimented by including guidelines on conditions of hospitality for third-country nationals, integration procedures to the centres, not only duties but also obligations of the centres' staff, and lastly but equally important the establishment and quality of adjacent provided services. It is evident that "hospitality thus emerges as an ideal, an object of regulatory policies as well as both a national and a private affair" (Rozakou, 2012, p. 566).

Within this context of state hospitality and provided services, the integration of 'third-country nationals' is stated, as follows:

"Depending on the category of the persons hosted in the centre, and if possible, social inclusion programs are offered in collaboration with public or private stakeholders. [...]"

The above mentioned services are oriented towards strengthening of the forces and empowering of the adult members of the guest families, with the prospect of their autonomous integration into the local social and economic life, as well as the empowering of the persons in their efforts to create functional relations among them and in their creative integration in society." (MD 11.1/6343, 2014, Article 15, Para 2,3: 38320).

The services concerned with the basic needs and social aspect of integration include appropriate living space and conditions, catering (food support), health services, psycho-social support, access to education and legal aid, and 24 hours safeguarding and security. Of particular significance are considered provision of Greek language lessons, access to the educational system for the underaged, creative occupation (such as sports, dancing classes and educational trips) and consultation on social networking and professional integration. As many other national and local policies are focused on the main areas of integration, community life, housing, employment, health and education, it is also evident that the Greek national policy in regards to the operation of the centres is also composed around them. Thus, the programs that should be offered in the centres are organized around the "five pillars of integration" (US Amb. Emerson, 2016), those being:

- Linguistic integration
- Integration of school children
- Economic integration
- Provision of a clear path to citizenship
- Civic integration

Through this document, it is also implied that integration as a cultural and social process should be first addressed and achieved within the camps by the support of both public and private actors. Therefore, the corresponding article of the Ministerial Decision of December 2014 declares integration as a significant aspect within the Hospitality Centres and primarily acknowledges social, economic and cultural elements as fundamental for the success of ‘autonomous integration’ process.

Nonetheless, in the above excerpt there is an opening statement that highly determines if a person is eligible to be considered for any of the provided services, by two implied preconditions.

“Depending on the category of the persons hosted in the centre...”

First, the MD article states that access to services is depended on the category of the persons. Although this article will not dive into an analysis of the categorisation and labelling of refugees (Arendt, 1951, 1996; Malkki, 1995; Zetter, 1991,2007), it is critical to note that the ‘bureaucratic labelling process’ of the refugee defines and prioritizes needs and therefore access to accommodation and services. The categorization, especially within the legal framework in Greece as well as other European countries, forges distinctions among the refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and therefore strengthens the immaterial borders that a person comes across in their effort towards social and occupational advancement, a vital component of the multi-dimensional process of integration.

This brings us to the latter implied precondition of the excerpt above: ‘persons hosted in the centre’. The labelling of the person as a guest and third-country national, straightforwardly excludes from the process people who although legally are asylum seekers or undocumented immigrants, without papers, they are still not accepted to stay into hospitality centres (Rozakou, 2012, p. 568). It is evident, that this ‘bureaucratic label’ of a third-country national, the person who has been granted asylum and therefore legal permission to stay, settle and work in the country, has also a spatial manifestation on the type of accommodation facility that the person is eligible to stay and might be assigned to.

SPATIAL INTEGRATION PROCESS EXPLORED THROUGH THE 'POLITICS OF INVISIBILITY'

During 2015 and following the revised Action Plan on Asylum and Migration Management (MoPOCP, 2013), the establishment of new camps in the Greek islands and mainland was realized. The classification of the camps in regards to their temporary or permanent status, as well as the procedures and services provided, emanates from a legal regulatory framework of the Greek reception and detention system. Within this framework the state's first emergency response was to inaugurate a network of Temporary Accommodation Sites, alternatively named Open Reception Facilities (ORFs) located in the mainland, which complemented the newly established Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) and Transit Sites located in the islands, and Pre-Removal Detention Facilities located both in the islands and mainland¹. Due to the 'humanitarian aid urgency' and consequently 'state of emergency' that the country declared, the sites operate in a temporary status, particularly prior to the closure of the Greek Border in Macedonia and the EU-Turkey Agreement (20 March 2016). Therefore, the temporality of the officially established sites, except from the unsystematic recording, reporting and monitoring of site profiles, signified their non-classification as Hospitality Centres (Δομές Φιλοξενίας), and consequently their operation not legally subject to the MD of December 2014 (General Regulations on the operation of Hospitality Centres). This allowed for diverse interpretations of integration policy and as a result the formulation of different integration processes, both formal and informal, within the sites.

And contrary to the above aspects of integration, where accessibility to adequate housing, education, legal support, capacity building, employment as a significant factor for self-resilience and livelihood, are considered crucial for establishing social integration and cohesion, the state's response in the selection of the state-led refugee camps' locations conveniently disregarded the factor of spatial proximity to urban centres and therefore accessibility to such services. The camps were located in the periphery of urban and rural areas, with inadequate or even non-existent public transportation services towards the urban centres, isolated from the social life of the local community. In addition, the state-led refugee camps operated, whereas some still operate, in abandoned military bases and public facilities, derelict factories and deserted

municipal or ministerial summer camps (Christodoulou et al, 2016; Karyotis, 2016; Simit, 2016; Tsavdaroglou, 2018).

For instance, Elefsina site, which was shut down due to inadequate and dangerous living conditions and reopened on the grounds of reached maximum capacity of other refugee camps, is located in a Greek's Navy abandoned warehouse building, Skaramangkas site at Greek's Navy territory next to the commercial and transport port of Attica, a highly environmentally polluted and industrial area, Rafina and Lavrio sites located in deserted summer camps in forest areas with lacking fire safety infrastructure, and the Elliniko sites were located at Athens' old airport, specifically the Arrivals building and Hockey and Baseball fields, remains of the vast legacy of relinquished Athens Olympics 2004 facilities. In the following figure the location of the state-run refugee camps in relation to their geographical proximity to rural and urban areas is illustrated in the Greek country region (Fig. 1).

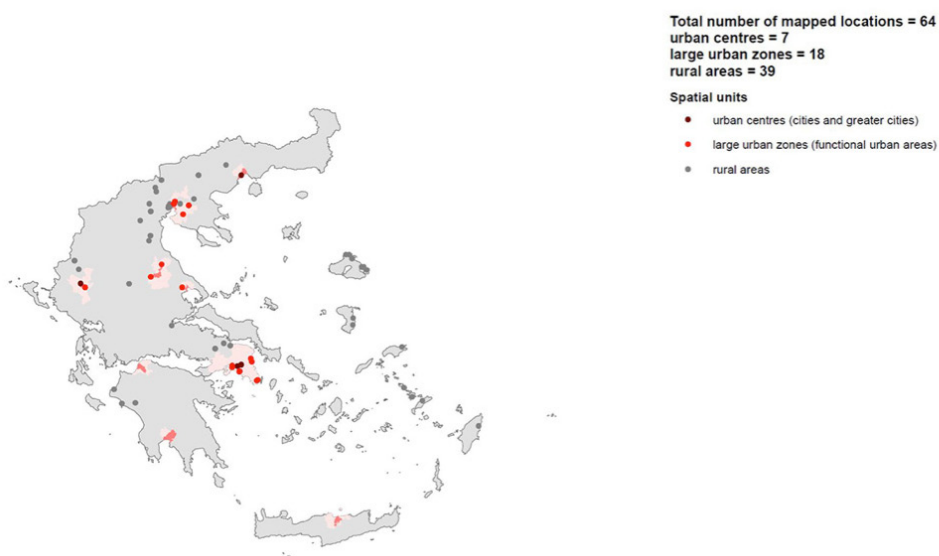


Figure 1. Temporary Accommodation Sites in Greece, 2017. Geographical location and proximity to urban/rural areas. Data gathering: A. Paraskevopoulou, visualization: F. Palaiologou, 2017. Source: refugeespaces.org

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And while the state sets the ground base for the sites location and management, the site management support and therefore services provided, are executed by other actors, mainly iNGOs and local NGOs operating on the ground (i.e. Norwegian Refugee Council, Danish Refugee Council, Oxfam, International Organization for Migration, et al.). It is asked from the external non-governmental actors to address the gaps in services and processes that state actors allowed through loopholes. Thus, the aforementioned integration services are offered by iNGOs, local NGOs and volunteering organizations (i.e. Hellenic Red Cross, SolidarityNow, Praxis, Metadrasi, British Council, Greek Council for Refugees, et al.), that have either the authority of the site, or are present periodically on site and provide supporting activities, such as health care, protection, legal aid services, children activities and informal education. However, access even to these supporting services is limited, depending on availability of staff, existing facilities and allocated funding. The formal processes of integration within the territorial boundaries of the camp are rendered insufficient to address and accommodate the refugees' needs and enhance inclusion to the local community.

Not only then the geographical location and internal operations of the state-led refugee camps are such that reinforce segregation, but also their actual materiality is such that promotes state's control on the 'subjects' and social exclusion. This is achieved by building up territories of the 'other' (Delaney, 2005; Stavrides, 2016) through technologies of imprisonment, such as border fencing (Fig. 2) and entrance access points (Fig. 3, 4). The above examples merely represent the inadequacy of state housing policies, but most importantly depict the spatial manifestation of 'invisibility', 'exclusion' and 'seclusion' of refugees in the urban / rural fabric and as a result in public and social life. Therefore, it becomes apparent that the spatial aspect of integration is neglected, while the 'politics of invisibility' (Rozakou, 2012) are embodied and reproduced through material boundaries and territorial exclusion.



Figure 2. Skaramangkas Refugee Site border fencing. A. Paraskevopoulou, 2017.

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Figure 3. Elliniko Arrivals Refugee Site entrance access point. A. Paraskevopoulou, 2016.



Figure 4. Skaramangkas Refugee Site entrance access point. A. Paraskevopoulou, 2017.

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TOWARDS SOCIO-SPATIAL INTEGRATION: A TWO LAYERED PROCESS

Moreover, as presented above the social factors of refugees' integration concerned with capacity building, community life, livelihoods and self-resilience are inconsistently and insufficiently provided within the remote territories of the state-led camps. For instance, in Elliniko Arrivals site, language courses for children and adults, in both English and Greek languages, were operating on a volunteering basis, children activities were performed on site once a week through the support of a volunteering organization, and informal children's education was provided on a regular basis by the site management support organization. In Skaramagkas, due to the withdrawal of the children's actor on site, access to children protection and activities for a significant period of time was unavailable, while in Elefsina access to regular psychological support was limited due to the incapacity of the official state actor to provide as well translating support. In most of the sites in Attica, access to legal advice and health services is offered on a periodical basis, because of the temporary presence of legal and health actors on site, and through referrals to external agents, most of who are located in Athens' city centre.

This means that residents of the refugee camps will have to travel long distances (in some cases even more than forty kilometres) to reach the urban centre. In order to do such a trip the available transportation offered is through public transport network, that would either be inadequate or unreliable in regards to timetables. In some cases, such as the Elefsina, Rafina or Lavrio site, where there was not adequate connection to public transportation, services of private transportation would be arranged by state and non-governmental actors operating on sites. However, due to insufficient budget allocation or funding, and as the immigration state's strategy moves towards 'cash' support, these transport services were cut down and eventually terminated. It is apparent, once again how the geographical location of the site is more than crucial in granting access to integration support services.

Nonetheless, and even if transportation connections to the city centre are poor, refugees residing in the refugee centres will travel to gain access to social, legal services, administrative centres, as well as job opportunities, shopping markets and creative

and recreational activities, most of them offered in bottom-up spaces of welcoming refugee practices. “Chora Community Space” in Exarcheia residential area, which is also close to the central market of Athens, would offer language classes, collective kitchen classes, and health support with an in-house dentistry service. “Refugee Accommodation and Solidarity Space City Plaza”, a self-organized and managed squat (2016) in a non-operating hotel building, offers accommodation, legal services, language lessons etc., having a vibrant presence in the central area of Athens contributing to the creation of an inclusive community. The above organizations operate within a network of self-organized spaces and squats that produce bottom-up practices of inclusion towards achieving integration.

At the same time, economic networks are created producing a bottom-up space of common places of exchange between the refugees and host community. These networks are created within the setting of the state-led refugee camps and are reproduced outside of the camps’ material borders, through encounters of commerce. For instance, the residents of the camps in order to have access to basic needs, such as food, and recreational activities, they form spaces of social exchange through informal practices. Coffee shops, restaurants, small market places (Fig. 5,6) are encountered within the camps highlighting not only the vibrant refugee community that is enclosed in a bounded space, but most importantly the invisible connections and processes that the refugees develop. Social and financial connections which expand through commerce activities that are generated, though depart from the camp. In Elliniko Arrivals site the women’s community would come together and produce knitted goods, such as gloves, baskets, decorative products, which later were sold in the city’s centre informal markets. The daily travels towards Athens’s centre gained multiple denotations, such as access to health system and legal services, social interactions through recreational activities and financial gain, redefining the existing spatial borders.

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Figure 5. Skaramangkas Refugee Site in site mini market. A. Paraskevopoulou, 2017.



Figure 6. Skaramangkas Refugee Site in site pool table and coffee house. A. Paraskevopoulou, 2017.

In this sense, the material borders of the camps act as an ‘edge’ where different groups interact. Networks connecting camp life to the social structure and city life are producing an urban open system (Sennett, 2006), where borders are perceived as membranes, rather than territorial boundaries. Thus, the material walls, the actual bordered fencing surrounding the camps, when perceived in their immaterial manifestation, function as membranes being both porous and resistant. Porous in the sense that they allow for the communication with the local community and interaction between physical creation and social behaviour. This porosity, however, is depended on the people residing and managing the site, the informal processes that exist and are allowed to operate within it, and the ones that operate outside of it. At the same time, these informal spaces except from obtaining territorial materiality, they also attain

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digital presence (Fig. 7), and consequently visibility beyond the physical space thus acknowledging and, in a way, formalizing the informal.

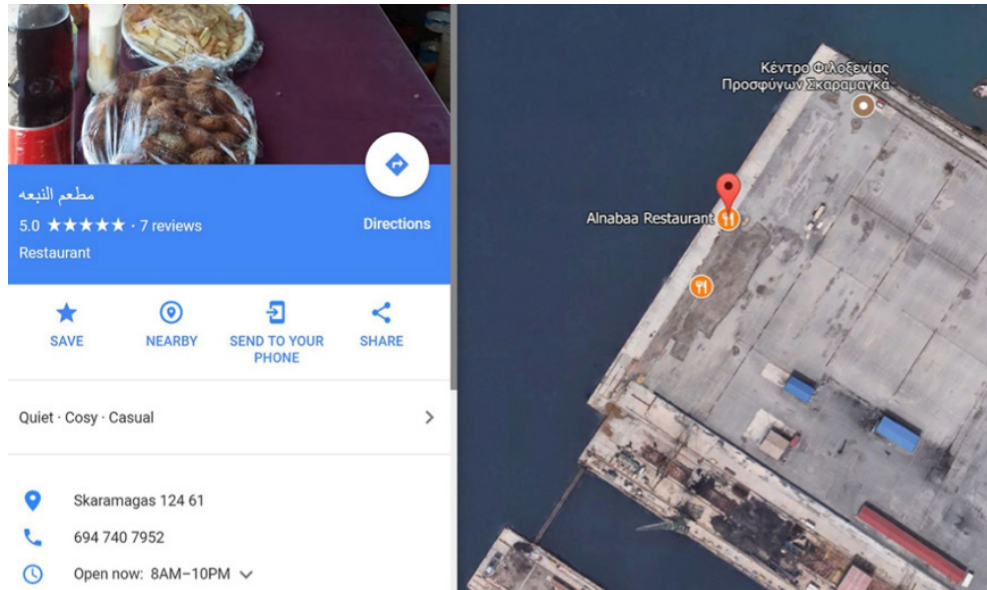


Figure 7. Alnabaa falafel restaurant in Skaramangkas Refugee Site. Source: [googlemaps.com](https://www.google.com/maps).

Being in the process of rebuilding their lost identity and individuality, refugees have achieved in building connections to the city and creating working places and business opportunities within and beyond the camp. They produce their own integration process enhancing their livelihoods, access to labour and creating their own employment opportunities. The non-visible aspects of social integration become visible, and thus spatialized, as the refugees reclaim their 'right to appear', their existence, presence and space within the urban. A second layer of integration processes becomes palpable, one that operates within informality, from the bottom-up, and which actively advocates towards the socio-spatial potentiality of integration.

CONCLUSION

How are these informal processes that underpin the socio-spatial elements of integration generally perceived within the state's policies? And how can integration, as framed within the Greek's state rhetoric, be attained through refugee led and formal led processes of inclusion? As I have illustrated above, it becomes evident that informal and formal led practices of integration operate in two disparate levels, which however when conceived holistic, compose a two layered system operating in a porous manner.

By dialectically engaging with the concept of integration, as it is framed in humanitarian aid interventions and as it is addressed in the state's migrant policies, I have argued towards the spatial characteristics of social, cultural and economic inclusion. My theoretical contribution lies in the critical examination of the concept of integration within territories of exclusion and the exploration of the undocumented practices of inclusion which surpass territorial limitations. Through an empirically informed research, I have explored the relationship among the geographical location of state-led refugee camps and chances for inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers with the local community and the social and economic life of the city. I have revisited the label of 'hospitality centres', following a policy document analysis of national migrant policies, and explored its limitations within the Greek state's regulatory framework. I have argued then that the geographical locations of the state-led refugee camps contribute to refugees' social segregation through state control, perpetuating the 'politics of invisibility' rather than fostering inclusion.

Specifically, I have examined practices of integration which operate within and beyond the refugee camp through two lenses that represent the two aforementioned layers. By re-examining the notion of the 'border', both material and immaterial, I illustrated how processes of integration are implemented within state-led refugee camps though formal procedures and informal practices. I have presented the way in which formal led responses in providing access to accommodation, health, employment and community life are deemed inadequate to address the people's need. I have then articulated how informal practices of social and economic exchange materialize within and beyond the territorial and physical boundaries of state-led refugee camps,

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producing a network of bottom-up spaces of inclusion. Through this exploration of the ground reality, which becomes more concrete, localized and sustained, I have argued towards the importance of understanding such informal practices as processes of integration which operate in a distinct level.

Unfortunately, these processes that underpin the socio-spatial potentiality of integration still remain unmapped, undocumented and unrecorded. However, they provide insightful understandings on how things develop on the ground; on how integration should be perceived through the ways it is spatially materialized in the urban fabric. At the same time, state led responses to integration move towards housing refugees within the urban fabric. Those vary from hotel rooms (UNHCR), individual apartments (PRAXIS, ARSIS), collective apartment buildings (Solidarity Now, CRS) to hosting refugees in Greek families (Solidarity Now) but also dedicated centres (day-centre, drop-in centre, etc.). This illustrates a shift aiming towards urban integration and spatial visibility, which nonetheless if considered unilateral will fail to attain its aspiration. What then is deemed necessary in order to achieve socio-spatial integration is, firstly a move towards perceiving processes of inclusion as a two layered system operating in a porous manner, and secondly a depart from the national scale to documenting the ground reality on the local scale.

NOTES

1. For more comprehensive presentation of the centers typology visit: <http://www.refugeespaces.org/greece>

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7

Can the poetic of commoning change the habitus? Reflexions from Lesbos with a Latin American perspective of urban - re- gional social movements

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INTRODUCTION

Guy Debord writes that if the city's history is the history of liberty, it is also the history of the tyranny of the state management mechanism that controls the countryside and the city. The city for centuries was only the territory of the historic struggle for freedom and not the location of freedom (Debord, 1992[1967]). A historic moment of liberation of the city --although for a very short time--occurred during the Paris Commune in 1871, where people took over and worked with participatory democratic assemblies. Castells (1986) labels this movement as the first "urban social movement".

Contemporary urban social movements do not only demand "the right to the city", but also try to implement it in their everyday life. As Marcuse (2009:193) pointed out, "it is not the right to the existing city that is demanded, but the right to a future city".

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“The key role for the urban imaginary is to make today’s impossibility into tomorrow’s possibility... What we need, then, is to create an appetite for thinking and acting beyond currently acknowledged frames of reference” (Chatterton, 2010). A rebel Latin American perspective of urban-regional social movements can decolonize the urban imaginary.

Contemporary urban-regional social movements have a deeper, than previous simple urban movements, role, because they promote the values of freedom, dignity, solidarity and social rights through various local groups and networks (Petropoulou, 2013). They reinvent the notion of the “common” (Stavrides, 2011), gradually build other collective values, and finally propose “ant-systemic” values (Wallerstein, 2008). One of these values, “the right to the city” and “the right to the difference” is a quotidian process (Lefebvre, 1968 and 1970) and includes all the people not considered officially as “citizens” in the past (immigrants, many autochthonous nations, women and children etc.). Particularly in Latin American cities, where a long tradition of rebellion of Indigenous (first nations) and Afro-American people is omnipresent, this same tradition also refers to the right to “living well” (*sumak kawsay*, *buen vivir*), which includes all the living beings. In Bolivia, Ecuador and, in general, in Aymara and Quechua communities we can see this process of creation of commons in the revival of “*Ayllu*” and autonomous “*Comunas*”, where a mode of very old participatory democracy exists. In the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, the old process of local autonomies in re-occupied lands (“social land system”) is actually organized with a “*Caracoles*” political system of organization. Many other communities are in a process of construction of new autonomies through a system of horizontality (in Michoacán, Oaxaca, Guerrero and other Mexican States). In small communities of old autonomous groups of auto-liberate slaves the notion of *Quilombos* in Brazil and *Palenques* in Colombia revitalize the actual social movements. Sometimes the tradition of rebellion and the tradition of “commoning” is a transferable tradition in sites of popular auto-construction (“*favelas*”, “*villas*”, “*barrios*”). The poetic way of these movements is very important. For example, in the favelas and the periphery of big cities in Brazil, many capoeira groups and many sarahu groups contribute to the creation of new rebel cultures related to the tradition of rebellion (Damianakos, 1987), with a transcultural encounter of free artistic experimentation: poetry, music, theatre, graffiti, video and other experiments.

Can these movements, through a systematic intervention in everyday life, decolonize urban imaginary and change aspects of habitus? Let's talk a little about that. The concept of habitus is one of Pierre Bourdieu's fundamental contributions to sociology and one of the key terms of his theoretical construction. By 'habitus' Bourdieu understands a set of generative schemes from which subjects perceive the world and act on it. These generative schemes are socially structured.

They have been formed throughout the history of each subject and suppose the internalization of the social structure, the concrete field of social relations in which the social agent has been formed as such. But, at the same time, they are structuring: they are the structures from which the agent's thoughts, perceptions and actions are produced (Román Reyes (Dir): *Critical Dictionary of Social Sciences*). Habitus is Aquinas' and Boethius' Latin translation of the Aristotelian concept of *exis*: "Ἐξίς δευτέρα φύσις ἐστὶ" ("exis is a second nature"). Bourdieu then elaborated habitus in a double critique of Sartre's phenomenology and Levi-Strauss's structuralism in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972). Loic Wacquant explain that:

"Against structuralism, then, the theory of habitus acknowledges that agents actively make the social world by engaging embodied instruments of cognitive construction; but it also insists, against constructivism, that these instruments are themselves made by the social world through the somatization of social relations. The situated individual 'determines herself insofar as she constructs the situation that determines her', but 'she has not chosen the principle of her choice', such that 'habitus contributes to transforming that which transforms it' (Bourdieu, 1997: 177). Habitus supplies at once a principle of sociation and individuation: sociation because our categories of judgment, sensibility and conduct, coming from society... individuation insofar as each person, by virtue of having a unique trajectory and location in the world, internalizes a matchless combination of such schemata" (Wasquant, 2016: 67).

I argue that the process of construction of commons like "commoning" (De Angelis & Stavrides, 2010) can change faces of the habitus if it is accompanied by the systematic repetition of an important corpus of decolonized cultural activity (socially included and not excluded) in the quotidian life. Social movements and collectivities work not only on the conscious level, but on the sub-conscious too, through activities

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of commoning in the quotidian life, with a poetic inspiration.

“The poetic way of seeing the world is a huge resource of communication in this time of global crisis where anti-systemic movements that are born all over the world begin to express an alternative political discourse, but they can’t still communicate well with each other” (Petropoulou, 2016). “Poetry” -poetic perception generally- can join different social resistances because it speaks straight to the heart and not just to the reason of the people involved in social movements... The root of the Greek word “poetry” (poesis - ποιήσις) means “making - creating”. “But a lineated poem is a making full of breakings . . . a structure of internal resistances” (McHugh, 1996: 208 in Maynard, 2008). Culture and poetry “rely on a structure of resistances, less a blueprint for action than a watercolor wash, at once elliptical and suggestive of both social memory and imagined futures” (Maynard, 2008). As Julia Kristeva (1974) says, the workings of poetic language as a signifying practice is “a semiotic system generated by a speaking subject within a social historical field”. Thus, the revolution in poetic language “calls into question the traditional epistemological subject and patriarchal language” because it talks about things that go beyond the mental categories and the fragmentation of knowledge that we are used to, after a long period of patriarchal domination.

CHANGING THE HABITUS IN LESVOS ISLAND?

A REBEL PERSPECTIVE...

In the recent Mexican earthquake, the most sensitive and politicized residents were organized in brigades and managed to save hundreds of people, thus overturning the destructive governmental engineering solutions, which if implemented, could lead to the loss of many human lives. For capitalism, poor people deserve nothing in the face of the rapid restoration of state-owned machinery. For Capital, working people are considered as “asset”; they are “money”. For solidarity groups they are human beings and, as such, they can collectively create a world without human exploitation and with respect to the environment. Zapatista movement texts speak about “Hydra Capitalist”, a new aspect of contemporary capitalism and call to resistance and the creation of multiple new rebel worlds (EZLN, 2013).

Contemporary capitalists' individualists practices change the habitus. The sense of place in this transformation is very important (see: Healey, 2005: 189-219; Friedmann, 2005: 315-334 and Waterson, 2005: 334-355, in Hillier & Rooksby, 2005). But in the same time, can new constellations of new rebel world's solidarity practices change this new habitus? The case of Lesbos island is a good place to examine this process.

In Lesbos, the last 4 years has been a period of large population movement, where hundreds of people have been organized to welcome and save nearly half a million people. For the capitalists, these people have a value if they only produce "money" and profit. The accumulation of Capital presupposed the dispossession of their land. For the collectivities, these people are first and foremost humans. At that time many, common spaces were created. In Lesbos, there were also plenty of "refugee-welcome" stories. But so far, many "invisible cities" are generated by commoning practices across Europe, Mediterranean and worldwide. A lot of stories have been written about this solidarity.

However, now we are living in a new situation, much more complex, where dystopia coexists with heterotopia and utopia. We try to create common spaces, but the dystopian spaces are growing around us. Thus, we constantly refer to other heterotopic spaces that have been created in the past.

Following the EU-Turkey deal (March 2016), the situation is changed dramatically (AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, 2016). We have come to a new normality of a vicious circle of refugee-handling machinery (governmental and non-governmental organizations, national and international agencies, human-management companies, accounting firms etc.), which, in the name of controlling migration, perpetuate the appropriation of refugees.

Although in the era of globalization, the borders are porous passages for Capital and commodities, at the same time they are transformed into strict and boned "new fences and enclosures".

The Newcomers are marginalized and stigmatized, and the locals live in cities full of an increasing number of detention and reception refugee centers. Many invisible dystopian cities, where psychological distress and biopolitical control prevail, have been created. These "non-places" very quickly stigmatized as dangerous, "other" and

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unsafe areas. And that's how the post-truths began (see the introduction of this book about the "Contested Borderscape Conference"):

- European member states are signatories to the Geneva Convention Related to the Status of Refugees.
- Human rights and dignity are respected in detention centres across Europe.
- An electrified fence was built to protect the nation-state from illegal intruders.
- Traffickers are responsible for deaths by drowning in the Aegean and Mediterranean seas.
- Deportations are voluntary returns.
- Turkey is a safe country.
- War is peace.
- Freedom is slavery.
- Ignorance is strength.

In this hostile climate, people on the move contest European border regimes, peripheries, and cityscapes by claiming spatial justice and political visibility, while creating a nexus of emerging common spaces. Inside these spaces another habitus of solidarity and commoning is created, disputing the habitus of stigmatization and segregation, generated by the repetition of post-truths.

Between 2015 and 2016 more than 500,000 migrants and refugees passed through the island of Lesbos, according to United Nations' data (UNHCR, 2016), in a situation of "irregular bureaucracy" (Rozakou, 2017). The reasons for massive migrations, apart from wars and policies of oppression, are multiple. During this period, the doors of the houses remained open, despite the (few) cases of reported robberies. On the other hand, some illegal practices related to the increase in prices on merchandise offered to refugees by local businesses have been denounced. Within this context, solidarity groups and collectives have built common spaces where different levels of commoning (Alexiou, Tsavdaroglou & Petropoulou, 2016) can be observed (Platanos, Lesbos Solidarity, MUSAferat, No border, independent advocates and others collectivities).

The agreement between the EU and Turkey of March 2016 has contributed to the change in the perception of the migratory phenomenon on the island (Petropoulou, 2017), both on the part of the refugees and on the part of the local people. They have transformed it from an issue of human solidarity to one that is based on institutional-

ized, regularized, and finally inhumane process. To a similar conclusion comes the analysis of the role of public institutions in Lesbos during the “migration crisis” carried out by Psimitis, Georgoulas & Nagopoulos (2017).

After this agreement, various participatory-research studies show that the new arrivals perceive the island as a “beautiful prison”. We also note the change in the opinions of the new arrivals towards the inhabitants of the island. The decision to transform the Moria camp into a “hotspot” (i.e. a Reception & Identification Center) and the creation of different types of enclosed spaces within this space, together with attempts to criminalize the solidararians through the (mass) media, to institutionalize the control and punishment of new arrivals after March 2016 and the arrival and operation of large NGOs, have markedly changed the character of the island, contributing to a new socio-spatial segregation that reproduces the old divisions.

After the agreement, the migrant population has to wait up to two years on the island to continue the trip to Athens and then to Northern Europe, with this last destination becoming an unrealizable dream. Thus, in the Moria hotspot, riots and fires, major hunger strikes (which have had a limited impact) and even attempted suicides have started taking place. And, step by step, the population of the island became habituated with the situation. Everything happens as if nothing has happened.

The generalized increase of insecurity for the newcomers is evident in the Moria hotspot, both inside and outside (lack of hygiene etc.), especially when their number exceeds the limits of the hotspot capacity. The Moria hotspot is transformed into a post-modern complex panoptic space (Tsianos & Kuster, 2016) where irregularity is legalized within a complex system of controls and personal relationships. The confidentiality requirements of most of the large NGOs involve a lack of transparency in the flow of information. It must be said that this is not a generalized situation all over the island. In other cases, such as in the “Kara Tepe” municipal camp, in the “PIKPA” solidarity camp (Lesvos solidarity¹) and even in the refugee housing in the inner city, the situation is much more favourable, since a sense of general well-being has been achieved.

The Greek State is currently operating in a permanent “state of emergency”, in which extreme poverty and abandonment of these new “pariahs of society” (Agamben, 2004; Sparke, 2006) is due both to the mismanagement of the regularization processes and to the biopolitics strategy incorporated into this context (a permanent

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“state of emergency”). Migrants can’t share the public spaces of the city with the inhabitants and tourists because they are persecuted by the repeated controls of a multinational police force (which force them to return to the hotspot if they do not have legal papers). As a result, successful interpersonal relationships of mutual respect are suspended in a living eco-landscape of permanent restriction and humiliation. While the police forces reinforce their presence in the city, the city loses its functions of care and solidarity. At the same time, the media tend to magnify the incidences of petty theft and burglary. Within such a socially complex situation, the attitudes of some islanders has begun to shift to racism, and very often the open harassment of sedentary protesting refugees (including mothers and babies) in the central square of Mytilene during April of 2018.

Despite this situation, some new collectives started to exert pressure for the recognition of the richness of trans-culturality: Mosaik², The Coral (choirs of children and adults), Legal Center of Lesbos, workshops cross-cultural schools, Micros Dounias, Chirco Bahalo, associative cafe and restaurants, etc. A trans-culturality is been created, not only as a result of migrants arrival from all over the world, but also of those people who come to help and launch new initiatives from civil society. Some groups that oppose to detention centres (such as Musaferrat³) and criticize racist practices (Anti-racist Observatory of the University of Aegean⁴, Observatory of the Refugee and Migration Crisis in the Aegean⁵, anti-fascist assemblies^{6,7}, teachers’ collectives, doctors, lawyers, journalists and independent artists etc.) play an important role against emerging racist / fascist practices, but that is not enough. The important thing is the role they have in the creation of an anti-racist habitus.

REFLECTIONS ABOUT HORIZONTAL SOLIDARITY AND CULTURAL GROUPS

In my study (in process) with different solidarity and cultural groups that work with assemblies and “horizontality”, I perceived that some of those groups seem to have the intension of becoming a political subject through their actions while some other clearly deny such a perspective. Some groups are more restricted in their main activ-

ity, changing only slightly through the interaction with other groups. Finally, there are groups playing the role of place of interaction and fruitful meeting that lead to multiplication through “rhizomes” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980). The individuals participating in all these collectivities may come from quite different social groups, may live either in central or peripheral areas of the city, popular or middle class neighborhoods, but they all have something in common: the need for free expression through artistic path and, as a counter-power, the need to resist against their sociopolitical, financial and cultural repression by the state and upper-class institutions.

Some of these collectivities perceive art as a path of resistance against the dominant system, some other as a creative path of new structures, new ideas and new narratives: the common feature of all is their existence as “creative resistances”. The interactive meetings between all these collectivities are usually ephemeral and they take more serious organizational dimension only during the explosion of major social and political events following the needs of these social struggles and also during the period of several political and social festivals. According to Castells, if my way to build my experience reinforces some systems of power, then the struggle is now in the socialized communication fighting for the liberation of the mind (Castells, 2012). If the contemporaneous information war is a conflict with history, an attempt to destroy the roots, a preventive war against memory (Virilio, 2004), social networks that are built underground at this moment are the solidarity cracks (Holloway, 2010) that changes the codes of the dominant capitalist system. “Critical artistic practices are those that, in a variety of ways, play a part in the process of disarticulation/rearticulation, which characterizes counter-hegemonic politics” (Mouffe, 2008).

Therefore, my reflection on the issue of what kind of elements could characterize the existence and actions of a poetic social movement concludes to the following basic principles that question the existing dominant codes (Petropoulou, 2018):

- Independence from political parties and private economic interests.
- Openness and free interaction with other social movements and collectivities.
- Participatory Democracy (through the most immediate possible ways).
- Cultivation of a different relation with land and life (eco-balanced living).
- Recognition of a different gender-relation (critical to patriarchy).
- Use of a poetic language as a signifying practice.

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- Practice of art actions that come from the heart of the city's inhabitants and not just as an artistic ornament.
- Understanding of the difference of "the other".
- Acceptance of sensitivity as a drive not for condemnation but as a creative force of the social movement.
- Understanding of personal-time as a special key to coexist with the other.
- Encompass of rage organized or not, but always poetic and creative.
- Genuine relationships bonds in daily life and self-sufficiency of basic survival needs.
- Recognition that small everyday things play an important role.

The political practices, that these collectivities adopt, are multi-complex: ne group intent to become a political subject while another clearly denies such a perspective. Some groups are more restricted in their main activity while there are other groups playing the role of place of interaction and fruitful meeting that lead to multiplication through rhizomes. The most important feature is to consciously try not to dominate the network, but listen to the rest of the participants.

In the case of Lesbos, all these collectivities try to create spaces of encounter without discriminations of gender, cultural and religion preferences, and speak about the abolition of human exploitation. In all these spaces all participants discover all "other" participants, and try to discover and participate in the city with no discriminations. All these collectivities try to construct the "right to the city" in the quotidian life; try to change stereotypes about the other and step-by-step change aspects of the habitus of discrimination. Sometimes, this happens through reference to an older habitus of "tradition of rebellion", including acceptance of "the different", already constructed in Lesbos Island from the past during repeated migration flows. Sometimes this is impossible because the habitus of segregation and discrimination is very profound in quotidian practices; but the path of music, dance, theater, education and quotidian practices, step-by-step, change aspects of this habitus.

Change the codes of communication - change the practices of discrimination in the quotidian life - change this habitus! Reclaim the habitus of tradition of rebellion in a contemporary cultural constellation of diversities. This is the bet. If one paraphrases the words of John Holloway (2010), the poetic urban social movement actions would

be part of “the millions of bees bites” making the revolution happen now and every day by breaking capitalist social relations in a continuous break process, and finally contributing to the redefinition and eventual creation of a poetic rebel urban space, not only to the economic reproduction of urban space.

NOTES

1. <https://lesvossolidarity.org/en/>
2. <https://lesvosmosaik.org>
3. <http://musaferat.espivblogs.net/en/>
4. <http://antiracist-observatory-uoa.blogspot.com/p/normal-0-false-false-false-el-x-none-x.html>
5. <https://refugeeobservatory.aegean.gr>
6. <https://lesvos-against-fascism.espivblogs.net>
7. <https://www.facebook.com/antifalesvos/>

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8

Fixing ruptures in the neighborhood¹

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And when my mind is wandering

There I will go

And it really doesn't matter if I'm wrong I'm right

Where I belong I'm right

Where I belong.

The Beatles, Fixing a Hole

Lyrics by Paul McCartney

INTRODUCTION

At the edge of winter and spring 2017 the call for papers of the conference Contested Borderscapes conference caught my eye. After the intense experience of leading the applied interdisciplinary project Memory of Roma Workers (Sidiropulu Janku 2015) I remained attracted to the alternative formats, so call for not only presentations, but also workshops and artistic interventions seemed like a very logic sequel for my work. As it often happens, I wrote my abstract warily, but urgently at the same time,

I felt rush from inside. Nothing and no one urged me to sign in for the conference, yet I felt the need and temptation to try something out of the box. Later at the edge of Spring and Summer, when I started to put together the travel means, I was deciding between more academic and more experimental contribution one more time. With the awareness of risk of the failure my choice might bring, and with the awareness I can afford this risk, since the funding for the travel expenses is not bound to any scientific grant, I decided to go for a more experimental format.

Lesvos has always been a place of moved and ever changing history of inhabitants and political affiliations. Second half of the 20th century *mélanged* this already complicated spawn with massive growth of tourism. Local inhabitants now have to face other “hybrid users of the space/place” – the refugees and clients of international network of smugglers in one person. The political borders determine creating the social boundaries, the pragmatic process of looking after arriving people’s basic existential needs strengthens the existing structures that might as well deepen the potential ruptures between locals and newcomers. I planned to focus on less political layer of ruptures rooted in the day-to-day life of a space/place, the one of neighborhood.

Being an ethnographic sociologist with an experience of participatory/action research, I decided to apply diverse methods of creating a dialogue. I understand dialogue as a form of bridging boundaries on individual, social and structural level. The emotions were welcomed into the creative process as an ingredient to work with reflexively, not the determinative principal leading the process. Due to the placing my contribution to conventional presentation and discussion based parallel session, I was aware I will not have much space for experimenting with presentation of the results itself. At the end I choose set of pictures followed by reading my analytic diary and invitation of audience into creating origami boats, in order to bring in some tangible transforming element into the room.

The term discursive sub-political intervention originated from the conceptual debates above the project Memory of Roma Workers. Its meaning refers to avoiding disproving the conflicting arguments (in the context of Lesvos situation in Autumn 2017 this would be securitization discourse on migration and spectacular presentation of migration), with the aim of disqualify or persuade the rival, rather focusing

on bringing in new layers of meanings, that are bound into the daily experience of bearers of chosen social phenomena (in the context of Lesvos situation in Autumn 2017 this would be everyday neighborhood experience with common dwelling of old settlers, tourist and asylum seekers) in order to propose more vivid and enjoyable forms of everyday interactions in shared spaces, and possibilities of co-creation valuable elements (possibly, but not necessarily material) of everyday life for everybody engaged in the process. As such the discursive sub-political interventions are bound in modern individualistic understanding of human beings, but equally emphasize the value of dialogue and cooperation as necessary means of expressing the humanity.

To fulfill my aim, I decided to combine observations, walks and interviews in the chosen neighborhood, I did realized online pre-research before my travel to Lesvos, and I included analysis from the research project Political Participation among Refugees in Austria and the Czech Republic: Biographical Perspectives (PARAC), that we conducted with my colleagues from the Center for the Cultural Sociology of Migration Bernadette Nadya Jaworsky and Radka Klvaňová in 2016.

I am now inviting the reader to join me in this socio-spatial experience of looking for the proper discursive sub-political intervention in chosen neighborhood of Lesvos. I combine field notes, analytical and poetic notes with interview transcripts and visual materials, leading towards the proposed intervention. To some it may seem like sort of a traveler's diary, and they will be to an extent right. As Alain de Botton states in the *Art of Travel* (2004), traveling is more than physical dislocation. It is a state of mind, analytical activity. The perspective of a traveler (which I as a matter of fact was) enlightens the thousands of refugees' experience in past three years in Lesvos in the proper light for the suggested intervention.

LOCATION: GREEK ISLAND LESVOS, CAPITAL CITY MYTILENE, OLD HARBOR

Going through the Astra flying agency magazine on board of the plain form Munich makes me think about the Greek identity. There is definitely blue color, hope. Fatalism, humbleness and pride. Fisherman also comes to idea. The islands. The adver-

tisement of Victor distillery (n.d.) has light blue logo and depicts part of fisherman's body pulling the fishnet to the fishing boat, sea surface and includes slogan "Proud as Greek". Another advertisement is for the beer named 56 Isles (n.d.) and depict dark blue bottle of beer lying on the sea shore.

There are about 90.000 inhabitants in Lesvos, out of that 15 000 in Mytilene. The estimation is that around 6 000 refugees were in the camps in Autumn 2017, but it was probably even more, and the sanitary conditions were horrible, especially in the camp Moria (Deutsche Welle 2017). Later on when I speak to one of the inhabitants of Moria camp, he describes: *"Usually the camp inhabitants living in Moria look rougher and more devastated by living in the camp, to an extent you can tell difference on the street. This place is overcrowded and violent."* I am aware that these urgent and humanitarian issues have to be looked after with the highest priority, I am putting them aside in order to look at the everyday life in neighborhood, that has not stop since Summer 2015, even though it has sure been severely influenced by the events.

When we are landing, I am looking out of the airplane window, seeing some square buildings in open landscape, perhaps the detention center. My local landlord is waiting for me in the airport. He knows what is my interest in coming to an island and he is introducing me Lesvos. He mentions two refugee camps, Kara Tepe and Moria, not the third possibility for refugees, initiative PIKPA. We drive through the Mytilene city center, we pass people bathing in the sea. *"People are still swimming!"* I say. *"Yes. Yesterday I went fishing and the sea had 21 degrees. Some people still swam."* Lately, he speaks more about fishing as a way of life and dealing with the life events: *"We are all trying to help them. Once I was fishing and there was a boat full of people. They just left them between Turkish and Greek waters. They just left them there. So I went to them, wanting to help them. But, but there was too many people."* I also open the issue of lived Greek-Turkish relationships, Turkey is on sight distance from Lesvos. *"Do you ever go to Turkey?"*, I ask. *"I was there four or five times. But all the Greek buildings that are there, the Turks leave them to be destroyed. This I do not like."* I want to know more from the other side: *"And how about Turks? Do they ever come here?"*, I continue. *"Not so much, but last two years they started to come here more often."*

As any other location, the social relations of Lesvos are dynamic and ever changing. But, as is the case of many locations, big historical events tend to frame the location as social space (Lefebvre 1991), by material changes and organization of political and economic life, as well as by conceptualization of a space by its permanent and temporary dwellers. Last meaning-making big historical event so far was something Nicolas DeGenova named migration spectacle (2013). In Lefebvrian sense, this historical event reached the coasts of Lesvos way before it reached the front pages of world-wide mass and social media. Americans Robin and Robert Jones travel to Lesvos regularly since 1974 and they have summer house there. In April 2015 they witnessed the start of massive arrivals of people on boats in the Lesvos area where they possess a Summer house:

“They were dining with friends at their beautiful home when they looked out the window and off in the distance approaching perilously in the sea was an inflatable raft filled over capacity with people wearing bright orange life vests. There were mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, babies and grandparents. It would be the first of many rafts to come ashore to their tiny town of 1,000 people.” (Melancon 2017)

Later that year, the estimation of daily arrivals to this village was 1,000 people. This overwhelming and heartbreaking situation was repeating on many shores of Lesvos. The Jones started art project for refugee children and published a book (Jones, Jones 2016). Robert Jones describes:

For our tiny village, it was very difficult as there was no organized help at all. None of us knew what to do as we weren't trained on how to handle the situation. (Melancon 2017)

I wonder, how life is for refugees in Lesvos. My informant says *“all the dark people are refugees”*, as if before their arrival, Lesvos were a mono-ethnic place. We drive to local Statue of Liberty; neither the name nor the pose are random, it was made by Greek artists as direct reminiscence to the one standing in New York (Section n.d.). Several people are sunbathing there, some of them probably refugees, if I would take my informant's description seriously. This is the place of encounter, the true public space. Sun, beaches, small picturesque Greek town.



Figure 1. Statue of Liberty in Mytilene by Konstantinos Mavroudis sometime after Summer 2015 and by author in September 2017

We are passing by a woman with wounded face and two children. I wonder about the horrible things that have happened to her, but in the same time, I do not see how pity would be a way straightforward. I do not see on what basis we can meet anyway. Not because of her face, but because probable language barriers between us, and possible other barriers as well. Even though we are probably both double mums, gender or family situation is not usual common base for creating relationship for me. But gender comes to my mind anyway. I ask my informant about the safety in Mytilene. I am concerned about the general rules of lonely women wondering around the city. He answers with clear reference to the presence of refugees, as he mentioned some robbery and raping in Lesbos after the big amount of refugees came to the area: *“Yes, it is safe. For now.”* I hear tension in his voice, suggesting that the situation can escalate eventually, but I do not ask any further.

Seeing refugees downtown of Lesbos reminds me of a woman we interviewed for

the PARAC research, who used the word “hell” associated with something else than war events. In her case the narrator refers to the beginning of her residency in the Czechia, a place where she came to find secure refuge:

Actually, my decision to leave was, in the moment when I saw my daughter, like, she was almost 3 years, she was down, afraid, because we started to hear a lot of shooting and it expecting when you... When you, eh, start to listen to sound of shooting, for sure a lot of... What it's called... Shot will come from window or from... So she was really so afraid, with very... Very, like, red face, she was... We have couch, she was laying under it and she was like: “Oh my mommy, I'm afraid, I'm afraid.” So, actually, in that moment, I w... I said: “Okay, I will not let my daughter live on this life.” This is the main reason for me to leave. I was so afraid about her. I give her life there, so it's my responsibility. I know here it will give me a lot of difficult stuff, but I take decision. And really like when I came to here, first year for me it was like a hell. Really, it was very, very bad situation for me. For example, my two sisters take the decision to return back. They don't take life here how it's hard. (PARAC 2016)

How would that women we passed by at the Statue of Liberty describe her first days, weeks, months in Europe?

Bing aware that the intervention should take place in semi-private, neighborhood context, the area around The statue of Liberty does not seem proper. It is a public space, but it is surrounded by museums and business buildings rather than residential houses, and if these are here they are rather villas behind high fences, not creating the neighborhood semi-private dynamics. We continue towards the Kara Tepe refugee camp, that is near by Old Harbor in the next gulf, the area seems to be more appropriate for the intervention. There is Sinikismos residential area near harbor, and Kara Tepe refugee camp up the hill, about half an hour walking distance.

We are passing by Tavernas, following up the hill towards the refugee camp. We meet several small groups of people streaming from and to camp. “*That is how they spend their day. Some of them may go out and they have to return for the night.*”, says my guide. I decide to explore closer the neighborhood life, both in the Sinikismos neighborhood and around the Kara Tepe refugee camp – the camp itself is closed up place, to an extent total institution (Goffman 1961, Opondo & Rinelli 2015), and see if there are any linkages that might have been used to fix the existing ruptures.



Figure 2. Sinikismos neighborhood viewed from the Old harbor. Kara Tepe refugee kamp is located right from the port warehouse at the horizon.

DAILY LIFE OF THE SINIKISMOS NEIGHBORHOOD

I wake up, hearing slight cracking sound. The rising wind coming from the open sea is playing with the balcony door. The sun is about to rise, the scene is very poetic. Sea wind. Waves hitting the shore. The omnipresent sound pervading all life, happy and broken, in Lesvos. Sea. In the Sinikismos neighborhood of Lesvos, every day refugees, tourists and old-settlers stare at the sea many times. The view at sea is always there, and bears numerous meanings, associations, it is with all its sounds and expressions as a huge being with which people live side by side. Both, tourists as well as refugees do not come to intervene with local people more than necessary. In terms of quality of relationships, it is similarly tricky for local social dynamics, it only has different economy. All come with hopes for bettering their existence, none intend to stay. Local people stay. Refugees who stay usually stay because they are stuck, not because they intend to. Tourists stay as long as they have money and time available. What valuable social relationships may be built upon such temporary and provisionary conditions of many?

I am walking through the area, from the church to small harbor it is less than 10 minutes. Inside the area there are several grocery stores, family houses, some of them wide open in the evening, old men sitting in the entry hall. Some of the houses have outside benches, but they are built in the house outskirts, so it is clear they are not meant to be used by the by-passers. Unlike in the downtown of Mytilene, I am not meeting any refugee-like-looking people in the alleys of Sinikismos. The grocery store cashier is very surprised I am not Greek, he is pointing at my nose, at my face, the general visage, perhaps he is also not expecting foreigner in his store. Seeing how people are dressed in the streets of Mytilene I changed my bag for less fancy one, did it help me to melt in, making myself less visible? Going from the store towards the harbor makes me think about the local ruptures, like the abandon store one street down the road. Another old man in the entry hall of the house greets me. Having a grocery store plastic bag, I feel more local now, I can perform something ordinary, “in-the-box” while dancing the street ballet (Jacobs 1961) with local inhabitants, without much intervening into their routines.



Figure 3. Walking in the Sinikismos neighborhood.

The walk, shopping and small talk is nice, but I also feel vulnerable and rush back

home before it gets dark. I am not sure about the rules of lonely women moving in the streets, I don't see many of them. On my way back I can see some fishermen in the harbor, they are probably refugees, because they do not have a boat, or a rod, just a fishing line. And they are younger and their skin is darker, than is the fisherman on the Victor distillery advertisement.

On another time, I ask my informant to take me up the hill to see the Kara Tepe refugee camp. We are riding up the hill and there we turn the car. I only watch, I do not feel like taking pictures from the car, it would seem to me disrespectful. There is big colorful inscription "*WELCOME*" on the fence, I am thinking about the irony of the saying, even though I understand its therapeutic and political intention. There is sprayed notice "*no human is illegal*" on the concrete pillar and on each side of it the carousel animal figures. I find carnival ethos quite fitting to the migration in contemporary Europe. The roles of victims and perpetrators are being reversed; no rules really function; only it is tragic, very tragic carnival this time and we can see no ending. The third artistic input into the area of Kara Tepe refugee camp I can see is the statue of two hands holding each other in a securing gesture. The statue is vertical, it associates pulling someone from water, I suppose. Here comes the sea again. In Lesbos, the sea cannot be separated from migration experience, as it cannot be separated from life experience, mere existence as such.

Going back down the hill offers a side view of the camp. It looks built into the hillside quite integrally, if I would not be informed there is a camp, I would not have noticed it, which I consider positive, it provides its inhabitants some symbolic privacy. The road is abandoned, no-space, like it is usual in Greece; besides several graffiti and a sidewalk, there is no sign of possibilities of making the sidewalk homey, therefore it only supports that the surroundings of a camp do not really function as urban neighborhood, that is obvious from the look from above. Inhabiting the corridor itself would not change it, but may everyday walks to and from town more pleasant to those undergoing it regularly.



Figure 4. Graffiti on the corridor down to the Old Harbor, daily visual companion of Kara Tepe refugee camp inhabitants on their ways down town. Source: Google Maps 2017.

Later on I am looking at the pictures and online maps from the area, thinking about existing ruptures, and how can small moves and actions help dealing with them in order to at least minimize them. I think it would only be fair to admit, that ruptures do and will exist there; as in any social landscape.

RUPTURED SOCIAL SPACES

In 2007 Columbian artist Doris Salcedo realized the first installation changing the very space of Turbine Hall in Tate Modern gallery, questioning the sacred, untouchable status of the gallery as a space of encounter with artistic contents. Salcedo installed huge opening rupture on the floor and named it with a Biblical name Shibboleth, referring to the mechanism of distinguishing between those who belong and those who remain damned.

“The history of racism’, Salcedo writes, ‘runs parallel to the history of modernity, and is its untold dark side’. For hundreds of years, Western ideas of progress and

prosperity have been underpinned by colonial exploitation and the withdrawal of basic rights from others. Our own time, Salcedo is keen to remind us, remains defined by the existence of a huge socially excluded underclass, in Western as well as post-colonial societies.” (Tate 2007a).

The Tate Modern gallery archived four digital pictures of the art piece, unfortunately not a single one includes the visitors of Turbine Hall (Tate 2007b). When I visited the installation in 2007, it was not the rupture on the Turbine Hall floor itself, but tangling of Turbine Hall visitors around, and in it, that caught my attention.



Figure 5. Visitors of the Shibboleth installation in Tate Modern Turbine Hall, October 2007.

Once there is a rupture, people are driven to react, even the ignorance is a reaction of a sort. In case of social ruptures, the diverse reactions change the appearance of the rupture, its nature and its effect. As Robert Jones evaluates the actions he and his

wife took in Lesvos, including publishing the book reflecting the art workshops with refugee children: *“It was our way of healing from the experience. We couldn’t turn away from what had happened.”* (Melancon 2017)

The notion of rupture is establishing principle of biographic sociology. Narrating through, and out of the experience of rupture has not only therapeutic effect on human being, it also uncovers existing social structures and norms, how they are perceived by people as social actors. The mechanism of restoration the rupture is thus leading principle of constructing social reality as understandable and viable. That is why often biographic research focuses on either visible ruptures, like East-West European biographies (Breckenr et al. 2000), or uncertain and emerging identity projects (Nurse 2013).

Neighborhood as everyday life place with manageable size and essential influence on social life of its dwellers is well-fitting scale for looking for rupturing elements of social life and finding micro solutions or transformations of them. That is how I understand Centner’s notion of microcitizenship (2011), where everyday claim for space use predominates political identities or economic power. In Centner’s understanding, rupture may be understood as set of conflicting or competitive claims that are being negotiated. The possible processes of negotiating these claims by various actors are of significant importance for understanding the nature of ruptures in neighborhood. Focus on neighborhood is helping to take into consideration dwellers with different life styles, access to capitals (including social media) while doing so, and therefore for example not taking out the oldest generations of dwellers, that are essential part of Greek islands neighborhoods. Here are six notions of ruptures in Sinikismos neighborhood I took into consideration when working on the discursive intervention plan.

- For Kara Tepe dwellers, there is not real neighborhood; their everyday urban landscape is a rupture itself. There might be the neighborhood dynamics inside the camp, but I had not the chance to examine it, and it will have specific dynamic of a total institution influencing the neighborhood relations, therefore I consider my analytical tools as not fitting it.
- Inside the Sinikismos neighborhood, I am facing functioning neighborhood (people grating each other on the streets, having small chats in grocery store etc.), it is only too private and not enough secondary in terms of neighborhood

social relationships. Therefore the little harbor by the statue seems like to be a good spot for the intervention, since it is more semi-private, proper mixture of personal and distant social ties that create possibilities to socialize with each other on the civic base.

- With refugees living near Sinikismos, the Sinikismos street dynamics did not seem to change, the meeting zone is the Mitilinis-Thermis street, so this is another possible urban space for the intervention.
- There are internal ruptures inside Sinikismos, visually expressed by abandoned shops and yards.
- There is historical rupture present; inhabitants of Sinikismos are looking at the Turkish land from their windows. The island belonged to the Osman Empire until 1912, we can expect there is still a lot going on inside the emotional landscape of old-settled families. Actual political situation of Greek-Turkish relationships may activate and reinforce possible conflicting, or even traumatic layers of Greek-Turkish relationships expressed in daily private lives of Sinikismos inhabitants.
- There is a rupture opening through all Europe and democratic world; it is being pronounced by lately published book *The Great Regression* edited by German sociologist Heinrich Geiselberger (2017). The rupture between those understanding and supporting opening up of the globalized world and those considering themselves being losers of this process. The latter approach was expressed by the “Krypteia” group bomb attack threat that happen at the beginning of the *Contesting Borderscapes* conference that was even covered in local online media Emprosnet. It is a burning and tricky challenge to think about our actions in a way that they do not support growing of this rupture and push politically half-heated people not being involved in the political debates and civic actions to choose sides.

COMMUNITY FISHING AS THRIVING TIME-SPACE PLAY

I am listing through the conference materials, looking at the Mosiak center. It is striking there is a literacy club, one of the taboos of contemporary Europe; the fact

that there are still illiterate people, and they do not have to be newcomers. We offer what we believe in – education. Universal inclusive instrument. For refugees, as well as for not-welcoming domestic population. I am thinking about something not-educating, just being for a while, taking into account local natural and social conditions, permanent as well as temporary. Leading people together without breaking existing barriers between them too fast or too much, so they may feel safe, keeping their shells, just peeking out for a while, with the possibility to back off again, gaining feeling of security of encounter, step by step.

Based on my observations, interview inputs, reflections and theoretical reasoning, I decided to suggest the activity of community fishing. Fishing is omnipresent in Lesbos. Old settlers fish, refugees fish (not only in Old Harbor, they can be seen fishing in the very downtown of Mytilene as well), tourists visit fishermen's tavernas, and sometimes fish for fun too. Fishing seems like a possibility to let hard thoughts go away for a while. Also, it is sort of a men's club. I happen to be thinking about something for men, because I do not see many women in the streets anyway. If I was to suggest something female-friendly, it seems that I would have to follow women to their spaces, that are not self-evident in Mytilene. Symbolically speaking, fishing is a play with time. You have all the time and yet, you must not miss the right time to tug the fishing line and catch the fish. It is also a play with life value. You may take a life of a fish and thus giving yourself some existential credit of a hunter. Small victories in the line of hopeless days. It can still be traumatizing for refugees to get back to the sea, but some of them might be ready and appreciate this experience, moving out of the land they are stuck in for a while. In the Old Harbor of Sinikismos, there could be a fishing boat to rent with local guide. The price could sponsor one free rental for refugees. It could be organized by local community center, disposable in one of the Tavernas of café nearby, for example the one stating "we speak Dutch here". In virtual space, there could be organized the fishing contest on Instagram, the winner may get a fishing device.



Figure 6. Old Harbor without and with a fisherman.

Additionally, in order to succeed in realization phase of the intervention, I suggested set of general statements for the intervention, that in this case ended up to be the small local and social business project, but could have taken the form of site-

specific installations, material changes (for example accommodating and furnishing the corridor to Kara Tepe refugee camp), or suggestion for new municipality service for local inhabitants, the possibilities are endless.

- In neighborhood life, “the locals” should predominate “the globals” (Bauman 1998).
- There are different sorts of locals. Those living in the place for generations, but also those living in the area for days only. Citizenship or permanent residence is too rough tool to recognize locals these days. The first sign of being local is washing your laundry on regular basis in the area.
- Even in the most rural areas, there can be no functional neighborhood without generally accessible public space. The possibility of meeting a stranger should be embodied even into the smallest urban landscape.
- The dialogue is more important than universal agreement.
- No one is perfect, even more so in digital simulacra. Therefore share good stuff and inspiration with all; and communicate critique with those who can learn from it in a secured environment. It may be harmful and thus contra productive to mistake social media with the media.
- Very few works is worth not sleeping. Fair-trade is important, for each side of any social interaction, including helping volunteers, social workers and researchers.

CONCLUSION

The discursive, sub-political interventions in urban neighborhoods have specific conditions under which they can be useful and vivid tool to ameliorate the neighborhood social space. They cannot be applied without existence of public space, possibility of open dialogue and civic negotiation. They should not mix up with humanitarian aid, or more complex spatial reorganizations. In such cases they may be supplement to the process, but should not have a leading voice in such essential transformations. Such interventions are rather subtle tools of making social spaces more conscious, reflexive and, hopefully, more viable for all the social space dwellers, no matter how

permanent or temporary (I thank here Saara Mani for dragging my attention to the notion of dwelling).

The Old Harbor community fishing intervention was supposed to invite seemingly non-belonging dwellers of the space, in this case the Kara Tepe refugee camp inmates, to feel belonging on the fair level, not giving them the false impression that they belong similarly as old settlers – such gestures may only grow temporary dwellers' frustration. For old settling dwellers it was supposed to function as gentle invitation to get out of their houses, not for long, not on regular basis, and to do something they like to do, and maybe did not do for some time, due to economic, or biographic reasons. These two kinds of dwellers were supposed to meet based on common interest, but in the third territory, not dominated by either of these social spaces – the local social business fishing boat. New structure could open new possibilities for the forms of socializing, and thus emphasizing the ever-changing nature of geopolitical order. Fishing side-by-side, not against each other, or forcibly together, could create set of micro situations, when people would start to recognize each other on the streets, and eventually greet each other also in Old Harbor, not only inside Sinikismos, or probably inside the Kara Tepe refugee camp.

Due to the capacity reasons I did not have a chance to bring the idea into the realization phase. This would take some more weeks and resources, local partners, patience and possible changes as the process would start. Since Autumn 2017 the situation in Lesvos, and in entire Aegan See region and surroundings changed, so I would have to go back and see how things are at the moment in order to start over. The discursive sub-political interventions need to be freshly designed in order to leave behind permanent inputs, otherwise they might miss the target. As Paul McCartney wrote, “Where I belong I’m right”, and without dwelling, there can be no belonging.

NOTES

1. This text would not be possible without the intellectual support of The Centre for the Cultural Sociology of Migration at Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno. I would not be able to travel to Mytilene without the generosity of the Green Foundation, Bratislava. I am

grateful to the organizers of the conference Contested Borderscapes for creating this stimulating and importunate event. Last but not least, I thank the people of Lesbos. It is not by chance they were nominated to the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016 for their actions during demanding years 2015-2016. And I thank the leisure time fisherman in Mytilene for keep on trying to pull the line in the very right moment.

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9

Ecologies of migration. Metabolic borderscapes and relational architecture

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RETHINKING MIGRATION

Population thinking

There is something fascinating that is intrinsic to the phenomenon of migration. The cyclical mass movement of large mammals across vast continents, the seasonal transatlantic flights undertaken with astounding precision and agility by entire populations of small, fragile birds, or the imperceptible journeys of microscopic life forms within certain metabolisms, are in themselves incredibly strong accounts of the role of migration in the life histories of organisms. Without migration, understood as the spatiotemporal and/or metabolic movements and displacements of organisms and populations, usually from energy-poor to energetically rich milieus, life forms would not

achieve the necessary equilibrium to exist. There is undisputed consensus among the life sciences, ecology, evolutionary biology, population studies, and natural history that migration is an indispensable and fundamental factor that not only guarantees the immediate survival of a population, but that it also propels difference and change over time, thus ensuring genetic variation among populations, and ultimately, contributing to the evolution of life forms. Further, the phenomenon of migration allows us to understand the drivers and thresholds, behaviors, patterns and habits of migrant species, and the ecological, environmental and evolutionary effects upon entire populations and the habitats they help to shape. In this sense, migration is a relational phenomenon that constitutes not only populations but also their milieus. Migration is the precondition for the relative stability of life forms. As Colebrook (2017) argues, “life, as such, is displacement in the face of one’s milieu becoming hostile” (p. 117). Because life is dependent on movement, migration is vital for its continuation. It is movement that affords the necessary relative stability for life forms to exist, not rest. For most species migration is the rule, not the exception.

There is, however, something utterly disturbing when what we stand witness to is not a swarm of migratory monarch butterflies, but the exodus of human beings escaping war, violence, environmental catastrophes, political repression, ethnical and religious persecution, poverty, or social marginalization. The recurrent images of human bodies lifelessly floating on the ocean or stranded on the beach, of small children caged in detention centers, of young men fighting their way in camps that have lost their temporal nature, or of hoards of people towing along human caravans, speak of a reality that is difficult to digest, and which should not be normalized under any circumstance. Other mechanisms are at work in these images; they trigger different aesthetic registers and affective sensibilities than the images of migrating whales in the Pacific Ocean. Beyond the cognitive discomfort caused by the reality of these imaginaries, the affective levels that are shaken in the face of such calamitous conditions for millions of humans alert us to human life in peril, not of the continuation of life. Migration, seen in this way, is not the evolutionary journey of the human taxon, the quest for relative stability of populations of humans, or the intentional, free-willed search for ‘knowing, having and being more’ of historical human agents. It reduces human migration to its negative value. It becomes an abnormal vector of exodus and displacement.

Quite counter-intuitively, at least from a biological or evolutionary point of view, human migration is regarded as something problematic, violent, and accidental. It is read as a symptom, and as sign of imminent or ongoing crisis. Arguably, this is partly because human migration acquires an ethico-political dimension that is not conventionally present in scientific studies on migration of other non-human organisms and life forms. Migration becomes the involuntary, violent and parasitic displacement of human beings in relation to what is considered as the *proper* state, namely that of a state of guarded rest. It is stasis and enclosure that affords stability, not movement. Human migrants and human populations in exodus, become the exception, not the rule.

When the relative stability and the boundedness of milieus face the stress of multidirectional and multidimensional migration flows, they enforce a state of stasis, tending to fall back on exclusionary models that in their attempt to protect this stability, slow-down, restrict and eventually impede, free movement and displacement. In this way the whole milieu comes under threat. And it is in this situation in the socio-political domains when fear, anxiety and nostalgia take hold of the social imaginary. Refugees and migrants, as discrete identities exert significant pressure on the boundaries, thus allegedly threatening the integrity of a territory, and the assumed social identity of belonging to it.

At this juncture, several important issues become visible: the manner in which migration phenomena involving the human taxon are rendered different, or other, than those of non-human organisms, not only carries heavy undertones of typological thinking and species exceptionalism, but it also effectively objectifies the human taxon degrading it to deviant and uncertain categories such as the migrant, or the refugee. This produces the reduction of human subjectivities into diverse forms of subjectification as victimization, precariousness, and vulnerability into defining forms of a fixed, static identity (of *being* a victim, marginalized, vulnerable, poor), denying them any other ontological possibilities, including that of qualitative transformation (of *becoming* something 'else'). The questions on what constitutes 'a migrant', or 'a refugee' conventionally focus on what these constructs are, where they *originate*, how they can be measured, or even what they mean instead of focusing on their potentialities, of what they, in their becoming, are capable of *doing*. In other words, the crystalized identity of migrants or refugees as abnormal and threatening loses its sense of 'belonging', while contradictorily remaining intrinsically connected

in problematic ways to that from where it departs or originates: a state of fictitious stability and order. On the other hand, it anchors these (and other) subjectivities as key categories within artificial, sedentary models of state-formation.

From this perspective, the abnormal is precisely the sedentary and static state-model of distribution, inhabitation and classification and the problematic complicity of the construct of the 'migrant' within it. This points to the deeply rooted links of sedentarism to diverse dominant projects of state formation, the construction of society, and its cultural and territorial arrangements into bounded, legible and stable schemes and distributive models. Arguably, a narrowing vision, which claims to capture and organize an otherwise complex, threatening and messy reality, is a necessary frame to focus on -and control- particular forms of knowing, having and being. Nevertheless, such narrowing frames not only oversimplify, but also reduce reality, matter and space to their extensive, metric properties or political identities, offering static, fixed and schematic representations of it, removed as it were, from the actual phenomena to which they allude. Human migration is especially prone to the effects of such simplification, leading to a reduced understanding of the complexity of the migration phenomenon itself, the multiple, symbiotic agents that shape it, and which are shaped by it, as co-constitutive of a relational milieu, or metabolism. Understood as assemblages, as flows of desire or 'abstract machines', however, human migrations resist the neurotic drive of classification, control and subjugation. The persistence of these phenomena evidences the inability of regulatory models to ever fully capture them, and -under the logics of reduction- the futility of thinking about migration as a problem to be tackled, solved and eradicated once and for all. In the light of the alleged urgency and intensification of present day migration flows and refugee crises across the planet, it becomes evident that terms such as 'migration', 'migrant', or 'refugee', as well as those that refer to their 'stable other' ('citizen', 'nation-state', 'territory', etc.) deserve careful reconsideration and rethinking. A first step to this end is to challenge traditional sedentary logics, shifting our familiar sense of identity 'elsewhere'.

Nomadic subjectivities

In discussing the ongoing refugee crisis faced by the European Union, Rosi Bradotti

(2014) invites us to question our assumed identities from established, nation-bound points of reference. Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical concept of nomadology¹, she proposes the figure of the 'nomadic subject' as a powerful concept to rethink identity, and to conceive a social imaginary that reflects the social realities already being experienced in emerging post-nationalist politico-economic environs, or 'regions'. In Braidotti's understanding a 'nomadic subject', which actively constructs itself "in a complex and internally contradictory set of social relations" (Braidotti, 2006, p. 86) may be better equipped to undertake the difficult challenge of changing "deeply embedded habits of our imagination" (Braidotti, 2011, p. 261). Forcefully, this task requires a complete revision of the dominant modes of thought and action within which not only our identities have become encroached, but also through which these have been tied to specific geographies and territories. Although such dislocations will surely not be easy, nor come along automatically without its own perils, Braidotti's invitation to think differently about identity is crucial in the production of new —and more adequate— socio-political and spatial imaginaries and conceptualizations that may help us to envision the 'migrant' and ourselves in different terms and under other logics, namely as the becoming and coexistence of a multiplicity of nomadic subjectivities. It is at this point where we may begin exercising different forms of nomadic thought in general, and especially when dealing with phenomena of human flows and movements. When liberated from these conventionally reductive frames, a 'nomadic subject' reveals its intricate participation in an intensive ecology that not only engenders the becoming of form, matter and subjectivity, but which also re-assigns specifically human relations and practices a new role across space-time. In short, understanding migration and the migrant through nomadology opens them up to intensive thinking and transformation, and this is to regard them as processes of becoming. Becoming, as Deleuze and Guattari (2004) remind us, "... is not a correspondence between relations. It is not resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification" (p. 87).

Braidotti's nomadic thought allows us to rethink concepts conventionally associated to migration in general, and to human migration more specifically, including migrant identity, extensive space and geography, and its regulatory structures and systems such borders and jurisprudence. When challenged and problematized, these

become fields of latent potentiality and rich, productive possibilities. As such, they beg for different philosophical, theoretical and methodological approaches to the urgent questions raised by the actually existing and fully real phenomena of contemporary human migrations from symbiotic, metabolic, relational and ecological perspectives. This implies that not only will the ethico-political horizon have to be expanded, opened up to new possibilities, and articulated, but also that new ethico-aesthetic paradigms will have to be explored if what we are after is to participate in the co-creation a social imaginary and an ecology of human praxis that reflects and enables nomadic thinking, without succumbing to the fear and anxiety of breaking away from sedentary modes of being (Aldea, 2014).

RETHINKING THE BORDER

Architectural border topologies

Until relatively recently, the relation of the discipline of architecture to the phenomenon of migration was not an obvious, straightforward affair, and as such, it remained largely unexplored, especially in the education of architects. Currently, however, the problematic of contemporary human migration has attracted interest in many schools of architecture around the globe, where issues relating to the phenomenon itself, its figures and types, as well as the diverse formal, structural, and programmatic architectural expressions associated to it have become popular and recurrent themes in the education of architects, informing parts of the research programs and academic curricula, and ranking high in the thematic for architectural, landscape and urban design studios. In these studios, the phenomenon of migration and its relation to the built environment are dealt with specifically as a contextual problem where architectural design in its capacity to intervene in the actualization of socio-material conditions, assumes an allegedly political agency.

The methodological approaches taken in many of these design studios do not diverge significantly from more conventional architectural project briefings, and as such, they are often driven by short analytical-empirical research periods where students study (and sometimes visit) predefined case studies embodied in emblem-

atic 'sites' within a given spatial problematic that is circumscribed within territorial, urban or social conflicts related to migration or the spatial displacement of social groups. Students then formulate a general 'position' to the topic or case at hand, and identify a project's 'object' (border typologies, i.e.) and/or its 'subject' (the migrant, the refugee, i.e.) The output is commonly presented as a 'site analysis' or 'research report' followed by much longer periods dedicated exclusively to the development of architectural *designs*, which in many cases develop only obliquely to the theoretical or analytical points of departure. In the worst of cases, these are absent, or simply abandoned during the design phase. This brings to the fore a number of prevalent problems that may be inherent to the discipline itself, but which also reveal a set of 'habits' that are perpetuated in architectural education and its design pedagogy. On the one hand, a majority of design studios is entirely *project-oriented*, emphasizing programmatic, typological and compositional models as the engines for the conceptualization of architectural designs. On the other hand, and as a consequence of architecture's own inner logics and workings, and its tendency to express reality in extensive (geometric) units and fixed 'types', it is not well equipped to grasp and represent complex, dynamic forces and intensive qualities such as those driving migration flows. It relies on mostly extensive conventions and formulas, which translate in old habits of fixing, reducing and simplifying socio-spatial-material and temporal phenomena. This ties it to sedentary logics and to its territorial centripetal pull, regardless of what the intentions of a given project might be. Often the complexity of program, composition and/or form, serves as a justification or answer to previously identified questions, and often masks the overall disconnection or lack of societal or political relevance of the design projects themselves. This design-driven *problem-solving* logic exemplifies the emphasis of design in the formalization of *solutions* for the improvement, eradication or prevention of problematic multilayered conditions from an exclusively architectural perspective. One of the main problems of this conventional approach is that it usually tends to be prescriptive, meaning that it is based on forms of inductive reasoning, which also tends to reduce social and spatial complexity to a problem/solution dialectic.

The effect of this is that, on the one hand, the empirical observations take center hold as ultimate truths or facts. On the other hand, the abuse of static represen-

tational techniques and idealizations of specific architectural logics tend to fix the image of the architectural object at the core, displacing the very practices that it is supposed to afford into a secondary plane. The formal, compositional, technological and aesthetic-representational components required in architectural design education often restrict and narrow the focus of the interventions to scales and concerns that are relevant for the architectural discipline and its objects, but which are removed from the initial *problématique* they address. This causes asymmetries and inconsistencies that create a gap between (good) intentions and a project's viability. The motivation behind many of these projects is obviously legitimate and commendable, and the architectural designs usually highly aestheticized or graphically pleasing, but the ambitions and expectations often surpass the actual possibility of their realization, or of their desired impact. One could argue that a common line that runs through many architectural design projects dealing with the complexity of contemporary phenomena such as human migration in the design studio today, beyond their utopian, reactionary or prescriptive/normative undertones, is the rather naive assumption that complex, multidimensional problems can be solved through the design of built form alone.

A recurrent subject of more critical or 'radical' design studios, however, is the *problématique* of the border condition and its geographical, territorial and spatial impact on human beings, their social relations, and their environments. These approaches focus on architecture's complicity with the *problématique* of contemporary human migration specifically through the figure of the border. The argument is that in its capacity to actively delimit, subdivide, separate, partition and control the environment and space through built form, architecture in its mainstream practice actually supports and perpetuates many of the questionable infrastructures of status quo border politics. From the design and construction of infamous border walls and crossing points, detention centers, prisons, immigration facilities, refugee camps, to the more nuanced and cosmopolitan, but equally questionable global mobility 'transferiums', architecture has played a strategic role in the logics and models that sustain, reproduce and propagate many of the structures and systems of contemporary border politics. In this regard, it is often through the figure of the border — quite literally — that architecture engages with the phenomenon of human (and non-human) migration; the figure of the border acts as a means to articulate both these apparently incommensurable

fields. This highlights the intimate relationship between architecture and the many typological variants of the border as a physical entity or territorial marker, as well as a technology of *separation*. Hence, the function of the border in its capacity to partition, segment, delimit, and ultimately exclude, as a material expression of separation, is highlighted in many inquiries of the relation of architectural design and the phenomenon of human migration.

Missing in many of these readings is a more nuanced interpretation of architecture as a *framing* operation or process, whose primary function is that of tracing and establishing *boundaries* (Cache, 1995). In this sense, Elizabeth Grosz (2008) writes that cutting space through the construction of a frame “is the very gesture that composes both house and territory, inside and outside, interior and landscape...” (p. 37). Yet, the architectural boundary is more than a separation alone: while it is indeed a framing technique that cuts into the surface of the earth and through space, hence creating the necessary spatial conditions for the establishment of an ‘inside’, (or interiority), and an ‘outside’ (or exteriority), these cuts also define a plane of composition that is able to regulate and order space and the forces that shape it. But it is the cut, and not the physical border as such, what is defining here. The cut necessarily implies that the border not only has two sides that separate two states, but a third element as well: a space in-between the two sides that touch the states, but which they can never occupy. Thomas Nail (2016) refers to this as the “fuzzy zone-like phenomenon of inclusive disjunction ... of neither/nor, or both/and” (p. 3). In this regard, Nail observes that the ‘in-betweenness’ of the border is a continuous process of “multiplication by division” (p. 3) and qualifies this division as either extensive or intensive. An *extensive* division generates an absolute break between two *quantitatively* separate and *discontinuous* entities (or states). An *intensive* division on the other hand adds new paths (forks or bifurcations) that generate *qualitative* changes to a *continuous* system (p.4). Whether the bifurcation is experienced as a continuous path by some bodies, or a discontinuity by others, the understanding of the border as an intensive phenomenon and as a continuous process (and not as a “thing”) is also what lends it the capacity to arrest or slow down not only bodies, but especially the flows, movement and forces that transverse space. Yet, this also implies that, far from being an operation that results in the simple separation of binary oppositions (of inside/outside, landscape/terri-

tory, exclusion/inclusion, and so on), or of extensive quantities /intensive qualities of movement, architectural framing simultaneously selects, connects, and redirects these flows and domains into other configurations.

Here, the architectural border acquires the specific function of an interception and filtering device — or apparatus — capable of controlling and mediating movement through semi-fixed means. Walls, fences, screens, ditches, trenches and many other formal or typological figures of the border are understood not only as territorial markers of the limits of nation-states, i.e., but as instruments capable of articulating highly diverse and dynamic material and immaterial flows, thus securing the continuous processes that maintain the border and activate it as a filter that decides which paths continue, and which are redirected elsewhere (Nail, 2016, p. 4). The border as an active process of bifurcation continuously redirects flows of people and things across or away from itself, and as such it is never static or singular. It is always mobile and always multiple. The common idea that people have of the border as a fixed division wall is inaccurate, as Nail and others have convincingly shown. Etienne Balibar (2012) for instance, argues that walls are not passive structures capable of stopping movement by themselves, but rather that they become a point or “line of crystallization” where specific border technologies and other phenomena such as violence play out (p. 10).

The border hence acquires a machinic dimension, or as Nail (2016) refers to it, as a motor: “the mobile cutting blades of society” (p. 7). Understandings of border technologies as kinetic phenomena however surpass the extensive and spatial interpretation of the border as a static, but permeable screen through which bodies and flows move. As Nail writes, “the movement of the border is not a metaphor; the border is literally and actually in motion in several ways” (p. 6). From geomorphology to territorial conflicts, whether ‘artificial’ (socially constructed) or ‘natural’, borders are engaged in material processes of deep (planetary) time that transcend the scale and time of nation-states and society, but which nonetheless continue to interact with human practices. These border topologies operate horizontally and vertically in much more complex temporal registers and scales from the ones from where borders are conventionally apprehended (Biemann, 2016). Further, these border topologies question the linear focus and two-dimensional approach to cartography and mapping. (Blake, 2005; quoted in Awan, 2016, p. 280). This is especially relevant for architec-

ture and other material-discursive practices that rely on cartographic and representational techniques.

Following Bernard Cache's (1995) thoughts, Thomas Nail (2016) argues that, "architecture should not be primarily conceived of in terms of space (simultaneity) or time (succession), but as the outcome of mobile processes of ... bordering" (p. 48). This brings architecture closer to a reinterpretation of the border not as separation per se, but as a *topological* entity constituted by the techniques and apparatuses of bordering (Awan, 2016, p. 279). Here the border is understood not as fixed form moving across space and time, but instead in relation to bordering processes (Adkins & Lury, 2012); as a dynamic entity that is constructed through an ecology of diverse flows, forces, agents and bordering practices. From a topological point, the border becomes a fluid and relational phenomenon, constantly in motion, which surpasses its function as a geopolitical entity. Topological thinking regards the border as intensive and ecological.

Hence, it is important to develop methodological approaches that generate 'units of measure' and value relationally, and not as external, extensive metrics (Adkins and Lury, 2012). A topological methodology allows us to lift the border from its static position into more dynamic, relational understandings of the *borderscape*, "where the experiential and representational character of borders and the practices that produce them is highlighted across varied spaces and times" (Awar, 2016, p. 280). This is especially relevant for architecture and its pedagogies, where thinking and acting differently are crucial to overcome the inertia of architectural habits.

Metabolic borderscapes and relational architectures: other methodological approaches

Thinking topologically and transversally with other domains and disciplines is necessary in order to propose new methodological approaches for architecture to engage with the phenomenon of human migration, border conditions, and the ecologies that emerge from them. Exploring ideas and concepts from population thinking, intensive and topological thought, nomadology, ecosophy, among many others, aid us in the development of different cartographic practices that include human and non-human

agents and subjectivities (nomadic subjects) and consider other logics of movement (the nomadic, the pedetic, i.e.) than the extensive and reductive ones conventionally used in architecture. This is a first step in avoiding the perpetuation of existing, status quo models and schemes, and the reproduction of questionable border politics. Considering the prior existence and relationality of every single thing, phenomenon and agent (including migrant populations and nomadic subjectivities) participating in a border milieu or ecology echoes Didier Debaise's (2012) inquiry on ways of knowing how individuals constitute themselves from their relations, and which are interwoven before their very existence. In other words, it is first necessary to understand how symbiotic relations among human and non-human, organic and non-organic agents shape subjects within specific milieus, and how their movements may be understood as the confluence of flows and intensive forces, rather than simple conjunctions in space-time coordinates. Whether these can be reduced to territorial, spatio-material or architectural expressions is not the central concern; instead a new approach focuses on anti-reductionist perspectives that reject generalizations in favor of pluralizations. In this way, migration flows are always multiple, always differentiated, always intensive, always non-unitary, non-linear, and always capable of producing oscillatory vibrations, waves and pressure. In short, they actively participate and problematize the 'kinopolitics' of society (Nail, 2015).

Pluralizing migration flows and returning to them their uncertain, yet consistent qualities, opens up important ethical dimensions. If morals preconceive and predetermine what 'ought' to be, ethics works with the specificity of a given situation: it deals with *what is already there*. Hence, any ecological approach will need to acknowledge the futility of impositions, especially architectural ones, and instead engage in working closely through and with the existing and potential relationships among things, people, and other phenomena, teasing out their inner agency. In this way, the capacities to compose and shape new material, social and spatial arrangements are furthered. In this sense, the task of the architect, engineer, designer, planner, or strategist — as 'expert' — is fully rethought. In Guattari's (2013) words, the role of the architect is no longer that of being "the artist of built forms anymore" but instead that of "revealing the virtual desires of spaces, places, trajectories and territories" (p. 232). Thus, the architect's main role becomes that of the cartographer. Pluralizing nonetheless poses the

challenge of selecting only a manageable amount of specific agents, relations, spatial territories and phenomena within the proliferation of quasi-infinite possibilities given within border conditions, or borderscapes. The point here is to fully acknowledge this explicit reduction and qualify it within a methodology that nonetheless allows us to uncover, observe and also describe the less evident relations that exist among them in an effort to expose their morphogenetic capacities in a coherent way.

Ultimately, however, architectural intervention projects dealing with borderscapes, regardless of their methodology, need to lead to their architectural, spatial and material expression in the presentation of *designs*. This ties them to a 'ground' and to a 'logic', but the challenge is to identify sufficiently representative conditions where these might evidence how the confluence of migration flows conform entire open, metabolic systems with other types of flows.

One such approach would be to focus on different 'points', 'junctions' and conditions within a broader borderscape or topology, and not exclusively on the border itself. These 'markers' do not necessarily have to be immediate to each other, follow a particular 'path' or sequence, or hold any other relation of (spatial, scalar, social or physical) proximity. Together they nonetheless hold a certain kind of consistency. Formal and informal border-crossing points are perhaps the most obvious and intense points of confluence of multidimensional and multidirectional flows (of migrants, politics, information, goods, water, soil, and so on). Further inland, in the urban periphery other junctions, such as landfills, industrial areas, agricultural land or slaughterhouses, where migrant flows are perhaps much less obvious, but where the pooling of other flows (of waste, labor, money, matter, etc.) are equally intensive. Other, apparently much more static points are urban centers, such as squares, parks and markets. Here, the very conditions of sedentary, urban logics prefix the flows and movements of people and society to an imposed, gridded order. Yet, on much less tangible and visible levels, in these points flows and movements take on a quasi-molecular scale, leading to the confluence and re-articulation of their speeds and intensities. All these points may be then subjected to a series of analytical and diagrammatic operations, including the development of relational maps capable of expressing the capacities of flows and agents within and among these points. These diagrammatic maps take into consideration the logics of population, intensive, and topological think-

ing that work as a theoretical point of departure for an architectural design intervention, and which subsequently encounter and inform each other in the analytical aspect. In their encounter, these three logics reveal aspects of each point that would otherwise not be immediately evident. In such an approach, the logics of population, intensive and topological thinking unlock the fixed and static ‘readings’ of specific conditions.

While population thinking aids in the identification of (human and non-human) flows and their interactions and relations within a territory, and intensive thinking helps in revealing the drivers (‘desires’) that fuel the movement of these flows, topological thinking allows us to find the structures of the possible movements within a territory (DeLanda, 2002, pp. 9-12). Said differently, these three logics come together in the production of intensive cartographies of existing flows and their drivers (population and intensive thinking), while simultaneously pointing towards a multiplicity of practices, which then may be envisioned as spatial materializations (topological thinking). A significant trait of these materializations is that they are not predetermined and imposed on a given condition or ‘site’ but which instead emerge from it. In this sense, any intervention devised in this way renounces at the outset to the illusory pretension to solve and uproot something, which in principle is not a *problem*, but instead a *condition*; a consequence. It also advances the parameters that are desirable to redirect and loop (not only the flows but also their oscillatory capacities) into their own trajectories of becoming. This arguably assists in the formation of nomadic subjectivities, while also stimulating a ‘system’, which functions within the realms of the existing and the contingent in more ethical ways. Without predetermining what precisely these subjectivities *are* (we can at best speculate) the effect is that of an assemblage, of a ‘machinic’ devise that affords chance encounters, intersections, confluences, and vibrations.

This ecosophical approach applies to the formal and compositional development architectural design as well, which is considered as a consequence of the process of design thinking itself. Following a nomadic ethics, the design process cannot be predetermined, nor can the outcome be fixed in advance. It follows a nonlinear trajectory. Its refusal to submit to gravitas, or to surrender to static models and extensive thinking opens the design process up to the unexpected: to all that which *might* be encountered along the way. Rather than paralyzing the process, the encounter with new problems and questions allows the design process to run its own paths. One such

encounter is of course the one with the architectural domain itself and its habitual reliance on finding solutions to each presented problem. The specifically architectural questions are difficult to foresee in advance of the process itself, as these are produced by the system within which they operate. Only once the system begins revealing relations, confluences and exchanges of the specific points, will the architectural potential begin its process of actualization. Up to that point, there is no such thing as architectural specificity; it is revealed through and within the process.

After all, and if the whole process is to be understood as an open system, which more than solving or fixing, attempts to direct flows towards moments of possibility, architectural thinking needs to follow *par*. These moments are when the architectural interventions become *parameters* in the system. Beyond mere 'solutions', architectural parameters become powerful tools that further contribute to the speculation of how a system works. Aided by the techniques of architecture (notations, diagrams, drawings, details and models) these parameters nevertheless embrace the unavailability of contingency and complexity, and offer coherent modes of re/presentation to work within them. As an open system to which new parameters can be added (other flows, territories, agents and dynamics) it has the potential to reach and connect with other systems. After all, no project as a whole can be reduced to the heterogeneity of its components.

NOTES

1. Throughout their entire body of work Deleuze & Guattari make recourse of schizoanalysis and nomadology in different ways in order to engage in a variety of topics and domains. It appears in multiple guises to refer to different, but intimately entangled phenomena that drive dominant models, usually the determined, ordered, categorized and clearly differentiated (interchangeably referred to as the 'molar', the 'major', the 'royal', the 'macro', the 'striated', the 'sedentary', the 'territorialized', etc.), and the ones assumed to be less-so: that what is free, unlimited, chaotic, rhizomatic and unspecified (interchangeably referred to as the 'molecular', the 'minor', the 'ambulant', the 'micro', the 'smooth', the 'nomadic', or the 'deterritorialized').

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“Refugee tv” and “Refugees got talent” projects. Affective and decolonial geographies of invisible common spaces

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INTRODUCTION

CAN THE REFUGEE SPEAK (AND BE HEARD)?

In February 2016, while the Greece-Macedonia border was closed, some refugees set a U.N.H.C.R. table at the makeshift settlement in Idomeni and imitated international officials. As they described, ‘we brought a table, a laptop, and we built an office’ (cited in Dillon 2016). The participants in an improvised performance, shifted between the roles of refugees, U.N.H.C.R. officers and journalists covering the event.

However, if one approached closer one could read the sign on the table: ‘United Nations, no information and no help’. As one of the organizers explained: ‘Maybe the fake [UN] will find a solution for the refugees. But the real one finds no solution for people. For two months, the border [with Macedonia] has been closed. They did nothing’ (cited in Dillon 2016). This collective action gave rise to the creation of the

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“refugee tv”. A self-organized initiative by the refugees residing at the Idomeni settlement, which challenged the official media representations of refugees and carried out a number of interviews and activities, reclaiming the voices of refugees at the camp, their hopes and dreams. As an organizer expressed: ‘The refugees are full of dreams in the eyes and hope in the heart’ (personal interview March 28, 2018).

By the end of May 2016, the refugees were relocated to 13 State-run camps on the outskirts of Thessaloniki, the largest city in northern Greece. However, all of the camps, as they are located on the western edge of the city, far away from the urban center, are isolated and invisible. They are based on abandoned former factories and former military bases that have severe infrastructural deficiencies. Health services, heating, running water, toilets and food are extremely poor. Thus, refugees often repeat that they feel ‘nostalgic about the days at Idomeni’ (personal interview October 24, 2018). In addition, journalists and activists are not allowed to enter the camps, and only a few accredited organizations have access. While both NGO employees and refugees are forbidden from taking pictures and videos inside the camps. At the same time, mainstream media often portray refugee camps as places of crime, violence and misery¹. It is important to note here that most residents of Thessaloniki do not have any bodily contact and thus, sensory involvement with the refugee camps. This suggests that the spatial segregation of the refugee camps produces a form of “sensorial racism” (Hamilakis, 2013, p. 34) regime.

Yet, the collective action of the ‘refugee tv’ did not end with the evacuation of the informal settlement of Idomeni. In the hidden “non-places” of refugee camps the idea of “refugee tv” revived. The invisibility, the prohibition of access and imagery, and the wretched living conditions, but most importantly, the will and struggle of the inhabitants of the camps, turned “refugee tv” into the voice of the excluded and isolated refugees. In many camps “refugee tv” groups were organized and related facebook accounts were created and managed by the refugees themselves.

At this point, Spivak’s (1988) critique of constructions of the “other” based on universalized Western concepts and assumptions, is important in understanding the operations, effects and affects of “refugee tv”. Spivak (1988) in her popular paper ‘Can the subaltern speak?’, explores the possibility of subalterns, the populations subordinated to hegemonic structures (of class, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.),

to speak on themselves. In the case of “refugee tv” and “refugees got talent”, the following questions could be added: Can the refugee dream and hope? Can the refugee cry, protest and demonstrate? Can the refugee’s claims be heard? Can the refugee’s body inhabit the city? Can the refugee have access to affordable housing, health, education, work? Can the refugee taste, sing and dance? These questions consider and underline the right of refugees to a decent and multi-sensory living.

This paper centered on the above framework and based on participatory observation, ethnography, semi-structured interviews and militant research, conducted between 2016-2018, explores the subversive practices of the newcomers. The way refugees employed mimicking practices and parody to challenge official representations and power relations, claim visibility, reinvent a culture of coexistence and sharing, and produce hybrid common spaces. In order to protect refugees’ personal data, the research participants’ names are not included here. The paper employs instead the name “refugee tv”, referring to a collective – multitude subject, that through “narrativizable action-reaction” (Massumi, 1995, p. 88) produces potential “lines of flight” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983/1972), realms of possibility to rearticulate the thoughts and desires of many other refugees.

The first section of the paper discusses the theoretical approaches to autonomy of migration, spatial commons and enclosures, and considers how these could be enriched with affect and decolonial geographies theories. The following section presents the “refugee tv” collective in Idomeni and Thessaloniki and the “refugees got talent” project at the refugee camp of Oreokastro in the outskirts of Thessaloniki, through conversations with participants. Finally, the paper presents some concluding remarks on the decolonial and affective character of the suggested common spaces created by refugees.

THEORETICAL APPROACH. AFFECTIVE AND DECOLONIAL GEOGRAPHIES OF INVISIBLE COMMON SPACES

As the ‘refugee tv’ group points out:

‘Journalists come here, they do interviews, they take photos of refugees and then

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they go back home and show what they want to show (...) What we plan to do is show people what refugees want people to see, and this time we get to decide, not journalists’ (cited in Owens, 2016).

‘Usually, when someone talks about the refugees’ camp, he or she looks at us compassionately. But not, the reality is not that. People carry with them their cultures, habits, customs, their special skills, and in the camp during the “refugees got talent” we had the opportunity to share all of them’ (personal interview September 23, 2018).

Refugees are mostly depicted in the debate on migration, either as a potential threat to the local population (De Genova, 2017; New Keywords Collective, 2016) or as victims, helpless people seeking help from NGOs, humanitarian organizations, activists and State structures (Gabiam, 2012; Ihlen, et al. 2015; Reimann, 2006).

Against this double bind of criminalization and victimization of refugees, different approaches to migration have emerged. These are based on postcolonial studies and have as point of departure the work of Fanon and his stance on colonialism. According to Fanon, ‘colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip (...). By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.’ (Fanon, 1963/1961, pp. 210-211). Furthermore, Said’s (1978) critical work “Orientalism” argued that colonialism functioned not only as a military and economic sovereignty but also as a discursive hegemony. While scholars (Guha, 1982; Arnold, 1977; Chakrabarty, 1992; Chatterjee, 1986) of the “subaltern” approach focused on the “small everyday struggles”, following the Gramscian anti-hegemonic “local resistance actions” of local populations. Significant is also the contribution of Bhabha (1994), and his concept of “hybridity”, that describes the creation of new cultures as nonlinear and unpredictable “intersections”, “magmas”, “mutations”, “bastards”, that have the ability to challenge, judge and destabilize previous cultures. Important in Bhabha’s analysis (1994, p. 86) is the observation that the culture of the colonizers is never fully copied by colonized local populations, but it is hybridized. In this case, appropriation of colonial culture often involves repetition, imitation, mimicry, and mockery. Against perceptions of normalization and clear delimitation of cultures, hybridity for Bhabha (1994, pp. 6, 13, 22, 113, 193) is the “heretic”, the “in-between”, “ambivalent”, “contested”, “semi-visible”, “quasi-invisible”, contin-

gent “location of culture”. In the hybrid location of culture, according to Bhabha, a series of processes are taking place, such as: “presentation-recognition”, “translation”, “subversion”, “camouflage”, “relocation” and “reinscription”. The concept of hybridity has been adopted by various scholars (Brah & Coombes, 2000; Downey et al., 2016; Soja, 1996), while also new terms have been proposed in an attempt to capture the processes of cultural hybridization. Characteristic of these are the terms “transculturation”, which refers to the mixing of the dominant and subaltern culture, and “nomadization”, a concept that seeks to demonstrate the destabilization of identities, either metaphorically or as a result of immigration. Also, several terms refer to the geographical spaces in which mixing and hybridity take place, such as: “liminal space”, “heterotopia”, “borderlands” and “third space” (Knox & Pinch, 2010/1982).

In the field of postcolonial studies, Spivak’s work departs from Fanon’s and Said’s analysis, and subaltern approaches, and highlights the importance of the intersections of capital, gender, ethnicity and culture. In particular, Spivak’s criticism to subaltern scholars focuses on three points. First, Spivak argues that the concept of “subaltern” is a homogenous category that obscures internal differences; while she emphasizes the many “silent subalterns” inside the “subaltern” (Spivak, 1990). Second, she argues that the “subaltern” rhetoric victimizes subjects as it names them subaltern and locates them within “lower and upper classes” dipoles. Third, Spivak accuses “subaltern” scholars of dividing culture, economy, ethnicity into separate spheres, while at the same time degrading the issue of gender. Finally, Spivak argues that those who suffer from discrimination should not be called “subaltern”. Spivak (2003) does not support the approaches on the dichotomies subordinate-dominant, West-East, North-South, first world-third world, colonial-colonialist, indigenous culture-foreign culture. Spivak throughout her work highlights the post-colonial subject as the agent that crosses boundaries of structured classifications and categories, and destabilizes the systemic or rigid identities.

In order to understand social relations in the production of common spaces, we need to take into account also decolonial geographies (Jazeel, 2014; McFarlane, 2006; Robinson, 2011; Roy, 2011; Simone, 2010). Decolonial geographies attempt to deconstruct Western geographic classifications and taxonomies aiming at the de-westernization of geographic theory, that is the so-called dismantling of the Western

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gaze and speech. At the same time, they highlight the multiplicity of subaltern subject positions, while they focus on the examination of the intermediate, heterotopic and hybrid forms in the production of space.

In line with the above-mentioned genealogy of post-colonial approaches and decolonial geographies, several scholars (Casas-Cortes, et al. 2015; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013; Nyers, 2015) have endorsed the perspective of “autonomy of migration”. The “autonomy of migration” approach, following the tradition of “autonomous Marxism” on the autonomy of labour power against capital (Bell & Cleaver, 1989), attempts to reverse the polarity between “structures” and “agency”. It focuses on the ability of the moving populations of migrants and refugees, the so-called “protagonists” (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2003), to act, cross borders and challenge immigration control structures such as States and hyper-States agreements, army-police-border guards, registration and control systems. Many works that develop the “autonomy of migration” approach (De Genova, et al. 2018; Kapsali & Tsavdaroglou, 2016; Mitropoulos, 2007; Nyers, 2015; Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013), take into account the discussion on “commons” and “enclosures”, and they introduce the concept of “mobile commons”. That is, forms of solidarity and commoning among refugees who self-organize political and social struggles, negotiate multiple cultural, gender, political and ethnic identities and often produce “common spaces” (Trimikliniotis, et al. 2015).

Therefore, crucial in the “mobile commons” approach, i.e. the commons of moving populations, are the various modes of communication, negotiation and co-decision on the rules, values and practices of sharing. As De Angelis (2010, p. 958) insightfully comments, ‘commoning is not only based on pre-existent values, pre-existent “ethical” choices. The commoning (...) is also and most importantly a field of production of values’. But although many studies (De Angelis, 2017; Singh, 2017; Stavrides, 2016; Tsavdaroglou, 2018) have acknowledged the verbal form of commons, the so-called “commoning” as the most critical dimension of commons, there is a lack of in-depth analysis of commoning relations among refugees. These relations might be concealed and invisible and difficult to approach from a Western centered perspective. Hence, the study of such relations requires a constant focus on emergent affective and intimate interactions.

For this purpose, I draw on theories of affect in order to examine the bodily and

emotional practices of reciprocity, waiting, hope, coexistence and struggle. For instance, Deleuze and Guattari (1994, pp. 168-9), inspired by Spinoza's (1996/1677) theory of unity of "mind and body", explored and underlined the capabilities and potentialities of bodies to act, influence and affect each other. This draws attention to an important aspect of the embodied relations between refugees, and the way these can give way to affective potential and affective "openness" (Massumi, 1995, p. 96), against border closures and the isolation of refugee camps.

I would like to return to the question of whether the refugee can speak and be heard, and perhaps extend the question to ask 'how does this subject feel' (Muñoz, 2006) and how the experience of trauma relates to the invention of a 'project of collective sensory detection' (Berlant, 2008, p. 846). These questions direct attention beyond the right to cross a physical border, and the right to representation and speech. They emphasize not only the autonomy of seeing and speech, but also a multi-sensory claim and the autonomy of affect. As Massumi (1995, p. 96) argues 'the autonomy of affect is (...) its openness. Affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is'. And this process is absolutely political. As several thinkers propose, senses, emotions and affects are political (Avramopoulou, 2018; Hamilakis, 2013; Massumi, 2015; Woodward, 2014). In this sense, the projects of "refugee tv" and "refugees got talent" experimented with the possibility of expressing the voice, the eyes, the bodies, the senses, the feelings and affects of refugees in extremely precarious conditions.

REFUGEE TV:

TOWARDS VISIBILITY OF A HIDDEN COMMON SPACE

This section is based on a conversation with members of the "refugee tv".

Charalampos, question: Please, could you describe in a few words the situation in Idomeni makeshift camp, and how refugees reacted to the sealing of the borders?

Refugee tv: The situation was extremely difficult. The weather was very bad, there was lack of medicines, food was not enough, most people were sick, no one informed us about the border situation. So, because of this miserable condition, people started

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to organize themselves, to organize protests and hunger strikes, to claim not just better quality of food, but the opening of the borders. The refugees actually complained because they wanted a better future and what they received from the authorities was the closure of the border in front of their eyes. Many said that they preferred to have remained in Syria and die there of bombs rather than face the slow death at the border of Macedonia.

Charalampos, question: The conditions of poverty and misery were the main material for local and global media representations. How was the situation in Idomeni covered by the mainstream media? Were you happy with the views and pictures depicted?

Refugee tv: We watched every day dozens of journalists and cameramen from everywhere coming to Idomeni and taking videos and pictures of the refugees suffering, praying for food, children playing in the mud, mice and snakes around the tents, people fighting. Journalists, like crows thirsty for blood, mocked us and they were not interested in hearing our voices or helping us. They just wanted to videotape the refugees suffering while media companies were making money.

Charalampos, question: What did you think about this? Was this condition that prompted you to organize the “refugee tv”?

Refugee tv: We all agreed that we had to react and the best way we thought was to do something satirical. So, we got a piece of wood and a small plastic bottle and we made a fake camera and with a cable we found on the street and the can of a teargas we tied to some shocks with a plastic cup of tea, we made a fake microphone. One friend hold the fake camera, the another the microphone and we went around the refugees performing the reporters.

Charalampos, question: Did this have a positive response from the other refugees? Did they trust you?

Refugee tv: Yes of course! We became somehow the voice of the refugees. Refugees trusted us because we were like them, in the same situation, we were not liars like the mainstream media journalists and here is the interesting point. While we did a fake camera action with a fake microphone, the interviews we made were much more real and powerful. From that moment, the refugees refused to give interviews to the mainstream media channels, since they had their own.

Charalampos, question: Was it difficult to break the ice, to convince the other refugees to talk to you?

Refugee tv: Our action was funny, playful, people were enjoying, laughing at the fake camera and this immediately broke the ice. We became friends, the other refugees trusted us, thus we came close and they talked to us from their hearts.

Charalampos question: What was the purpose of your action, what exactly did you want to show? Did you address all refugees regardless of gender, nationality, age and religion?

Refugee tv: Here I would like to emphasize that we made interviews with all refugees without discriminating on the grounds of nationality, gender, religion or age. Most importantly, we tried to show the positive side of the refugees, not just the bad conditions as the mainstream media did, but that each refugee has some unique talents and skills. Some of the refugees are doctors, professors, teachers, lawyers, they have studied, others are artists, actors, painters, singers, musicians, footballers, cooks, hairdressers. Everyone has some talent and a dream of what he or she wants to do or continue to do and this is what we wanted to highlight.

REFUGEES GOT TALENT:

COMMONING PRACTICES IN A CAMP

This section is based on a conversation with the organizers of the “refugees got talent” and “refugee tv”.

Charalampos, question: How was the situation in the camps and how the idea of “refugees got talent” was really born?

Refugee tv: In the camps it is forbidden to take videos and photos, they are controlled by the army or the police. I remember I had an idea of making a television program and the authorities did not give us permission. Then, we thought of the talents of the refugees and of organizing something like the reality show “Arabs got talent” that broadcasts in Syria or a similar television series here in Greece. Thus, the “refugees got talent” was born. The first one took place an afternoon in the Oreokastro camp and we video-recorded it in order to show the different skills and talents of refugees.

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Charalampos, question: How the “refugees got talent” was organized exactly?

Refugee tv: We put together an informal organizing team, we set a few tables, we prepared a “refugees got talent” logo on a board and we live streamed it on facebook. This way refugees from other camps could watch it and participate by voting for best contestant-talented. Approximately 3,000 refugees from the camps around Thessaloniki participated in the poll. Of course, the most important thing was not who would win, but the fact that refugees came out of a state of apathy that prevails in the camps and remembered that they have talents and skills, and that they could do many things.

Charalampos, question: What was the overall feeling in the camp?

Refugee tv: We loved it so much, it was like an improvised theatrical performance, all the refugees from the camp were present, especially the children were very entertained.

Charalampos, question: What you believe the “refugees got talent” offered to the people in the camp?

Refugee tv: It was very empowering for everyone. Most importantly, the refugees realized that they have dignity and therefore they can hope. They realized that life is going on. You know, when you are locked in a small room you try to do something, to escape, you are looking to find the window, you are looking at the door as if it has cracks, you believe that maybe you could break the wall. In fact, you are trying to get out what you have inside you and to show, to tell to the outside world that you are here.

Charalampos, question: Tell us a few words about the situation in the camp, what has changed after the “refugees got talent”?

Refugee tv: Life in the camp was definitely very difficult. However, especially after organizing “refugees got talent” and many other collective actions, if you look at the daily routine around, you will see that there were several interesting collective moments. Many young refugees play football, others cook together, others drink tea in large groups, others do language lessons to other refugees. The group of “refugee tv” did activities as a school for children, music lessons, video and editing lessons to convey the life of the camp to the outside world. In a way, everyone was trying, apart from being biologically preserved, to maintain or improve their skills and culture. Life in the camp was like living in a big house, after a few days you knew everyone.

Charalampos, question: Were there any communal and care practices among the refugees?

Refugee tv: Yes, indeed, a kind of community has been shaped in the camp, strong friendships have been created, people have developed sharing and mutual care practices. People who had never met before, from very different places, countries and religions came close, met and shared their anxieties and their problems. A large multinational and multilingual family was formed.

CONCLUDING COMMENT. REIMAGINING A DECOLONIAL AND AFFECTIVE COMMON SPACE

In this paper, I sought to illustrate how the newcomers employ practices of imitation, parody, and mockery in order to claim visibility, and create in-common cultures of sharing and hybrid common spaces. To conclude, I would like to emphasize the following three comments that “refugee tv” and “refugees got talent” projects figured out on how common spaces are emerged.

During the “refugees got talent” project, the organizers together with participants smoked shisha, drank tea, played the guitar and sang songs from their home countries. Thus, one night under the impromptu lighting and amidst the smells of freshly cooked food, one of the contestants grabbed a cooking pot, turned it upside down and made an improvised drum. People gathered and started singing and when the song ended, the performer stepped forward and hugged each one in the crowd. The multiple gestures and sensory relations, the experiences of touch and being touched, listen and being listened to, look and to being looked at, seemed to collapse the borders and boundaries between subject and object, world and body, thought and body, and between different bodies. It could be said that the gestures and contacts produced an “inter-corporeal” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1945) and “inter-animated” (Hamilakis, 2013) common space. A common space of interconnectedness, simultaneous perception and experience through interaction. As Merleau-Ponty (1964/1961, p. 162) points out ‘that which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognize, in what

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it sees, the “other side” of its power of looking. It sees itself seeing; it touches itself touching; it is visible and sensitive for itself.” What was clear in the “refugees got talent”, was participants’ smiles of satisfaction and proximity. It was exhibited a nexus of acoustic, visual, taste, smell, tactile and kinesthetic interactions, that even briefly challenged refugees’ precarious conditions and imposed social and spatial exclusion. In their words ‘our songs are a storytelling of how were our lives before the war in Syria, and it was as if we had completely forgotten the pain and trauma’ (personal interview, December 5, 2018). Therefore, the multi-sensory affectivity is political and critical in processes of producing common spaces.

In addition, refugees through practices of “relocation” and “reinscription” (Bhabha, 1994) created a new collective and personal space in the non-place of Idomeni and in the camp. They sought to turn the blocked “borderland” into a hybrid common space. Important in this was peoples’ memory, and the recall of previous experiences through which refugees maintained hope and faced the conditions of endless waiting. For example, during the “refugees got talent” a teenager participant that sang a rap song explained to the panel members that he had not sang rap in the past. As he described, “his girlfriend in Aleppo loved rap music”, and since the day she was killed in a bombing he is trying to learn and practice rapping in order to keep her memory alive. Through the “refugees got talent” he shared and expressed his love for her. In a similar way, many more participants recalled memories of beloved persons that were killed in the war zones of Middle East.

Hence, through memory new relations of proximity and trust emerged. As Bergson (1991/1908, p. 133) argues, ‘there is no perception which is not full of memories’ and as many scholars (Cole, 1998; Connerton, 1989; Hamilakis, 2013) emphasize, memory is a social and collective process that generates collective, inter-subjective and corporeal-somatic experiences. Furthermore, as Benjamin (1999, p. 211) shows, an “involuntary memory” (*mémoire involontaire*) might produce “disorders” and “dissensus” (Ranciere, 2004), landscapes against voluntary objectified memories. From the above we could say that common spaces emerge through the sharing of intercorporeal experiences and narrativized memory journeys, that can mobilize desires and imaginations and activate common spaces as a collective affectivity of claim and dissensus.

Finally, the projects of “refugee tv” and “refugees got talent” appeared to offer a voice to seemingly “voiceless” and “subaltern” subjects and to destabilize, even temporary, the refugeeness as a homogeneous category. As the organizers often repeated, their goal was to highlight the different talents and skills of each refugee, to break social, political, ethnic and sensory based stereotypes, and to claim the right to speak, experience, dream, hope and struggle. Therefore, the common space emerges as a collective struggle, as relations of solidarity and mutual help and as an attempt to ensure the diversity and uniqueness of every commoner. As one of the “refugee tv” members said: ‘no matter what happens (...) in the future, (...) [we] will always have the talent show’ (cited in Skarlatos, 2017).

In conclusion, this paper suggests that the study of the common space has to be enriched with sensorial and emotional geographies, studies on affective practices of belonging, of being in common in and through multiple bodily and sensory interactions, intimacy and reciprocity in everyday life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the refugees that share with me their thoughts and offered me special affective experiences. Moreover, I would like to thank Ilektra Kyriazidou for her invaluable and generous comments.

FUNDING

The chapter is an outcome of the RE-HOUSING project, which is funded by the EU’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 795992.

NOTES

1. Indicative are the titles of several mainstream newspapers’ reportages: “Thessaloniki zero hour: Refugees and immigrants are invading the city”, *Πρώτο Θέμα*, May 7, 2018 [in Greek]

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(available at: <https://www.protothema.gr/greece/article/785095/thessaloniki-ora-miden-prosfuges-kai-metanastes-kataklyzoun-tin-poli/> 2018/11/25); ‘Instructions to soldiers on crime at hot spots!’, *Πρώτο Θέμα*, March 17, 2017 [in Greek] (available at: <https://www.protothema.gr/greece/article/663260/odigies-stous-stratiotikous-gia-tin-eglimatikotita-sta-hot-spots/> 2018/11/25); ‘The unprecedented cycle of violence in the hotspot of shame’, *To BHMA*, October 7, 2018 [in Greek] (available at: https://www.tovima.gr/printed_post/o-protofanis-kyklos-tis-vias-lfsto-hotspot-lftis-ntropis/ 2018/11/25); ‘How the country turned into an endless Hot Spot’, *Δημοκρατία*, May 1, 2018; [in Greek] (available at: <https://www.dimokratianews.gr/content/85758/pos-i-hora-metetrapi-se-aperanto-hot-spot> 2018/11/25); ‘A mob of Muslims attacked Christians in the hot spot’ July 7, 2018 [in Greek] (available at: <https://enantion.gr/2018/07/07/2018/11/25/>); ‘Greek police is afraid for a dominoes of uprisings in hotspots’, *THE TOC*, October 28, 2016 [in Greek] (available at: <http://www.thetoc.gr/koinwnia/article/ntomino-eksegersewn-sta-hotspots-twn-nisiwn-fobatai-i-elas> 2018/11/25).

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